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Moving PFAS policy forwards in times of crisis

ENSO_r Conference, 20/10/2022

Prof. Dr. Karl Vrancken
PFAS Commissioner for the Flemish Government



Blokkeersdijk

Port of Antwerp

3M

Zwijndrecht

PFOS in top soil

500-1000 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$

3 – 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$

20 – 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$

5 – 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$

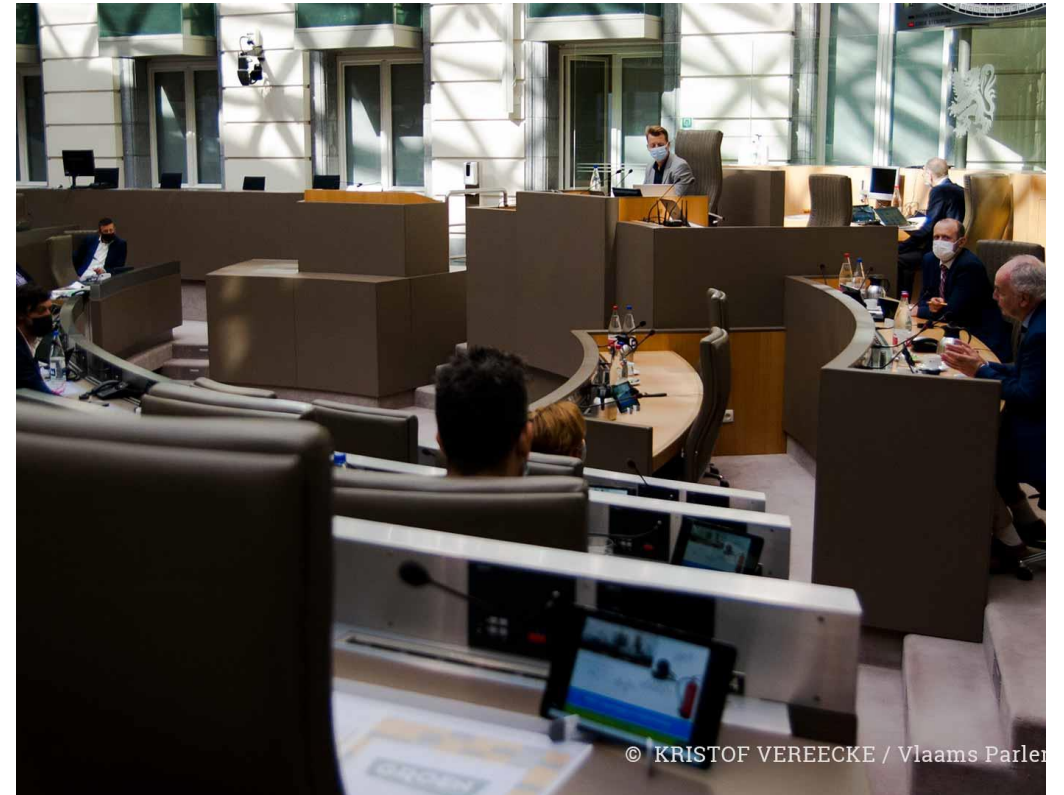
Oosterweel works
by Lantis



PFAS crisis

June 2021: The Flemish government:

- ▶ Appoints PFAS Commissioner
- ▶ Launches a parliamentary enquiry committee to determine causes and responsibilities



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Role of the PFAS Commissioner

Focus

- ▶ Searching for solutions for the current situation
- ▶ Looking ahead, better long-term approach for complex environmental cases

NOT:

- ▶ Analyse past mistakes
- ▶ Deciding on measures to be taken

Task:

- ▶ Coordinate the science-policy interface
 - ▶ Clear and transparent communication to stakeholders and population
 - ▶ Reporting
- ▶ Since June 2021 – 1,5 years



PFAS tasks

► Flanders

- Coordinate science-policy interface
- Transparent communication
- Reporting

► Region 3M

- Contact with stakeholders
- Expert committee – impact of the works
- Round table stakeholders
- Information for citizens



3M-tegemoetkoming: 1,8 miljoen euro voor 37 landbouwbedrijven

📰 Nieuwsbericht • 2 mei 2022



Rondetafelgesprek over saneringsopties in Zwijndrecht

📰 Nieuwsbericht • 2 mei 2022



Experts bespreken saneringsopties PFAS-vervuiling

📰 Nieuwsbericht • 21 april 2022



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PFAS communication

- ▶ pfas@vlaanderen.be
- ▶ Website PFAS in Flanders
- ▶ Podcast
- ▶ PFAS-pathfinder
- ▶ Town hall meetings
- ▶ Press

PFAS IN FLANDERS

[Overview](#) [First interim report](#) [Second interim report](#) [Third interim report](#)

Summary of third interim report on the PFAS contamination

As commissioned by the Government of Flanders, PFAS commissioner Karl Vrancken presented a third interim report on the PFAS contamination in Flanders in July 2022, the result of the cooperation between and input from numerous experts, each working within their own competence and field of expertise. This research report brings together results from measurement campaigns and technical studies conducted in the period April 2022 – June 2022.



The spread and risks of PFAS in Flanders

The [third status report, written in Dutch](#), covers the following topics:

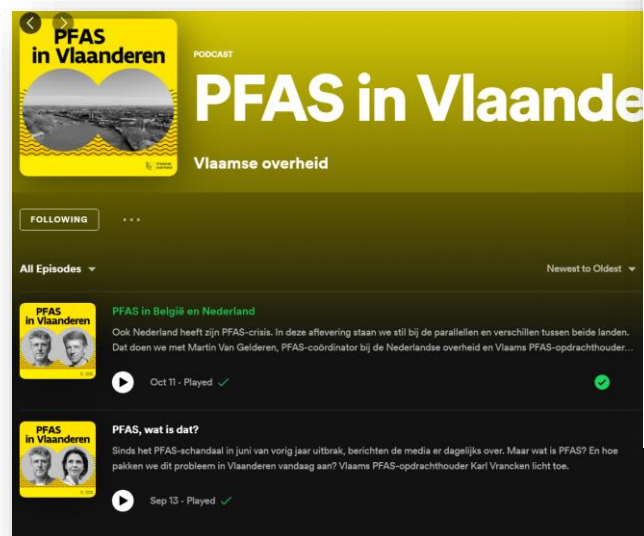
- chapter 1: Status of research, compiled in the same way as the overview of research and technical studies, included in the second interim report.
- chapter 2: Activity report for the period April – June 2022
- chapter 3: Conclusion, outlook and further planning.

This English translation provides a summary of the research outcomes (Chapter 1). In Chapter 2, the commissioner formulates his conclusions and looks ahead to the further approach of substances of very high concern in Flanders.

ON THIS PAGE

[The spread and risks of PFAS in Flanders](#)

[Summary of third interim report on the PFAS contamination](#)



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Output



September '21



April '22

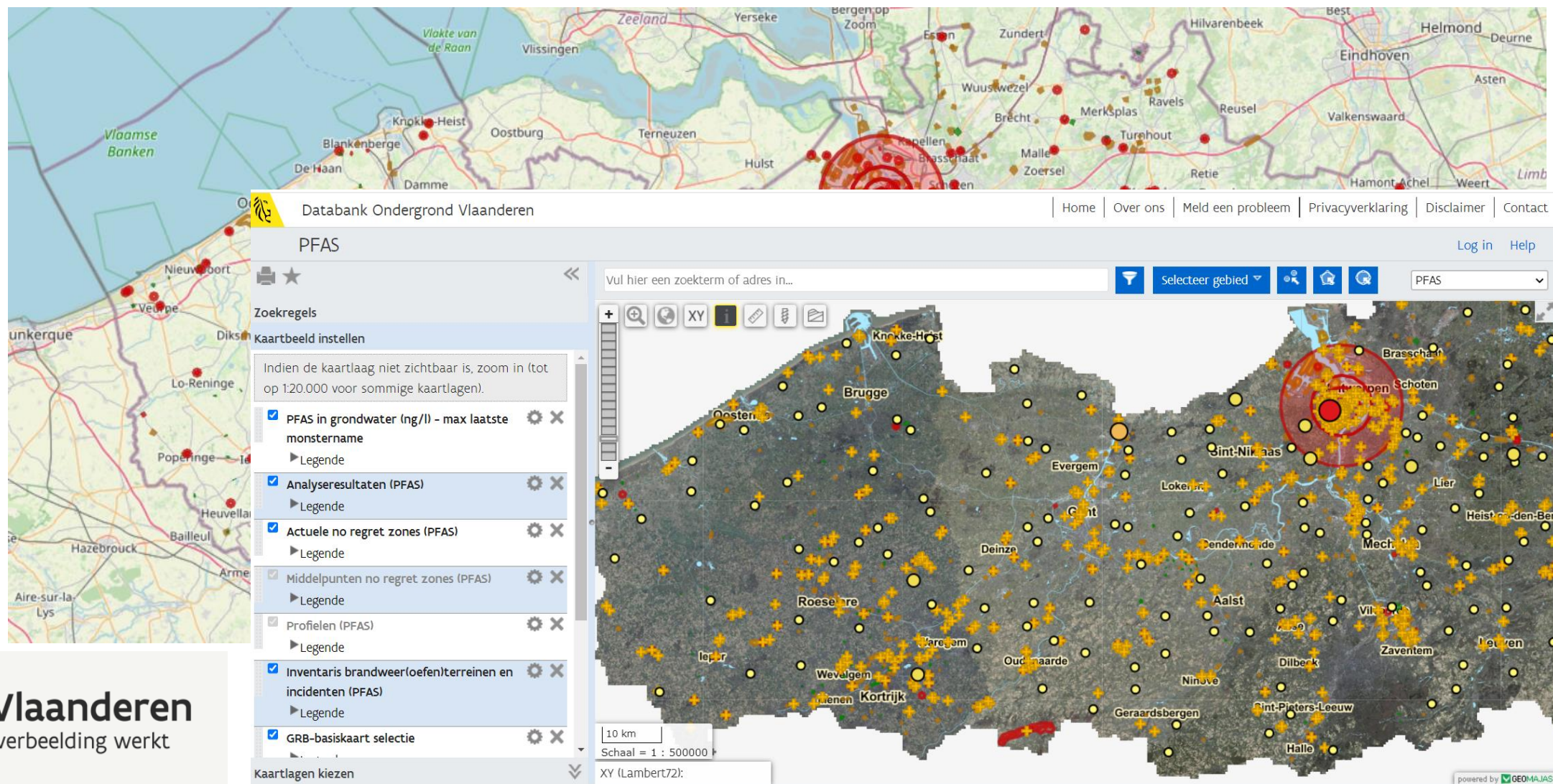


July '22



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PFAS map of Flanders



Observations

- ▶ PFAS is everywhere, also in non-suspected area
→ soil, water, deposition, food
- ▶ PFOS as main pollutant around 3M, mixed profile elsewhere
- ▶ 2/3 of inhabitants of Zwijndrecht have blood values that cause concern
- ▶ Drinking water in line with EU Directive
- ▶ Food is main exposure pathway: fish, organ meat, eggs
- ▶ Wet cleaning in house reduces exposure

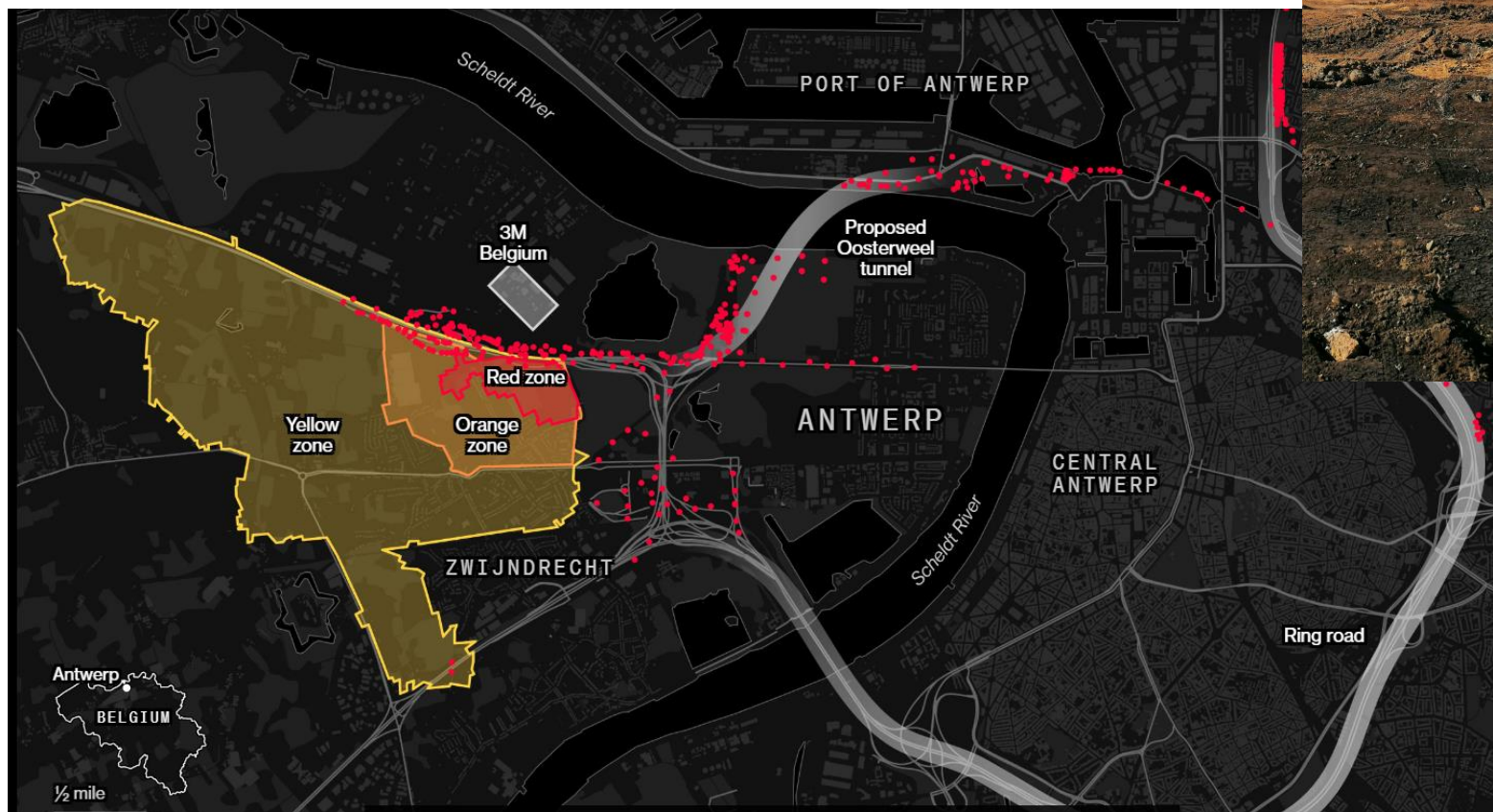


Actions

- ▶ No regret measures
 - ▶ Halt to 3M production
 - ▶ Blood sampling in 5km area around 3M
 - ▶ Sanitation agreement with 3M : 571 M€
-
- ▶ Revision of permits and emission limit values
 - ▶ Revision of soil sanitation regulatory framework
 - ▶ Sanitation projects in hot spots



Soil sanitation



Graphic: Bloomberg.com



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PFAS approach

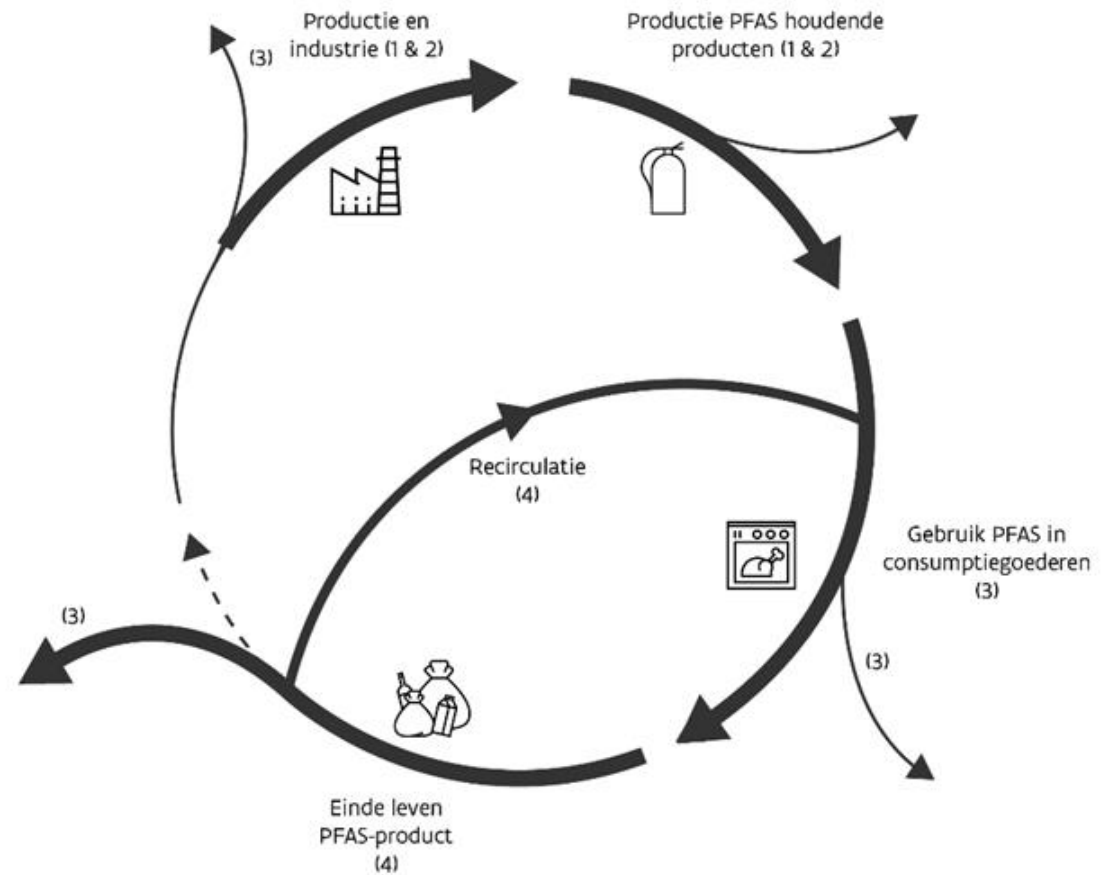
- ▶ **Coordination at the science-policy interface**
 - Open communication
 - Co-creation of knowledge
 - Stakeholder interaction
- ▶ **Flexible approach with broad expert group**
- ▶ **Working at local and regional level**
- ▶ **Linking knowledge to action**



Systemic solution

- ▶ Phase-out products
- ▶ Limit emissions
- ▶ Remediate polluted areas

- Managed circularity
- Destruction in 'safe sink'



European & scientific framework



- ▶ 18 priority substances
- ▶ European collaboration
- ▶ Policy for chemical substances of concern
- ▶ Priorities based on scientific insights



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Conclusion

- ▶ PFAS is everywhere
- ▶ Build science-policy interface
- ▶ No tunnel vision
- ▶ Systemic approach
 - Phase out
 - Limit emission
 - Remediated pollution



Questions?

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