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Energy, Water & Environment

The Decision to Allow Diesel Imports Contrary to Jordanian Standards





Position Paper on the Decision to Allow Diesel Imports Contrary to Jordanian Standards

A Cabinet Resolution dated 2nd September 2019, has been issued that allows fuel distribution companies to import diesel fuel that doesn't comply with the Jordanian standards, the decision was justified with the argument that the local product already is not compliant with the standards and permitting imports comes to establish "just competition" between suppliers. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources justifies the decision as being in line with the policy of market liberalization in order to secure Jordan's need of these products. It is worth noting that the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company exemption on abiding by Jordanian standards that specify the amount of sulfur in diesel at 10 ppm (10 mg /kg) was extended according to the cabinet decision dated April 2018, the validity of the decision is conditional to limiting the market share of the company to 46% of the total demand, where this will remain in force until Refinery's extension phase is completed as agreed upon. ¹

The allowed amount of sulfur given to Jordan Petroleum Refinery company limited to 12000 ppm, where the recent exemption allows other companies to import diesel with sulfur content up to 350 ppm. ²

Just Competition

"Just competition" that is based on meeting companies needs without taking into consideration the environmental and health consequences of such a step in addition to overlooking Jordan's commitments to the international community is in fact an unjust competition for many. Logically, the way to reach just competition should be through obliging the refinery to comply with the standard in gradual steps, not by allowing uncompiled imports. The "justice" in allowing the import of diesel that is contrary to standards will lead to many negative consequences whose effect cannot be completely predicted, some of which are as hereunder:

- Jordan's commitments to the international community

Jordan committed in 2016 to reduce GHG emissions by 14% by 2030. The Ministry of Environment had launched the national policy for climate change 2013-2020 and dedicated a section on how the transportation sector has the potential to mitigate climate change, especially as the transportation sector contributes to 31% of the GHG emissions in Amman.³ Efforts to tackle the transportation sector emissions seems to be not serious as a tax has been levied on electric vehicles, thereafter the latest decision allows importing diesel fuel contrary to international standards which will aggravate the problem.

- The third part of the equation

The decision that equates the importing companies with Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company and ignores other sides of the equation that will be highly impacted. This decision will lead to huge impacts on the environment, especially on the quality of air and this will primarily affect human health. The emissions from the exhausts of diesel engines are considered to be the most potent cancer-causing agents according to the International Agency for Cancer Studies. Furthermore, sulfur dioxide which results from the burning of sulfur-containing fuels, impacts the respiratory system negatively and makes it difficult to breathe. This is especially true for children and elders and who suffers from asthma.⁴ The presence of more sulfur in the air causes environmental damage as it increases the possibility of acid rain and reduces the soil's PH number.

¹ Jordan Petroleum Refinery annual report 2018

² Cabinet Resolution dated 2nd September 2019

³ Ministry of Environment

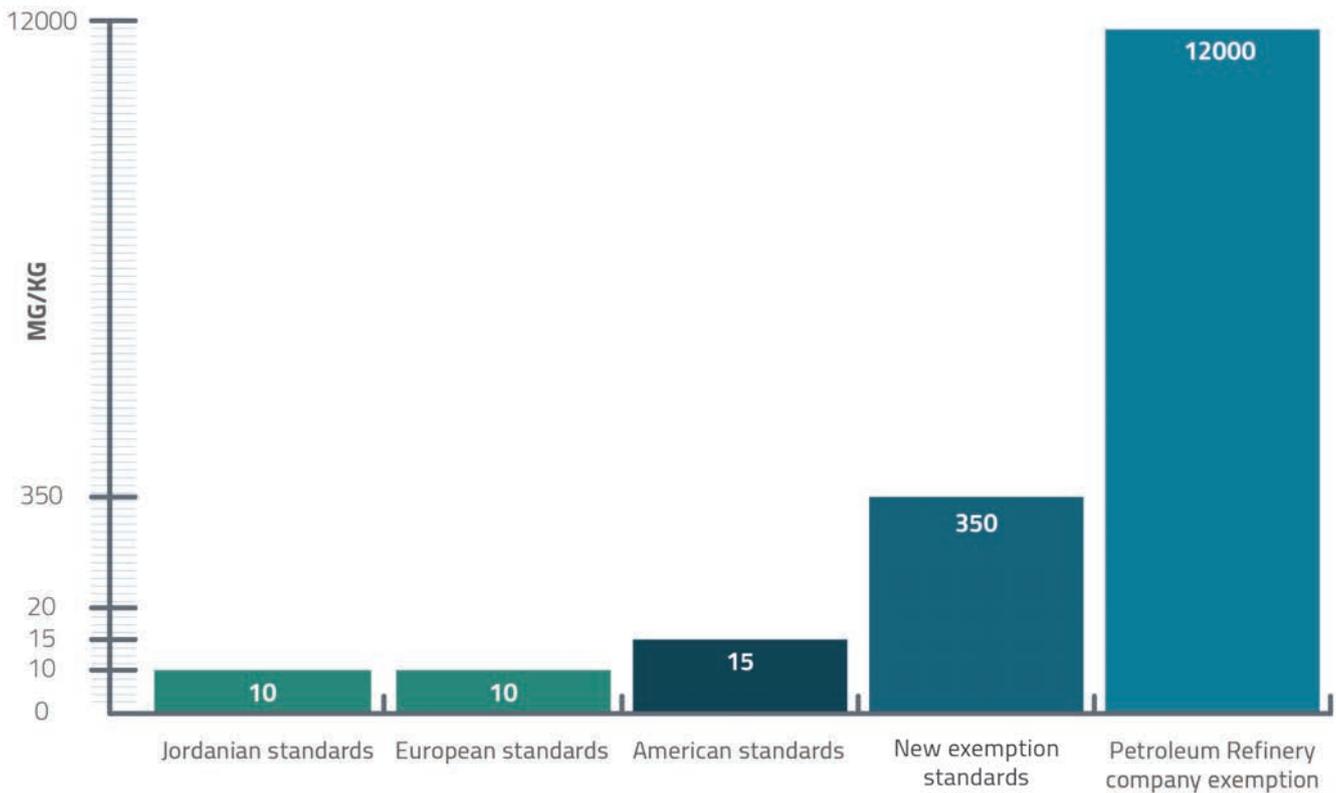
⁴ CT&F Journal Vol.4 Num.4 pp 123-136



International Trend

The European emission standards related to diesel fuel (EN 590) were first implemented in 1993. The accepted sulfur content was specified at 2000 ppm in 1994, and the number gradually decreased until it reached 10 ppm in 2009. The American Agency for Environmental Protection has specified an upper limit of 5000 ppm in 1993 and the number decreased to 15 ppm in 2006, in what is now known as ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD).⁵

Allowed sulfur content in diesel fuel



The decision to allow imports of fuel that doesn't comply with the standards is a step in the wrong direction, it opposes all the policies aiming to rely on clean energy that reduces GHG emissions. This decision will have a heavy price that people we will pay with their health and safety.

⁵ United States Environmental Protection Agency Website