

Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,

the following text (I have removed one image) is displayed: <https://www.bund.net/themen/aktuelles/detail-aktuelles/news/umweltgifte-fuer-die-ewigkeit/>

'Environmental toxicants for eternity

08 rd February 2021 chemistry, environmental toxins

Scientists have studied the prevalence of harmful per- and polyfluorinated chemicals. The results are alarming. The BUND calls on the legislators in Berlin, Brussels and the world to finally take action.

Even in the most remote areas of the world, such as the Arctic or high mountainous lakes, they are now proven: toxic chemicals.

Academics from the Zurich Federal Technical University (ETH) have now studied the widespread use of PFAS in order to produce a comprehensive inventory. These "per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances" form a group of more than 4.700 compounds.

PFAS is harmful to humans and animals and is being dismantled very slowly. They weigh on the environment across generations, so they are also called 'eternal chemicals'.

Some applications are well known and consumers often come into contact with them. Teflon, for example, was produced from perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). These and other PFAS are also contained [in watertight garments](#), tents, carpets, food packaging or cosmetics.

Dangerous variety of applications

However, toxic substances are even more widespread than hitherto known. The ETH Zurich researchers conclude that PFAS chemicals are virtually ubiquitous. For example, PFAS connections are found in wind turbine blades, guitar strings and the interior of oil pipelines.

They are used in solar panels and photovoltaic cells, brake fluid, pharmaceutical packaging and greenhouses windows.

PFAS compounds are also used in ammunition to reduce the likelihood of accidental explosions. Also in filters for the sieving of wine.

Consumers are exposed to unnecessary risk

But that is not all. It is particularly worrying that PFAS substances are present in dozens of common everyday and sports products: these include lubricants for bicycles, tennis rackets coatings, ski wax, fishing cord, some wooden boats and sail covers and climbing ropes.

However, there searchers stress that their current inventory of PFAS products is "in progress". They expect many other uses of harmful chemicals to be added.

Shell of silence

This is, however, a difficult exercise. This is because where companies use PFAS, it is often a scattered secret. For example, ETH scientists wanted to know from the US EPA in what quantities some PFAS are produced or imported in the US.

However, the authority refused the information. The reason: The undertakings classified that information as 'confidential'.

What is the policy?

The ETH Working Group hopes that human and environmental compounds will be replaced by other substances as quickly as possible. After all, if bicycle lubricants have long been free of PFAS, why do they still need PFAS?

The EU already raises similar questions. The new EU chemicals strategy for sustainability envisages regulating the group of all PFAS chemicals and banning all major uses of chemicals so far.

In the US, the new President Joe Biden has also promised rapid action — the outgoing Trump administration had suspended previously planned measures to limit and regulate PFAS.

PFAS chemicals are also identified as an issue of concern at the United Nations, a so-called "Issue of Concern". A working group is already looking for solutions to address the PFAS problem worldwide. However, no result has yet been achieved.

The BUND, together with other German, European and international environmental associations, is committed to an effective new agreement — [the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management \(SAICM\)](#). The new SAICM agreement is due to be adopted in Bonn in July this year. The Federal Ministry of the Environment is leading the negotiations.

To this end, the Federal Government specifically calls for:

- The EU must implement the proposals in its chemicals strategy, regulate the group of all PFAS chemicals as soon as possible and ban its main uses.
- The UNWorking Group on PFAS Chemicals must recommend as soon as possible global bans on the production and use of PFAS chemicals. Bans must be the basis for a global coordinated response to these harmful chemicals. Bans form the basis for individual states to act themselves.”

Do you support the prompt implementation of these two requests?I would be very pleased to hear from you. Many thanks for your efforts.

(complimentary close)

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