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CBAM acts as a drastic punitive tariff on imported fasteners

EFDA calls for immediate corrections to avoid jump in production costs of EU products assembled with imported fasteners

'The rushed introduction of CBAM without the required verification system effectively acts as a drastic punitive tariff on imported screws, nuts and other fasteners, making them significantly more expensive than expected as early as 2026. As things stand today, European fastener distributors will, through no fault of their own, be unable to use actual emissions data to calculate CBAM costs and will instead be practically forced to rely on the Commission's very high default values. This significantly increases the cost of fasteners and thus also of all appliances using them, reducing the competitiveness of products 'Made in the EU' on the world market,' says EFDA President Andreas Bertaggia in his appeal to EU Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, Wopke Hoekstra, on 9 March 2026, more than two months after the start of the full CBAM implementation phase.

European fastener distributors were only informed shortly before Christmas, and then in a very vague manner, about the key provisions for CBAM cost calculation, which have a significant impact on prices for ongoing trade transactions from 1 January 2026.

'In order to enable the use of actual emissions data for the 2026 import year, EFDA calls on the Commission to immediately align the system boundary relevant to fasteners in the CBAM with those of the EU ETS, so that EU importers, manufacturers in third countries and auditors know which emissions must be determined and verified for fasteners,' demands Andreas Bertaggia. 'In addition, it must be made possible to take verified emission values into account even after 30 September 2027. Thirdly, the incorrect and unrealistically high default values for fasteners must be corrected immediately.'

The reason why the actual emission values cannot realistically be used for fastener imports in 2026 is the failure of the EU and the Commission to put in place important prerequisites and processes that are essential for their use in a timely manner, thus falling victim to their own ambitions.

The biggest obstacle is the expected extreme bottleneck in verifying actual emissions data for imports in 2026. The bottleneck arises from the fact that only a very limited number of auditors with relevant expertise will be available to visit on-site and verify thousands of manufacturers of fasteners and other CBAM-regulated products and precursors around the world within the narrow time window from January to September 2027. The accreditation of

the auditors by the national accreditation bodies of the EU Member States is not expected until the summer.

The situation is further complicated by another omission on the part of the Commission, which specifically affects fasteners. As emissions that are not relevant to the European Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) continue to be unlawfully considered under CBAM, EU importers are unfairly disadvantaged compared to domestic manufacturers. The result is that there is no reliable basis on which manufacturers in third countries and auditors can calculate and verify actual emissions.

As it is highly unlikely that EU importers of fasteners will report successfully verified actual data by 30 September 2027, the Commission's default values for emissions will automatically apply. However, the default values are largely incorrect and contradictory and, even after deducting the mark-up, so absurdly high that they bear no relation to the values that European fastener distributors have collected from their suppliers during the CBAM transition period. The application of the current default values will cause the costs of fasteners to rise significantly higher than expected already in the first year of the full CBAM implementation phase, in some cases by up to 30-50 per cent.

'Due to its incredible complexity, CBAM overwhelms the thousands of small and medium-sized fastener manufacturers worldwide and therefore already has the effect of a non-tariff trade barrier. However, by effectively forcing EU fastener importers to use the absurdly high default values, CBAM now also fails to achieve its climate policy goal of creating incentives for importing goods with lower embedded emissions to make a financial difference. As a result, CBAM is degenerating into yet another merely protectionist instrument of the EU,' concludes the EFDA President.

Contact/notes:

Alexander Kolodzik, Secretary General
secretary@efda-fastenerdistributors.org

The European Fastener Distributor Association (EFDA) represents 2,500 major distributors of fasteners in Europe which supply the domestic economy with screws, nuts and other fasteners. Their customers include industrial customers from the automotive, aviation, railway, mechanical engineering and construction sectors as well as the crafts industry and downstream trading companies.

European fastener distributors source the fasteners from domestic manufacturers and from suppliers outside the EU. Every year, around two million tonnes of fasteners, produced by thousands of manufacturing companies from many parts of the world, are imported into the EU in complex supply chains involving many players.

The product range of even small and medium-sized companies comprises 30,000 different products – from standard screws to customised product segments and special designs. Across the entire industry, customers can choose from up to 130,000 fasteners, order and receive their customised range.