

PRESS RELEASE

GSP revision: The EU needs stronger safeguards for sensitive products such as bioethanol

European renewable ethanol industry calls for a lower threshold of preferential tariffs for non-EU producers

BRUSSELS, 17 March 2026 – European renewable ethanol producers are calling for increased safeguards in the EU's proposed revision of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences for trade, which grants preferential tariffs to certain countries.

The provisional agreement reached by the Council and the Parliament in December 2025 introduces several positive changes for the ethanol sector, securing a more stable market for EU producers. While the proposed revision would strengthen safeguards for sensitive products such as renewable ethanol by lowering the threshold of increased volumes of imports from 57% to 45%, the European Parliament now has the opportunity to enhance these safeguards. The European ethanol industry believes this should be tightened further for highly sensitive products, to 20%.

Europe's farmers and renewable ethanol producers face mounting challenges from the EU's trade deal with Mercosur and from inconsistent EU biofuels policies. These safeguards will be more important than ever to ensuring the viability of the European renewable ethanol industry, a strategic domestic asset that contributes to achieving EU ambitions for climate change mitigation, energy independence, food security and agricultural competitiveness.

Undenatured ethyl alcohol (CN 2207 10) and denatured ethyl alcohol (CN 2207 20) are a particularly sensitive product for the EU biofuels and renewable ethanol sector. Import surges can occur rapidly and have a significant impact on the EU market, affecting domestic producers who operate under strict sustainability and environmental requirements that competitors in other countries are not required to comply with. For example, volumes of ethanol imports from Pakistan skyrocketed by 197% in 2022 compared to 2021, and by 2024, import volumes had already risen 32% above 2021 levels.

A lower safeguard trigger would allow the Commission to react more swiftly to sudden increases in imports, ensuring a more effective and proportionate protection mechanism while preserving the overall objectives of the GSP scheme. This targeted adjustment would therefore help maintain fair competition and market stability for EU renewable ethanol producers.

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