

PRESS RELEASE

Knoops' advocaten sues State of the Netherlands on behalf of eleven interest organizations in connection with the harmful effects of PFAS contamination.

On Wednesday, April 24, 2024, Knoops' advocaten issued a subpoena on behalf of eleven different interest organizations¹ against the State of the Netherlands in connection with the harmful effects of widespread PFAS contamination in the Netherlands. The lawsuit will start at the District Court of The Hague on Wednesday, August 7, 2024.

What are PFAS?

The designation "PFAS" is a collective term for thousands of per- and polyfluoroalkyl compounds that are man-made and do not occur naturally in the environment. The substances are known to be very strong compounds, giving them certain useful properties and have been widely produced and used for decades.

Meanwhile, the substances are notorious in connection with increasingly alarming research findings from (medical) science about the harmful effects of the substances on humans, animals and the environment. Science shows that useful and better alternatives are available. Despite this, PFAS are still being produced, emitted into the environment and used in countless products, causing pollution.

Breach of duty of care

The interest groups have united to hold the Dutch State accountable for grossly neglecting its duty of care to protect Dutch citizens, animals and the environment from the harmful effects of PFAS contamination.

Although the State has long been aware of the serious consequences of exposure to PFAS for (public) health and the environment, the State is taking insufficient measures to limit and prevent the damage caused by PFAS. The interest groups – like many experts worldwide – are sounding the alarm about the harmfulness of this group of substances and the irreversible consequences if adequate measures are not taken shortly.

¹ Namely: *Vereniging Natuur- en Milieufederatie Noord Holland, Vereniging Zeeuwse Milieufederatie, Stichting Natuur- en Milieufederatie Zuid-Holland, Stichting Friese Milieufederatie, Stichting Gezond Water, Stichting SchipholWatch, Vereniging Omwonenden Luchthaven Eelde, Vereniging Vakvereniging Brandweer Vrijwilligers, Vereniging Belangenvereniging Brandweer, Vereniging Vakbond voor Burger en Militair defensiepersoneel, and Stichting Ouderennetwerk West-Friesland.*

First class action in this field

The case concerns the first class action in the field of PFAS contamination in which the national government is being called to account for its failure to take adequate measures in the short term to stop the massive damage to the environment and public health. In addition, the State is being held accountable for continuing to facilitate the production of these harmful substances. The aforementioned measures were formulated in consultation with experts in environmental chemistry.

Statements of law and claims

In summary, the following declarations of law and measures are claimed in this case:

- A declaratory judgment that the State is acting unlawfully towards plaintiffs in that the statutory standards for PFOS for surface water have not been correctly implemented in laws and regulations;
- A declaratory judgment that the State is acting unlawfully against plaintiffs by exceeding the legal standards for various PFAS and the sum of those PFAS in food, at least for fish and eggs;
- A declaratory judgment that the State is acting unlawfully against plaintiffs in that the advisory values established with regard to PFOS/PFOA by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and the EFSA health-based limit value for food, surface water, drinking water, soil and groundwater have not been incorporated into legislation and are being exceeded.
- Order the State to ban all emissions of PFAS immediately;
- Various measures aimed at reducing the exposure of the Dutch population and of certain risk groups to PFAS; reducing exposure via drinking water; conducting large-scale studies into links between PFAS exposure and certain health effects; minimization obligations; adopting the EFSA limit values; carrying out remediation work and stepping up monitoring thereof; realizing a central overview regarding the permits issued for PFAS emissions et cetera.

More information:

For more information about the case, please contact Knoops' advocaten by calling +31 (0)20 470 51 51 or sending an email to office@knoopsadvocaten.nl.

You can also contact the following contacts of the participating organizations for additional questions:

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