

PFAS VENETO

CRITICAL ISSUES AND KEY OBJECTIVES

for the Press Conference in Rome - 13 December 2021

[Call for UN - Marcos A. Orellana]

In our opinion, **the human rights that have been violated** - not only by the Companies **but also by our Institutions** (the Italian State, the Veneto Region, the Provinces of Verona/Vicenza/Padua and the Mayors of our Municipalities) who, over the last 40 years, have allowed the production of PFASs without any effective control - **are the following**:

- the **right to a healthy life**,
- the **right to a healthy environment**,
- the **right to effective remediation**,
- the **right to transparent information**.

The above mentioned rights are protected by the following articles within the **European Convention on Human Rights**: articles 2, 8, 10 and 13.

We would like to highlight the main critical issues and our key objectives:

1. **We were not notified that the water flowing from our taps was contaminated by extremely high levels of PFAS, despite the fact that both the local authorities and the water service providers had been aware of the issue since 2013.** Furthermore, even after 2013 and after the beginning of the Health Surveillance Plan (December 2016), authorities kept the definition of "potable" for the water flowing out of taps, even when the activated carbon filters did not succeed in filtering out all the PFAS and the "performance limit" was of 1030 ng/l in total.

>> We now call for accurate, relevant and transparent information.

2. **As of today - 13th December 2021 - not everybody who is exposed to the PFAS contamination has been granted the right to know the concentration of PFAS in their blood.** The Veneto Region has established that only residents in the Red Area born between 1951 and 2014 can access screening. As a consequence, children and elderly people are excluded. The same is true for the people who live in the nearby areas - in particular in the Orange Area. In fact, the water in this area has been contaminated not only by PFAs, but also by more recently produced - and discharged - contaminants, such as C604 and GenX. As for GenX, it is worth mentioning that the Veneto Region authorized its production in 2014, in the middle of the PFAS emergency. Citizens who are not included in the screening programme have no way to access the tests, not even if they are willing to bear the full cost, since no private laboratory is currently authorized to carry out this kind of tests.

>> We now demand that all the people who are exposed to PFAS be granted the right to access the screening programme, regardless of age or residence.

3. **Children with prenatal exposure to PFAS have been forgotten.** Although the two studies on "maternal and neonatal effects" clearly show that in the municipalities with the highest levels of exposure there is a significant increase in pregnancy-related problems and an increase in the number of children with reduced birth weight and/or congenital malformations, there have been no follow-up studies to assess the health status of these individuals.

>> We now ask that local health departments provide specifically-trained staff able to give relevant information to pregnant women or to young couples who want to have children: screening for PFAS ought to become part of routine pre-pregnancy tests in all the affected areas of the Veneto Region. We also ask for access to the PFAS screening for all the children at risk in the 0-3 age group. The children should then take part in a developmental screening in order to notice the onset of any disease.

4. **We have also been denied the right to information about food contamination.** We have been able to access the results of the tests carried out on some food types only thanks to an injunction, prompted by the activists' appeal, which was issued by the Regional Court. However, not all the available data has been provided. What's more, the data shows some serious methodological faults, to the point which the overall results cannot be considered totally reliable. Besides, the Veneto Region has underestimated the full gravity of the situation with regards to the contamination of agricultural products from the Red Area. This has occurred because the assessment has been carried out according to the 2018 EFSA guidelines, which, however, were not issued with reference to a heavily-exposed population, such as ours. Therefore, even if a PFAS emergency has been declared, we still lack any food safety guidelines.

>> Now we demand access to all data - even future data - collected through the testing of food. We also call for the setting up of a "PFAS free" label to be used for food products. This label is the necessary condition to allow for primary and secondary prevention of all the exposed citizens, in particular of those with high blood concentrations of PFAS.

5. **So far no effective site remediation has been carried out in the most affected areas,** even if Miteni ceased production in 2018. This means that the contamination of the aquifer is still going on and - as a consequence - the water table is still being contaminated. The hydraulic barrier has not shown any real effectiveness in stopping the contamination. The Mayor of the Trissino Municipality and the competent authorities both of the Province of Vicenza and of the Veneto Region were supposed to submit a remediation plan. In fact, they never did. In the same way, no contamination site investigation has been carried out so far. Nor has the National-Regional Agreement for the remediation of the Fratta-Gorzone river basin - where the ARICA big pipe discharges waste water from 5 water treatment plants - been put into action yet. The area of the Fratta-Gorzone river basin is where lots of agricultural products are grown to be sold on regional or national markets.

>> We now ask that citizens, environmental activist groups and local organizations be allowed to be involved in the site remediation of the Miteni site, and that this remediation be put into effect immediately, with no further delay. We also call for the implementation of the National-Regional Agreement for the remediation of the Fratta-Gorzone river basin. Moreover, the PFAS waste cycle should be a tightly monitored closed-loop system, in order to avoid the dissemination of PFAS into the environment through the discharge of contaminated industrial sludge in landfills - such as the Torretta landfill. Another contamination pathway is deposition from exhaust air from the chimneys of the plants which regenerate activated carbon filters, such as the one in Legnago.

6. **There is no legislation on a national level that regulates PFAS.** Without any legislation on a national level, citizens have no protection against PFAS contamination. If a Regional Government sets strict limits, companies could avoid the restriction by moving production to another Italian Region.

>> We therefore call for national legislation to regulate industrial waste, discharge from water treatment plants as well as the allowed concentration of PFAS in sewage sludge fertilizers. In order to grant a safe and healthy environment to all citizens, we demand that the limiting values for PFAS be established at “technical zero” (that is, the lowest level where results are satisfactorily reproducible between official laboratories) until the competent authorities - such as ECHA - ban the whole family of PFAS compounds.

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