

Report

'Forever chemicals' no more? Approaches in tackling soil pollution explored

Date: 2.02.2024

Moderator: Johan Ceenaeme (OVAM)

Reporter: Laetitia Six (OVAM), Griet Van Gestel (OVAM)

Subject: Forever chemicals' no more? Approaches in tackling soil pollution explored

The workshop consisted of 2 parts:

- 3 presentations. There was **no** possibility to ask questions after the presentation, speakers were available after the session, during the coffee break for clarifications or questions.
- Panel discussion including interaction with the audience via SLIDO.

1 PRESENTATIONS

1.1 MAPPING AND INVESTIGATION OF PFAS SUSPECTED SITES IN FLANDERS

Presentation by Griet Van Gestel – Flemish Public Waste Agency (OVAM) – see annex 1.

1.2 PFAS Treatment: The Current State of Play

Presentation by Rosa Gwin - AECOM – see annex 1.

1.3 Tackling PFAS contamination former paper factory Willebroek

Presentation by Katrien Van de Wiele - Flemish Public Waste Agency (OVAM) – see annex 1

2 PANEL DISCUSSION AND INTERACTION WITH THE AUDIENCE

Participants to the panel:

- Dietmar Müller-Grabherr – Common Forum – role of national regulator
- Gerlinde De Moor – Nicole – role of industry and service provider
- Mirco Barbero – European Commission, DG Environment – role of European regulator
- Carolien Van der Cruyssen – Zwijndrecht Gezond! – civilian near 3M

After a round of introductions of the panellists, they were asked to share an image on what the PFAS crisis meant to them or their organisation, which impact it had. Carolien, just to mention one, explained that when living in a contaminated area, you are constantly reminded to be careful (buy bottled water, noise and impact of soil remediation in gardens, etc.). Next it was discussed how the media attention and also political pressure influenced the activities at the panellists' organisations, at this is unprecedented for soil contamination. Positive was that the problem received the attention it needed, and resources were made available to investigate/solve the problem. Negatively perceived was that the story in the media was often not nuanced, collateral damage was created and that the pressure on all represented organisations was big. The discussion was continued on how to deal with this legacy PFAS in our soils. Ideas that were raised were to create a fund to tackle PFAS pollution first at the hotspot locations, work on the producer pays responsibility as an extension to the polluter pays, collaborate with all stakeholders towards solutions, generate more scientific knowledge towards understanding the fate of PFAS in the environment and remediation techniques, build on the proposal of the soil monitoring law to tackle also diffuse PFAS contamination, generate scientifically supported yet realistic soil standards. It was also concluded that while solving the problem in soil, prevention of new releases into the environment is equally important. To conclude the discussion, the panellists were asked for a news paper header they hope to see in e.g. 10 years from now:

- Dietmar Müller-Grabherr – Common Forum: “Soil cure and health care go hand in hand”
- Gerlinde De Moor – Nicole: hope to see no newspaper, meaning we have everything under control
- Mirco Barbero – European Commission, DG Environment: “Health of the EU citizens is better now thanks to the implementation of the Soil Monitoring Law”.
- Carolien Van der Cruyssen – Zwijndrecht Gezond!: “Largest PFAS hotspot transformed into a pleasant and healthy place to live”.

3 KEY MESSAGES

The last years Flanders has worked hard in getting a grip on the PFAS soil contamination by monitoring soil and groundwater, inventory of potentially contaminated sites, setting soil standards, pursuing research on the fate of PFAS in soil and starting remediation activities. With all actions taken, communication with the stakeholders, be it through information sessions with local residents or be it through cooperation initiatives with all stakeholders, has been envisaged. PFAS is not a Flanders, or EU problem, but a world problem. Nevertheless, approaches in the different regions are different as shown in the presentation by Rosa Gwinn. Remediation techniques have been developed and promising new techniques are being further explored and scaled to market ready solutions. We need to continue investing in the further development of those, e.g. through the KIS program launched in 2023. To conclude solving the PFAs problem in our soils will only be possible by involving regulators, researchers, problem owners, polluters and technology providers. Such collaboration should be enabled.

ANNEX 1 – PRESENTATIONS

- OVAM – Griet Van Gestel
- AECOM – Rosa Gwinn
- OVAM – Katrien Van de Wiele

ANNEX 2 - SLIDO

ANNEX 3 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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|---|---|---|
| Flemish Government | Belgische Baksteenfederatie | European Commission |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Departement Omgeving• OVAM• Departement Zorg• Departement Mobiliteit en Openbare Werken - afdeling Maritieme Toegang | Bond Beter Leefmilieu | ExxonMobil |
| 3M Belgium bvba | Brussels Airport Company | ExxonMobil |
| ABO nv | Brussels Environment | ExxonMobil Petroleum & Chemical BV |
| ACLAGRO | C-Biotech | Federal Ministry for Climate Action |
| Advocatenkantoor De Coninck | CEBEDEAU | FPS Health, food chain safety and environment |
| AECOM Belgium BV | Cefic | German Environment Agency |
| Agoria | CHEM Trust | Ghent University |
| Alecto Consulting | COMMON FORUM on Contaminated Land in Europe | Hasselt University |
| Allnex Belgium | CONDR | Indaver |
| Aquafin NV | Cornet & Renard | Industrious Law |
| ARCHE Consulting | daa | InOpSys |
| BASF Antwerpen | Danish Regions | Jan De Nul / Envisan |
| Bayer Agriculture bv | DEME | KU Leuven |
| | Devagro | Liedekerke Wolters Waelbroeck Kirkpatrick |
| | ERM | |
| | ESVM for ACEA | |

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|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Netwerk Brandweer | SARPI VEOLIA | Tractebel Engineering |
| NICOLE | Sciensano | University of Antwerp |
| OECD | Sodecon NV | Veolia nv/sa |
| Ramboll | SPAQUE SA | VITO |
| RCS Environmental Solutions | SPW - Direction de l'Assainissement des Sols | VIVAQUA |
| Renewi | Stad Antwerpen | Voka - Kamer van Koophandel Antwerpen-Waasland |
| RIWA-Maas | Stad Hasselt | Vrije Universiteit Brussel |
| Rudy Dams Consulting | Tauw België nv | water-link |
| Salesforce | TerraCorrect bv | Witteveen+Bos Belgium nv |
| Salesforce | TotalEnergies | Zwijndrecht Gezond |
| SARPI Remediation nv | | |