



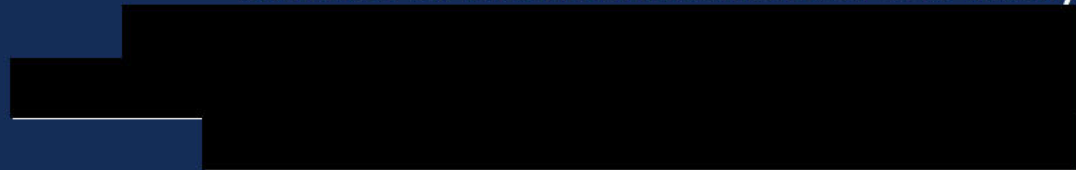
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PFAS presence in single use food packaging and tableware across Europe

The casual use of hazardous chemicals in everyday products

24 November 2021

Contact of the main authors of the study



Scope of the study

What? 99 disposable food packaging and tableware items made of paper, board and moulded plant fibre



Where? 6 European countries: Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom

When? Sampling from May to December 2020

Who? Joint study between 9 civil society organisations



Protecting humans and wildlife
from harmful chemicals



Bund für
Umwelt und
Naturschutz
Deutschland



Key findings



1. Widespread use of PFAS in takeaway food packaging in the EU

→ Direct exposure of EU citizens consuming takeaways



2. Highest PFAS levels found in compostable containers

→ Direct environmental contamination via composting



3. PFAS found in every item, even the ones not intentionally treated with PFAS

→ Pervasive contamination = barrier to a clean circular economy



4. No PFAS treatment in country with regulation in place (Denmark)

→ PFAS-free alternatives available on the market

Key implications



**Highlights the casual use of hazardous chemicals
in everyday products**

*Highly persistent and harmful 'forever chemicals' used
in single use products designed for the bin*



This is unacceptable and unnecessary

→ In total opposition with a zero pollution/toxic free
environment goal

Commission's commitments in the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability



→ ban the most hazardous chemicals in consumer products, allowing their use only where essential

→ ban ALL PFAS as a group by 2024, allowing their use only where they are essential for society

Key short- to mid-term opportunities to act



1. Scope of the PFAS group restriction

→ Ensure the restriction covers the full range of PFAS and has only limited derogations



2. PFHxA restriction

→ Propose and adopt the restriction by the end of 2022



3. Act in the meantime to protect exposed consumers and communities

→ Guidelines and advices to citizens

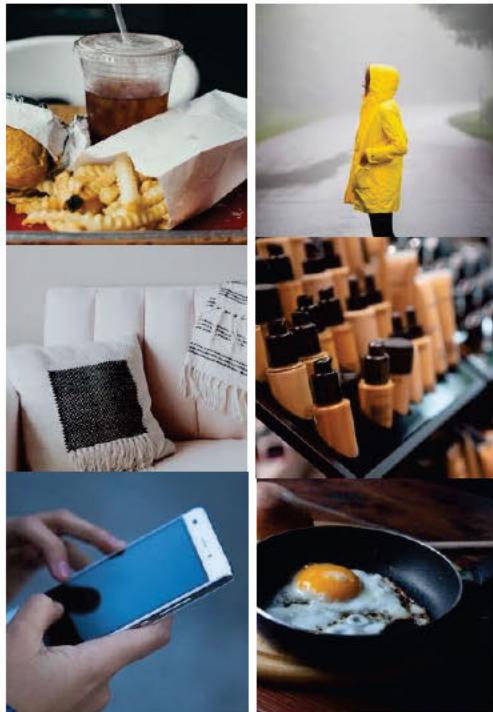
→ Clean up and apply the Polluter Pays Principle

Background

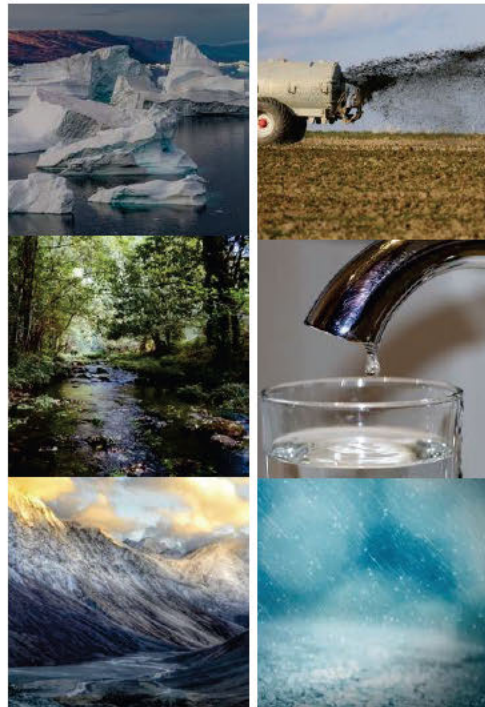
Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances - PFAS

> 4000 PFAS and counting

Found in many things



everywhere



and in everyone

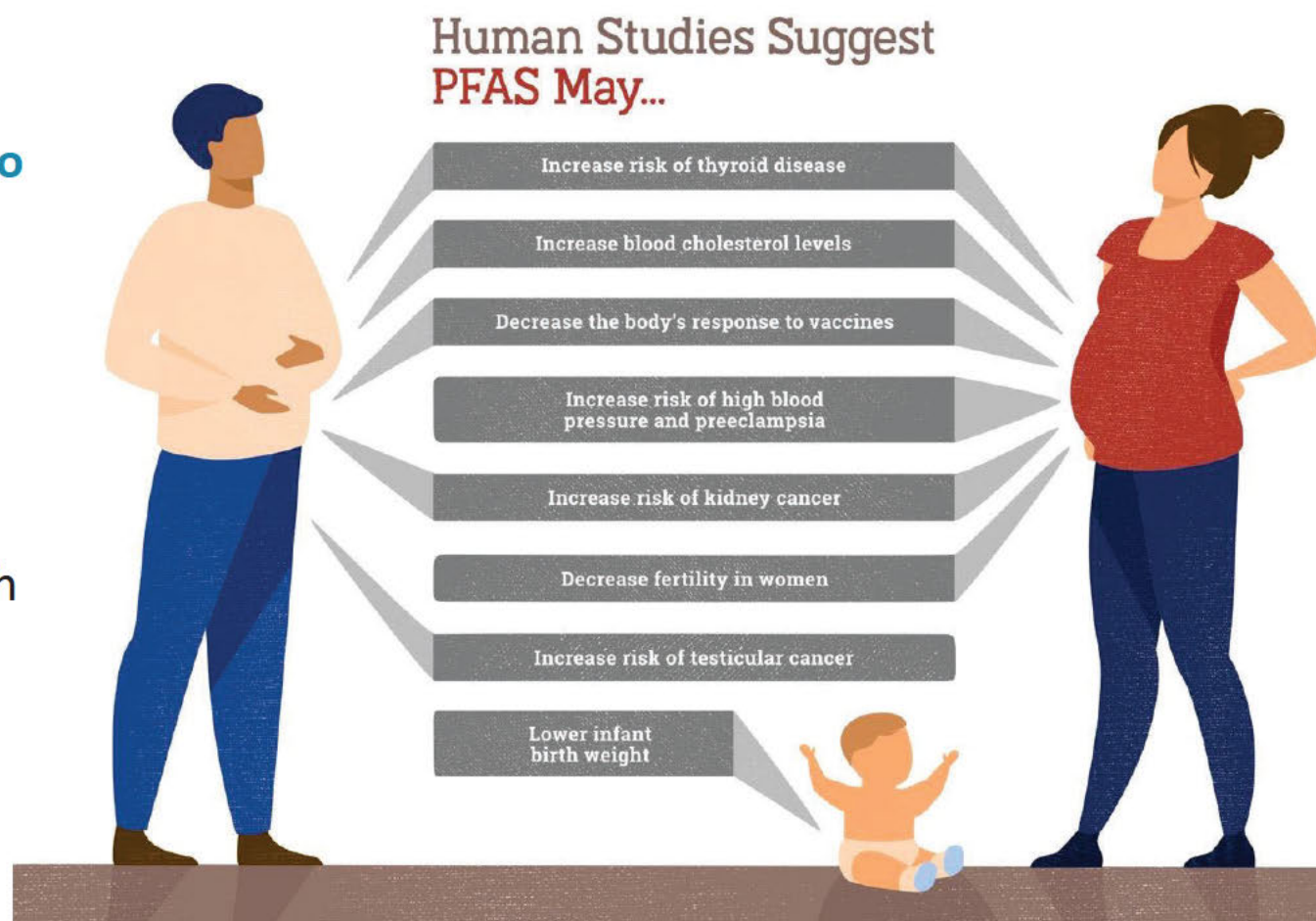


Urgency to stop the accumulation of PFAS in the environment and our bodies

→ **PFAS**, the *Forever Chemicals*, are **the most persistent synthetic chemicals known to date**

→ **Continuous emission** means **increasing levels** in the environment

→ **The more we learn** about their impact on human health and the environment, **the more concerning it is**



Why focus on PFAS in food packaging in this study?



Key issues related to PFAS in disposable food packaging



Disposable nature of the products contrasting with the extreme persistence of the chemicals

Contribute to short and long term human and wildlife exposure

- Potential migration to the food → contribute to direct human exposure via ingestion of contaminated food
- Single use products designed to be thrown away → high turnover rate
- Environmental emissions at production and disposal stages → contribute to environmental exposure
- Contamination of the paper and board recycling chain → barrier to clean and safe circular economy

Key findings and conclusions

The use of PFAS in food packaging is a widespread practice in Europe

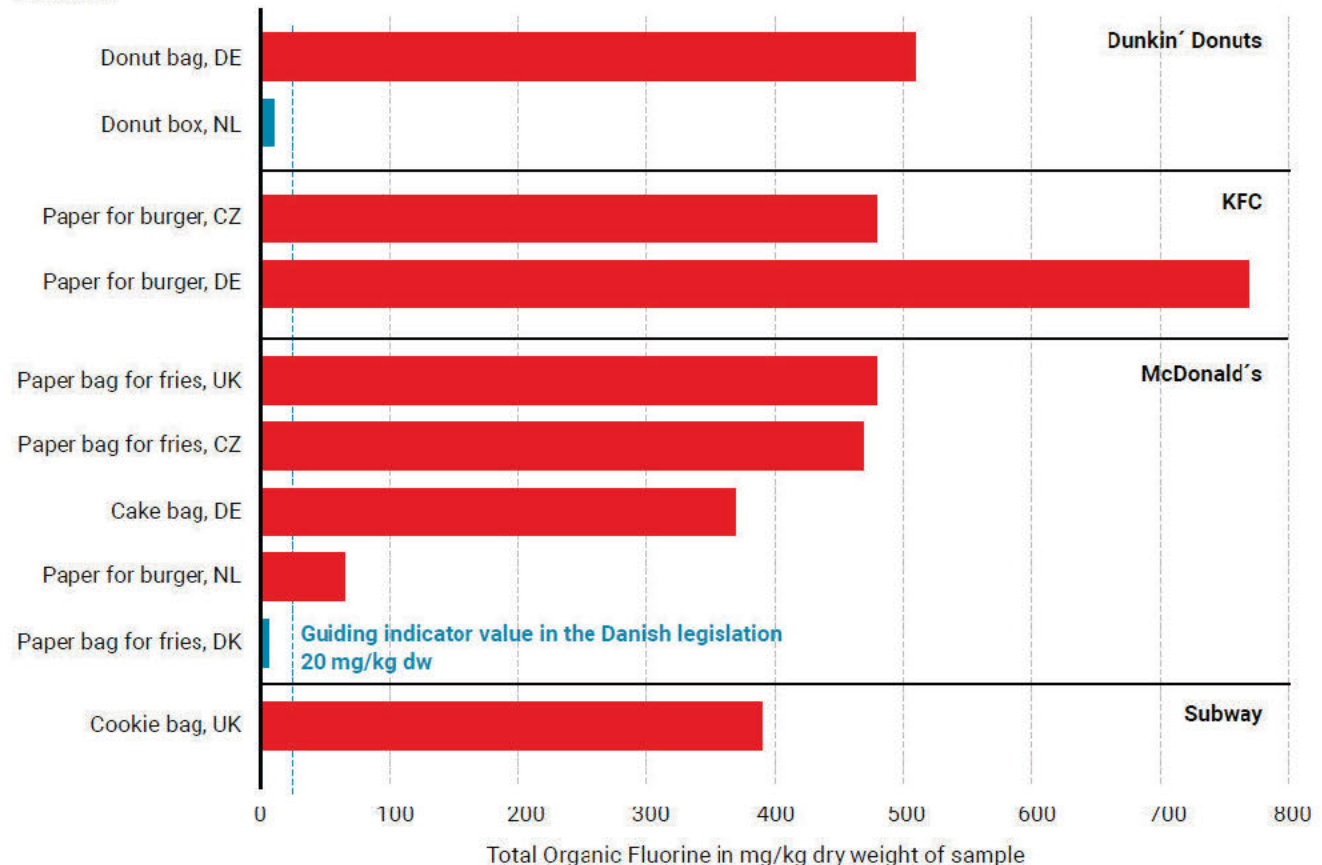
→ PFAS intentionally used in food packaging from popular global fast food chains and other takeaway restaurants

→ 32 out of 42 samples analysed = intentionally treated with PFAS

→ It is not an isolated practice



Graph 2: Total Organic Fluorine content of takeaway food packaging from global fast-food chains.



PFAS heavily used in “eco-friendly” disposable tableware



- Highest PFAS levels found in moulded plant fibre food packaging and tableware **sold as sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic containers**
- **These containers are advertised as biodegradable and compostable**
- **The use of non-biodegradable, highly persistent PFAS chemicals clearly contradicts this claim**

Reads: bepulp, go natural, Compostable

Pervasive contamination of the food packaging production and supply chain

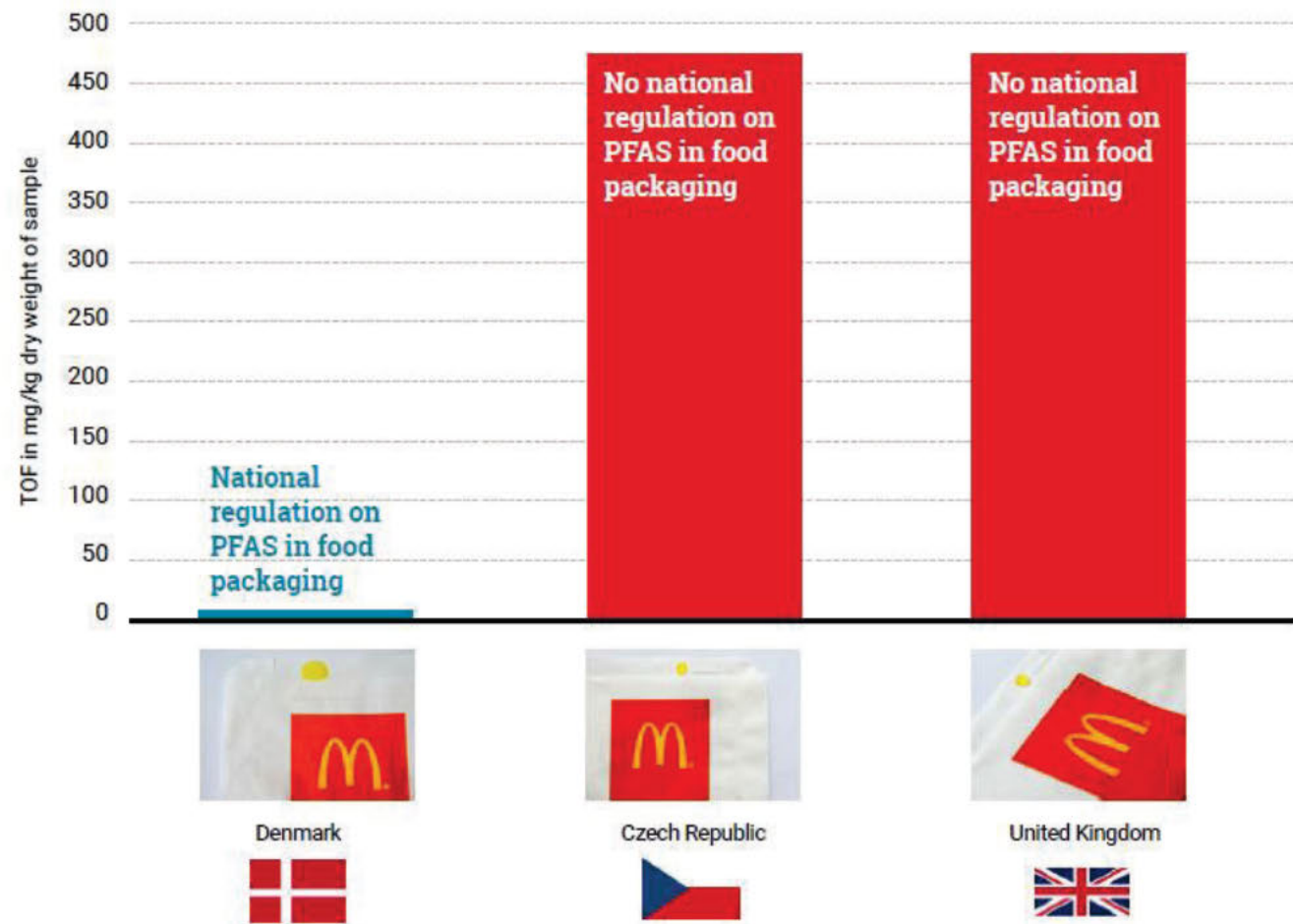
PFAS are already everywhere

- PFAS have been detected in every sample, even the ones not intentionally treated with them
- No paper/board food packaging is truly PFAS-free
- PFAS in food packaging is a barrier to recycling and to a clean and safe circular economy



Regulation is the strongest incentive for companies to move away from PFAS

- Same item tested in 3 countries (bought in Dec. 2020)
- In Denmark, the use of PFAS in paper and board food packaging has been banned since July 2020
- DK sample had the lowest TOF content of all samples tested
- Companies able to find alternatives when regulation is in place



PFAS in food packaging: an example of non-essential uses



- By definition and design, single-use packaging = used for **very short durations and then thrown away**
- This **contrasts with the extreme persistence of all PFAS**
- **Alternatives** to PFAS treatments already **exist**
- Safe, durable and reusable packaging and tableware are widely available

→ The treatment of disposable items with PFAS is a **typical example of unnecessary and avoidable chemical uses**

Key arguments for a PFAS group restriction



Persistence: All PFAS or their degradation product are highly persistent

→ *Every PFAS emitted today/tomorrow will be part of the pollution burden for many generations to come*

Irreversibility: The body burden is irreversible and environmental contamination extremely challenging/impossible to reverse

→ *PFAS are already found everywhere and in everyone*

Efficiency: Can't wait for the safety data of the 4000+ PFAS and need to prevent regrettable substitution

→ *The more we learn about different PFAS, the more toxic they appear*

European restriction on all non-essential uses of PFAS

Our recommendations for the restriction in development:

- To include the **full range of PFAS** chemicals in the restriction, including **fluorinated polymers**
- To guarantee that disposable food packaging and tableware is covered within its scope





Thank you

[REDACTED], 2021. *Throwaway Packaging, Forever Chemicals: European wide survey of PFAS in disposable food packaging and tableware*. 54 p.

Link to the full report:

<https://english.arnika.org/publications/throwaway-packaging-forever-chemicals-european-wide-survey-of-pfas-in-disposable-food-packaging-and-tableware>

