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# PFAS: health risks, pollution in Zeeland and around Antwerp, the Scheldt, and the documentary "Niet Pluis"

## 1. How harmful is PFAS to health?




PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) is an umbrella term for a group of more than 6,000 synthetic chemical substances, which have been widely used since the 1950s in products such as non-stick cookware, firefighting foam, water-repellent clothing, cosmetics and food packaging. What characterises PFAS, and is problematic at the same time, is that these substances barely break down, if at all, in the environment (hence the nickname "forever chemicals") and accumulate in soil, water and, ultimately, in the human body.

According to the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), PFAS are associated with a range of health effects: reduced functioning of the immune system (including a lower response to vaccinations, the best-documented effect), raised cholesterol levels in the blood, effects on the liver, and an increased risk of kidney and testicular cancer. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified PFOA in 2023 as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1), and PFOS as possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B).

In 2020, EFSA established a health-based guidance value (Tolerable Weekly Intake) of 4.4 nanograms per kilogram of body weight per week, for the sum of four common PFAS substances (PFOA, PFOS, PFNA and PFHxS). This corresponds to a blood level of approximately 6.9 nanograms per millilitre. Blood testing shows that a significant proportion of the European population, and especially young children, exceeds this limit.

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## 2. Some examples of PFAS pollution around Antwerp and in Zeeland

### Zwijndrecht (near Antwerp, Belgium) — discovered June 2021

During excavation works for the Oosterweel Connection, the major infrastructure project north of Antwerp, contractors discovered massive PFAS pollution (notably PFOS) in the soil around the former 3M plant in Zwijndrecht in June 2021. The polluted area turned out to extend over a radius of approximately 15 kilometres. Local residents were advised to no longer eat home-grown vegetables or eggs from their own chickens, and not to let children play in contaminated soil. It later emerged that the Flemish government, based on reports by toxicologist professor Tytgat (KU Leuven), had already been aware of the severity of the pollution since 2017, without this being made public at the time.

### The Western Scheldt (Zeeland), affected by Chemours Dordrecht — discovered October 2022

The PFAS pollution from 3M in Zwijndrecht also reaches the Dutch Western Scheldt in Zeeland via the Scheldt river; the water there has by now become so severely polluted that the province of Zeeland advises against consuming self-caught fish, mussels, oysters or cockles. In addition, in October 2022, environmental chemist Chiel Jonker, as part of the investigative journalism programme Zembla, made a worrying discovery in PFAS measurement data from the Rivierenland water authority near the Chemours chemical plant (formerly DuPont) in Dordrecht, close to the border with Zeeland and directly connected to the Western Scheldt. Extremely high concentrations of GenX and PFOA were found there, higher than anything Jonker had ever seen before in surface water. Partly for this reason, RIVM launched a two-year health study from 2026 among residents living near both Chemours and the Western Scheldt.

## 3. The documentary "Niet Pluis"




"Niet Pluis" is a Dutch documentary by filmmaker Arieke van Liere (Middelburg) and DDE - Video Agency, their very first documentary together. The film starts from a personal discovery: Van Liere's three Zeeland-based hobby chickens (Brownie, Sproetje and Poepie) turn out to be laying eggs containing PFAS. With their owner as "spokesperson", the chickens set out in

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search of an answer to the question of whether hobby-chicken eggs are still safe to eat, a question that has become all the more pressing since RIVM has advised, since 2025, against eating eggs from hobby chickens.

The quest takes the viewer to a Zeeland chicken farmer, a toxicologist from Wageningen University & Research, a concerned citizen with elevated PFAS levels in her blood, a Chemours whistleblower, the Zeeland Environmental Federation, the province of Zeeland, and the industrial site of 3M and Chemours. During the interviews, Van Liere serves her interviewees home-made PFAS egg salads and omelettes, suddenly making an invisible problem tangible and confronting. The voice-over is provided by nature filmmaker and Golden Calf winner Ruben Smit. Notably, the documentary came about partly through crowdfunding and a call on social media, which prompted hundreds of hobby chicken keepers from across the Netherlands to send in footage of their chickens.



The film has been selected for "Zeeuws Licht", the competition for films by Zeeland-based filmmakers at the Film by the Sea festival in Vlissingen, where the premiere is scheduled for September 2026. Afterwards, the intention is for Omroep Zeeland to broadcast the documentary.

## SCREENING

"Niet Pluis" – Film by the Sea.

Pathé Vlissingen – Screen 1, Spuikomweg 1, Vlissingen.

- Thursday 17 September 2026 at 7:30 pm.
- Saturday 19 September 2026 at 2:30 pm.

Niet pluis | Film by the Sea



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## MEER INFORMATIE OVER PFAS

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RIVM. *Risico's PFAS voor gezondheid en milieu*. https://www.rivm.nl/pfas/risicos-pfas-voor-gezondheid-en-milieu

RIVM. *Vragen en antwoorden over te veel blootstelling aan PFAS (EFSA-grenswaarde).* https://www.rivm.nl/pfas/vraag-antwoord/efsa

RIVM. *Gezondheid en PFAS rond Chemours Westerschelde*. https://www.rivm.nl/pfas/gezondheid-en-pfas-rond-chemours-westerschelde

GGD ZEELAND. *PFAS en gezondheidsrisico's*. https://www.ggdzeeland.nl/pfas-en-gezondheidsadviezen/pfas-en-gezondheidsrisicos/

VLAAMS PARLEMENT. *Onderzoekscommissie PFAS-PFOS (23 juni 2021 - 30 maart 2022).* https://www.vlaamsparlement.be/nl/parlementair-werk/plenaire-vergadering-en-commissies/commissies/onderzoekscommissie-pfas-pfos-23

OVAM. *3M-dossier Zwijndrecht*. https://ovam.vlaanderen.be/3m-dossier-zwijndrecht

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ZEMBLA / BNNVARA. *Dit is ons dossier over PFAS.* https://www.bnnvara.nl/zembla/artikelen/dit-is-ons-dossier-over-pfas

ZEMBLA / BNNVARA. *Plassen en sloten in wijde omtrek Chemours-fabriek zwaar vervuild met PFAS*. https://www.bnnvara.nl/zembla/artikelen/chemours-dupont-pfas-pfoa-vervuiling-verspreiding

BINNENLANDS BESTUUR. *PFAS-onderzoek gestart bij Chemours en Westerschelde*. https://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/ruimte-en-milieu/pfas-onderzoek-gestart-bij-chemours-en-westerschelde

PFAS kaartNederland.nl. *PFAS in Zeeland: de Westerschelde als vergaarbak.* https://www.pfaskaartnederland.nl/blog/pfas-zeeland-westerschelde

GOFUNDME (Arieke van Liere). *NIET PLUIS! Documentaire over PFAS in hobbykip-eieren*. https://www.gofundme.com/f/niet-pluis-documentaire-over-pfas-in-hobbykipeieren

MIDDELBURGSE VEERSCHE BODE. Hobbykippen maken filmfestivaldebuut bij Film by the Sea. https://www.middelburgseveersebode.nl/nieuws/algemeen/174212/hobbykippen-maken-filmfestivaldebuut-bij-film-by-the-sea-nooi

VLISSINGSE BODE. Hobbykippen maken filmfestivaldebuut bij Film by the Sea (voice-over Ruben Smit, landelijke tour). https://www.vlissingsebode.nl/nieuws/algemeen/174216/hobbykippen-maken-filmfestivaldebuut-bij-film-by-the-sea-nooi