

## Agreement on a National Action Plan for PFAS

This agreement has been entered into by the Danish Government, Denmark Democrats, Green Left, Liberal Alliance, the Conservative People's Party, the Danish Red-Green Alliance, the Danish Social-Liberal Party, the Danish People's Party and The Alternative.

## Agreement on a National Action Plan for PFAS

30 May 2024

The Danish Government, Denmark Democrats, Green Left, Liberal Alliance, the Conservative People's Party, the Danish Red-Green Alliance, the Danish Social-Liberal Party, the Danish People's Party and The Alternative have agreed to allocate DKK 404 million to a PFAS Action Plan.

We have learned more about the spread of PFAS pollution in recent years. The more places we look, the more we find. PFAS have been found on land, at sea, in the air, in humans and in animals. The substances have been used for decades, and the problem is not new. The substances have been continuously regulated at EU level and globally in line with the emergence of sufficient knowledge to introduce regulation. The challenge calls for a concerted cross-cutting effort to ensure that the problems do not get out of hand by preventing, containing and cleaning up PFAS pollution

Danes must be confident that the potatoes in their vegetable gardens, the water in their taps, and their children's rainwear are not causing exposure to PFAS that poses a health risk. They should also be confident that the authorities are constantly at the forefront of monitoring and controlling our environment for PFAS.

The parties have therefore agreed on an Action Plan for PFAS. The plan is the first comprehensive plan for PFAS management in Denmark, and it aims to protect citizens against PFAS in their everyday lives and in the environment. Efforts will have a broad impact, with focus on cleaning PFAS from drinking water and remediating soil, banning and phasing out PFAS in products and industry, more control, more measurements and stronger monitoring of PFAS in the environment, in food and in food-producing animals, in consumer products and in nature, working with the business sector, and ensuring thorough and timely information about PFAS for the public.

The Action Plan runs up to and including 2027, and represents a first phase of action against PFAS. The parties have agreed to allocate DKK 404 million in the years 2024-2027. Future efforts against PFAS pollution will be considered after 2027.

### **We need to clean up PFAS**

PFAS are very difficult to degrade and can persist in the environment for a long time. Even if we globally stop all discharges of PFAS today, we will still find PFAS in the environment, drinking water and surroundings in the future.

Therefore, the parties are now allocating funding to clean up point sources contaminated with PFAS. The regions estimate that it is possible that up to 15,000 sites have PFAS-contaminated soil due to possible polluting activities. This could be former firefighter training grounds and landfills. These point sources, where soil and groundwater contamination with PFAS poses a risk to drinking water and surface water, need to be addressed to limit the spread of PFAS to the environment. Government polluters are subject to the Soil Contamination Act in line with all

other polluters. Municipalities issue injunctions when a polluter can be held liable and therefore has to pay to investigate and remediate soil contamination.

The Action Plan sets aside funding that water utilities can apply to for funds to protect drinking water from PFAS where this is necessary. For example, by purifying the water or by establishing new supply pipelines and wells. When we find high concentrations of PFAS, we can isolate and contain the pollution, but in some cases we can also clean it up - remove it. The aim is to secure the supply of clean drinking water and avoid significant increases in water prices.

Furthermore, projects are being initiated to ascertain how, and under which process conditions, PFAS in waste and sewage sludge are degraded, especially during incineration, and to study challenges and solutions for managing wastewater from landfills containing PFAS and other environmentally hazardous substances.

Managing PFAS-contaminated soil is a major issue, and while several projects are underway to support and develop remediation technologies, there is a need to store the soil that cannot yet be remediated. The Action Plan launches an initiative to map the existing storage capacity for temporary storage of PFAS-contaminated soil and further needs and opportunities to increase this capacity. This includes looking at capacity needs and location in relation to transport of soil for sustainable management.

### **We need to prevent PFAS**

Just cleaning drinking water for PFAS is not enough. We must also work actively to limit PFAS elsewhere in Denmark where this makes sense.

A national ban on PFAS in firefighting foam has been introduced at training sites where there is a high risk of PFAS being released directly into the environment. The use of PFAS in textiles accounts for a significant part of total PFAS use, and for this reason the Action Plan also includes a ban of the use of PFAS in clothing and impregnation agents for consumers.

A national ban on the use of PFAS in food packaging made of cardboard and paper was introduced back in 2020, and this takes into account an unavoidable background level that is tolerated, provided it is below an indicator value. Therefore, the Ministry of Environment will seek to account for unintended trace contamination in clothing and impregnation agents by setting a binding lower threshold for the unintended presence of PFAS, where the presence of PFAS in concentrations higher than this threshold will be considered as intended use of PFAS.

The draft statutory order on a national ban on PFAS in clothing and impregnation agents for consumers will be submitted for consultation, so that unintended consequences of a national ban that may emerge in connection with the consultation can be taken into account. The Ministry of Environment is following the work by the scientific committees under ECHA to assess the proposed EU ban on PFAS. If significant new knowledge emerges based on the many consultation responses, this will be communicated to the parties to the agreement.

However, it is not enough to simply support future regulation with national bans. These problems also transcend national borders. For this reason we need to tackle the problem at the source and turn off the PFAS tap wherever we can and where it makes sense. In Denmark, in the EU and globally. Therefore, Denmark is pushing internationally for a general ban on PFAS in the EU and globally, where possible. In January last year, Denmark and four other countries submitted a proposal for a ban in the EU that would apply to the entire group of approximately 10,000 PFAS. It will be the most comprehensive ban on chemical substances ever, and Denmark must continue to work to implement the ban as soon as possible.

With this Action Plan, the parties agree to establish a number of new partnerships with the business community to explore several options to phase out or reduce PFAS in Denmark more rapidly. Furthermore, guidance material for public procurers and private enterprises will be developed so that they can quickly start imposing relevant requirements in their procurement.

Finally, the parties agree on the need to set binding limit values for PFAS in sewage sludge for agricultural purposes of 0.01 mg/kg dry matter for PFAS4 and 0.05 mg/kg dry matter for PFAS22.

### **We need to contain PFAS**

Today, cleaning up PFAS is both complex and costly. We need to find new and more effective methods, just as we have done for other types of pollution. Denmark has minimal experience with PFAS remediation. When PFAS pollution is detected in soil or water, it is necessary to prevent its spread to drinking water, food, crops and animals through remediation and clean-up measures. Therefore, a PFAS Knowledge Task Force has been established to propose prioritized actions by the end of 2024. Knowledge building will be a good basis for future focus by the authorities, and their efforts against PFAS pollution, so that the population can be protected as well as possible against unacceptable exposure to PFAS.

There is also a need to develop and test new technological solutions to ensure the best possible clean-up and remediation methods for Danish drinking water, groundwater and soil to protect both citizens and the environment. Funds have therefore been allocated to a research and delivery centre that can generate knowledge to support effective management and regulation of PFAS

Several knowledge projects have already been initiated, aiming to support authority regulation of the management of PFAS-contaminated soil. When the necessary specialist knowledge about the prevalence of PFAS has been obtained, the Ministry of Environment will begin work on assessing an appropriate level for managing PFAS in soil affected by diffuse pollution, including the extent to which there is a need for limit values and analysis requirements for PFAS in soil. The necessary knowledge base is expected to be available during 2025, and the Ministry of Environment will present a status report on progress to the parties to the agreement by no later than 11 October 2025.

The parties to the agreement want to strengthen the authorities' control of banned PFAS in consumer products and other applications, both in physical stores and via online sales. This could be in leather goods, clothing, impregnation agents or lubricating oil.

Humans are primarily exposed to PFAS pollution through what we eat and drink. Therefore, we need to pay extra attention to these sources, as a high intake of PFAS over time is suspected of causing slightly higher cholesterol levels, slightly reduced birth weight, immune system effects, and increased risk of kidney cancer, among other things.

This is why Danes should be confident that the authorities will quickly inform and warn the public, and take action if high concentrations of PFAS are found. Danes must have full information about PFAS in the same way as they have information and guidelines on the impact of heavy metals, phthalates, particle pollution and other substances that can be found in food, the environment or products. With this Action Plan, the parties aim to strengthen targeted information for the public, with easy-to-understand advice and guidance on PFAS.

The parties have agreed to allocate funds for a monitoring project on PFAS background values to generate knowledge about PFAS levels in the Danish population, including newer PFAS.

Monitoring of PFAS and hazardous substances in the aquatic environment and groundwater will also be stepped up, which will support detection of potential sources of PFAS pollution and enhance monitoring of game birds and mammals to detect potential sources of pollution, thereby ensuring that authorities have the ability to contain them.

Monitoring of PFAS in animal feed and food will be stepped up in the food area, with particular focus on foods that may pose the greatest risk of exposure and foods for which there is currently limited knowledge about the PFAS content. Examples include foods such as vegetables, fruit, eggs, fish, milk and meat. Enhanced monitoring efforts will help us stay ahead of potential risks and implement appropriate measures when needed. Besides this, there will be work to promote additional and more substantiated EU limit values for PFAS in food and to improve understanding of the link between the presence of PFAS in feed, animals and food, so that we can deal with a food risk if PFAS are found early in the food chain. It is important to note that diet is one of the main sources of PFAS exposure in the population.

The European Commission has accepted that, since 1 January 2024, herd owners have been able to apply for permission to allow their livestock to graze on PFAS-contaminated areas if this serves nature conservation considerations. These animals may not be used as food unless they are later proven safe through blood tests. The scheme thus ensures the option to graze nature conservation areas despite PFAS contamination.

There is insufficient knowledge about PFAS in fertilizer products used on Danish farmland. The parties have agreed to strengthen the project on PFAS in fertilizers, which has already been decided under the Knowledge Task Force. The results will be reported as part of other reporting from the Knowledge Task Force, and they will be communicated to the parties to the PFAS Action Plan.

Danes must be confident that the authorities are at the forefront, they have an overview of the level of contamination, and that they will keep citizens informed of any PFAS findings. It is expected that, as regulation increases, the task of controlling

and enforcing PFAS will become more extensive in the years to come, and therefore the parties to the agreement have allocated funds for more monitoring over all the years.

Finally, advice on PFAS for municipalities and water utility companies etc. will be improved, as the advisory task has intensified in recent years due to more extensive measurement of PFAS substances and increased public awareness.

The Ministry of Environment will annually submit a status report on progress to the parties to the agreement, including the plan for the coming year.