

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs): Proposal for restriction under the REACH Regulation submitted to the European Chemicals Agency

Updated Communication No. 008/2023 of 7 February 2023¹

Per- and polyfluorinated alkyl compounds (PFAS) are industrial chemicals that are widely used in industrial processes due to their water-, grease- and dirt-repellent properties. PFASs can also be present as residues or components in numerous consumer products such as paper, textiles, ski wax, electronic products, wall paints, cleaning agents or pans.

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) today published a proposal to ban the production, use and placing on the market (including import) of at least 10,000 PFASs. The proposal was drafted within the framework of the EU chemicals regulation REACH by experts from the national authorities of Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. From Germany, the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA), the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) and the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) were involved in the drafting process. The aim of the ban is to reduce drastically the release of PFASs into the environment.

Over the past three years, experts from the national authorities of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have assessed the group of perfluorinated and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFASs), which comprises more than 10,000 substances, with regard to the risks to humans and the environment resulting from their production, use and placing on the market. Additional information on these substances and on possible alternatives received through two public consultations ("Call for Evidence") was taken into account.

In their assessment, the participating authorities concluded that risks arise from the production, use and placing on the market as well as the disposal of PFASs. This was presented in a restriction proposal according to the REACH Regulation, which the authorities submitted to the European Chemicals Agency ECHA. The dossier proposes to restrict the manufacture, use and placing on the market of PFASs in the areas for which a risk has been identified. The dossier is available as of today on the Agency's website at <https://echa.europa.eu/de/restrictions-under-consideration/-/substance-rev/72301/term> .

Next steps

Following the publication of the dossier, ECHA's Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) and Socio-Economic Analysis Committee (SEAC) will begin a scientific evaluation. A six-month public consultation will start on 22 March 2023. During this consultation period, interested parties are able to submit additional information, e.g. to justify the inclusion of further exemptions into the restriction proposal. ECHA's Scientific Committees will take this information into account when preparing their opinion.

A decision by the European Commission on this proposal can be expected in 2025. If the PFAS restriction proposal is adopted, it will be one of the most comprehensive bans on chemical substances since the implementation of the REACH Regulation in 2007.

¹ Updated version of BfR Communication No 002/2023 of 13 January 2023.

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Further information on the restriction process

REACH Restriction

<https://echa.europa.eu/regulations/reach/restrictions/restriction-procedure>

Restriction on manufacture, placing on the market and use of PFASs

<https://echa.europa.eu/registry-of-restriction-intentions/-/dislist/details/0b0236e18663449b>

ECHA website on PFASs

<https://echa.europa.eu/hot-topics/perfluoroalkyl-chemicals-pfas>

National websites on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs)

Questions and answers on PFASs from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection - BMUV:

<https://www.bmu.de/faq/per-und-polyfluorierte-chemikalien-pfas>

Announcement on the restriction project on PFASs by the German Federal Office for Chemicals:

<https://www.baua.de/DE/Angebote/Aktuelles/Meldungen/2021/2021-08-31-PFAS.html>

Press release of the German Federal Office for Chemicals:

<https://www.baua.de/DE/Services/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2023/01/pm02-23.html>

Information page of the German Environment Agency on PFASs:

<https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/tags/pfas>

Further information on the BfR website on the subject of per and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFASs)

https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/a-z_index/poly_and_perfluoralkyl_substances_pfas_pfc_130146.html

About the BfR

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in Germany. The BfR advises the Federal Government and the States ('Laender') on questions of food, chemical and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.