Commerce Department backs Whirlpool complaint

The Associated Press

Whirlpool Corp. welcomed a preliminary decision by the government on Monday that affirms that the company and other U.S. appliance makers are being harmed by competitors importing certain refrigerators from South Korea and Mexico.

The U.S. Department of Commerce found that Samsung Electronics Co., LG Electronics Inc., AB Electrolux and other smaller brands were illegally "dumping" some of their foreign-made appliances in the U.S., by selling the products at less than fair value.

Whirlpool filed a petition with regulators a year ago, asking that the government impose extra duties on its competitors for these actions. The company said the selling of these appliances, specifically certain refrigerators with the freezer on the bottom half, violate international trade laws.

The case now goes back to the U.S. International Trade Commission, which is scheduled to make its final ruling by April 30. The companies face higher tariffs as a result of Monday's decision.

Whirlpool, based in Benton Harbor, Mich., is the world's biggest appliance maker. Its brands include its namesake as well as Maytag and KitchenAid.

"As the world's leading home appliance maker, we are taking a stand with these petitions to protect our 23,000 U.S. employees who produce the innovative and high-quality products that consumers demand," said Marc Bitzer, president of Whirlpool North America.

Samsung, based in Korea, said in a statement that the company is disappointed in the decision and said the calculation is based on flawed methodologies. Representatives from Korean electronics company LG and Swedish company Electrolux were not immediately available for comment.

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