PFAS Regulations

What already applies – and what is coming?

Updated overview with supplements · Focus on Europe and Austria · Reference date: 29 October 2026

PFAS are governed by several sets of rules: for substances and products, food, drinking water, water bodies, wastewater, soil and waste. There is no single general PFAS law and no limit value that is identical for all applications. [1–3]

The key distinction:

A product limit is not a drinking water limit. An environmental quality standard for water bodies is not a general wastewater limit. A limit of quantification describes measurement sensitivity; a reporting threshold determines the reporting obligation, not the permitted discharge quantity.

Use and depth of review:

Working document for content orientation within PFAS-SOLVE, not a complete legal register. The summary combines the regulatory overview provided with the legal sources additionally consulted in the discussion. National and international information has not all been independently verified against current primary sources. Exemptions, transitional periods and permits must be checked on a case-by-case basis.

1. Substances and products

Area	Values / existing rule	Timing / change
PFOS, PFOA, PFHxS	Largely banned. In principle 0.025 mg/kg = 25 µg/kg each for the substance concerned including its salts; in principle 1 mg/kg for the respective group of related compounds.	Trace thresholds for unintentional contamination, not a permission for intentional addition. Note special rules and exemptions. [6]
Food contact packaging	25 µg/kg per targeted PFAS analysed; 250 µg/kg for the sum of targeted PFAS analysed; 50 mg/kg including polymeric PFAS.	Since 12 Aug 2026. The first two thresholds exclude polymeric PFAS. Precursors may be relevant for the sum determination. Total fluorine is not automatically PFAS. [7]
PFHxA in certain consumer products	25 µg/kg for PFHxA and its salts or 1 mg/kg for PFHxA-related substances, measured in the homogeneous material.	Since 10 Oct 2026 for, among others, consumer clothing, footwear, certain paper/board food contact materials, consumer mixtures and cosmetics. Further consumer textiles from 10 Oct 2027. [8]
Firefighting foams	Group-wide PFAS threshold: 1 mg/l sum of all PFAS. In addition, PFHxA rules: 25 µg/kg or 1 mg/kg.	First group-wide bans since October 2026; broad application from 23 Oct 2030, individual exemptions longer. PFHxA in civil aviation from 10 Oct 2029. No wastewater limit. [8, 9]
C9–C14 PFCAs	Existing REACH restriction on manufacture, use and placing on the market, including salts and related substances.	Substance- and use-specific exemptions. Shown in this overview without additional, individually unverified concentration values.
Long-chain PFCAs C9–C21	Extension of the Stockholm Convention list; not to be equated with the existing C9–C14 REACH rule.	In principle from 16 Dec 2026; note party-specific particularities and national implementation. Check EU implementation and transitional periods against the specific legal act.
Toys	Ban on intentionally used PFAS.	Application from 1 Aug 2030.
General PFAS group restriction under REACH	No finally adopted general limit values or application deadlines yet.	Still in progress; not to be presented as an applicable general group ban.

National product rules: Since 2026, France has banned PFAS in certain product groups such as cosmetics, ski wax, consumer clothing, footwear and waterproofing agents; an extension to further textiles is planned for 2030. Since July 2026, Denmark has had additional rules for consumer clothing, footwear and waterproofing agents. Product scope, thresholds, exemptions and sell-off periods must be checked at national level.

2. Drinking water

The group of four consists of **PFOA, PFOS, PFNA and PFHxS**. Lower figures are only directly comparable where they refer to identical substances.

Jurisdiction	Already applies	Additionally coming
EU	Since 12 Jan 2026: 100 ng/l for 20 PFAS or 500 ng/l “PFAS Total”, depending on national implementation.	National tightening possible.
Austria	100 ng/l for 20 PFAS since 12 Jan 2026.	No additional stricter value stated.
Denmark	2 ng/l for four PFAS; in addition 100 ng/l for 22 PFAS.	Stricter national requirements already apply.
Sweden	Since 1 Jan 2026: 4 ng/l for four PFAS; in addition 100 ng/l for 21 PFAS.	Stricter national requirements already apply.
Germany	100 ng/l for 20 PFAS since 12 Jan 2026.	From 12 Jan 2028 additionally 20 ng/l for four PFAS.
Italy	20 ng/l for four PFAS since July 2026.	From 12 Jan 2027 additionally TFA: 10 µg/l = 10,000 ng/l.

3. Surface waters: rivers and lakes

Environmental quality standards already exist for PFOS. The adopted Directive (EU) 2026/805 extends the assessment to a group of 25 PFAS including TFA. The new values concern water quality, not, as a general rule, the effluent of an industrial installation. [2]

Matrix / requirement	Value or deadline	Interpretation
Water: annual average	0.0044 µg/l = 4.4 ng/l as the sum of PFOA equivalents.	Toxicity-weighted assessment, not a simple sum of individual concentrations.
Biota: organisms	0.077 µg/kg = 77 ng/kg as the sum of PFOA equivalents.	Different matrix and unit. The biota standard and application rules are particularly important for the relevant protection standard.
National transposition	By 22 Dec 2027.	Transposition into national law.
Water body objective	In principle 22 Dec 2039 for newly added substances.	No licence for additional inputs until 2039; deterioration must be prevented and measures are required.

The water and biota values must be read together with the footnotes and application rules of the legal act. In particular, 4.4 ng/l must not be presented as the sole universal PFAS limit for water bodies or wastewater. [2]

4. Groundwater

Existing groundwater law requires protection against pollution. The new EU quality standards refer to the groundwater body, not directly to an industrial wastewater stream. [2]

New parameter	Quality standard
Sum of 20 PFAS	100 ng/l
Sum of four PFAS: PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHxS	4.4 ng/l

These parameters are not to be equated with the toxicity-weighted 25-PFAS assessment for surface water. [2]

Deadline	Meaning
22 Dec 2027	New quality standards take effect; supplementary monitoring must be established.
22 Dec 2030	Preliminary programme of measures for the newly regulated substances.
In principle 22 Dec 2039	Target date for good chemical status with regard to newly added substances.

Whether a contaminated site must be investigated, inputs reduced or remediation measures carried out depends on the specific case and the applicable regulations. [2]

5. Wastewater: industry and municipal treatment plants

Existing obligations in Austria: According to the Environment Agency Austria (Umweltbundesamt), PFOS emissions from selected large industrial dischargers and municipal treatment plants above 10,000 population equivalents have been measured since 2023 and reported since 2024. The required limit of quantification of 1 ng/l describes measurement sensitivity – not a permissible discharge value. [4]

For certain waste treatment facilities, there are additional PFOS/PFOA measurement obligations, in principle twice a year. Further investigations may result from regulations, official decisions and discharge conditions. There is no general obligation for every operator to measure all PFAS. [5]

New EU requirement	Timing / meaning
Measurement methodology for PFAS sum parameters	The Commission is to establish the methodology for “PFAS Total” and “Sum of PFAS” in urban wastewater by 2 Jan 2027. A deadline for adoption is not the same as an already available methodology.
National transposition of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive	By 31 Jul 2027. Additional monitoring of concentrations and loads in the influent and effluent of relevant plants from 10,000 population equivalents.
PFAS sum monitoring	Explicitly for discharges into catchment areas used for drinking water abstraction; application depends on the available EU measurement methodology. No general start of measurement for all connected industrial operators.
Source tracing	In the case of relevant pollutant findings: identify sources and review discharge conditions. This may lead to further investigations and reduction measures.

The legal basis for these new obligations is Directive (EU) 2024/3019. A general numerical PFAS limit at the treatment plant inlet is not strictly necessary for source tracing. [1]

Fourth treatment stage and producer responsibility: The directive also introduces requirements for the advanced removal of micropollutants. This does not imply guaranteed removal of all PFAS. PFAS monitoring and the requirements for the fourth treatment stage must be read separately. Extended producer responsibility concerns certain pharmaceutical and cosmetics manufacturers; it is not a general PFAS levy for all industrial operators. [1]

6. Industrial Emissions Portal: reporting of PFAS loads

Substance	Reporting threshold for releases to water
PFOA including its salts	Above 1 kg/year
PFHxS including its salts	Above 1 kg/year

Only for covered installations and activities. The reporting threshold is not a permitted discharge quantity; permit requirements may also apply below the threshold. [3, 10]

Separation in time: 2027 is the relevant first data/reporting year; the new portal rules apply from 2028. Data collection for a year, subsequent submission and compliance with discharge conditions are distinct processes. Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/2267 specifies the first reporting year. [3, 11]

Load = concentration × wastewater volume. A low concentration combined with a large volume can result in a relevant annual load. Reporting requirements should therefore not be understood solely as concentration values.

7. How does a specific requirement for an operator arise?

Step	Meaning
1. Record the pollution	Relevant substances and inputs are measured or determined using the permitted methods.
2. Assess water bodies and sources	Water quality standards, pressures and possible industrial sources are considered together.
3. Review discharge conditions	Authorities or competent bodies review the applicable requirements and permits; conditions may be adjusted.
4. Define measures	Depending on the case, additional monitoring, avoidance, substitution, pre-treatment or other input reduction. No automatic general treatment obligation merely because a reporting threshold is exceeded.

This chain explains the interplay between water quality, source control and installation-specific emission limitation. It does not replace a case-by-case decision. [1, 2, 10]

Reporting obligation ≠ discharge limit ≠ automatic treatment obligation.

8. Food and feed

Binding maximum PFAS levels already apply to certain foods under Regulation (EU) 2023/915. These cover in particular PFOS, PFOA, PFNA and PFHxS, with individual and sum values in certain foods of animal origin, e.g. eggs, fish, meat and offal. The specific figures depend on the food and category; there is no uniform PFAS limit for food. [12]

Binding sampling and analysis requirements must be distinguished from mere monitoring recommendations or indicative values. An indicative investigation value is not automatically a marketing ban. Feed monitoring is likewise not to be equated with a general binding maximum level.

For operators, contamination of water, soil or feed can therefore also create a marketing risk for food. Food categories and the annexes applicable in each case must be checked separately for specific applications.

9. Soil and contaminated sites

The Soil Monitoring Directive (EU) 2025/2360 extends the framework for soil monitoring and the handling of potentially contaminated sites. It has been in force since December 2025; national transposition and further specification will follow. Identification, investigation and risk-based assessment are not the same as a single EU-wide PFAS remediation limit.

Whether a site must be investigated or remediated depends, among other things, on national law, the protected assets concerned, use and dispersion pathways. Soil, groundwater and wastewater are connected, but their assessment criteria are not interchangeable. National guidelines or assessment values must be classified according to their legal effect: a guide value is not automatically a statutory limit. [2]

10. PFAS in waste

Substance group	POP waste threshold already in force
PFOA or PFHxS	1 mg/kg each
Corresponding related compounds	40 mg/kg

Above the relevant thresholds, destruction or irreversible transformation is in principle required; statutory exemptions and specific treatment routes must be observed. Waste thresholds must not be confused with the lower trace thresholds for products. [6]

Separation from water is not the same as destruction. Contaminated concentrates, filters, sludges and other residues require suitable further treatment. Shipment rules and technical guidelines under the Basel Convention may also be relevant.

11. Outside Europe – compact overview

Region	Values / current situation	Next steps
USA	Drinking water rule: PFOA/PFOS 4 ng/l each; PFHxS/ PFNA/HFPO-DA 10 ng/l each; additional mixture assessment.	Compliance in principle 2029. Postponement for PFOA/PFOS to 2031 and withdrawal of further values proposed. Product bans vary by state.

Region	Values / current situation	Next steps
Japan	Binding since 1 Apr 2026: 50 ng/l as the sum of PFOS + PFOA.	Further substance bans.
China	PFOA 80 ng/l and PFOS 40 ng/l as reference values, not as equivalent binding drinking water limits.	Further product restrictions.
Taiwan	New drinking water values adopted.	From 1 Jul 2027: 50 ng/l for PFOA + PFOS; 70 ng/l for PFOS + PFHxS.
Global South	No uniform regional limits; international agreements and differing national implementation.	Extension of the Stockholm Convention list in principle from end of 2026; further national rules often still in draft.

This international information has not been fully re-verified for this document against the respective national primary sources. The Global South and Asia are not uniform legal areas.

12. Conclusion and limits of this overview

PFAS are already regulated. Further substances and products are being covered, water standards extended and measurement and reporting obligations expanded. New requirements do not always mean lower numerical values: often, additional substances, products or installations are included.

For an operator, substance use, product group, wastewater stream, discharge route, location and specific permits are decisive. Neither a drinking water value nor a portal reporting threshold alone answers what this operator may discharge.

Precisely because requirements are expanding step by step and only become concrete case by case, it pays to address detection, separation and destruction before time pressure sets in. An initiative such as **PFAS-SOLVE** provides a shared framework for this: members bring in their own PFAS challenges as use cases, gain access to all findings and thus secure a knowledge advantage before new obligations take effect.

Before external or legally relevant use: check national start dates, exemptions, proposed US changes, specific substance entries and current permits against the relevant primary sources. This document is an orientation aid, not a complete verified legal database.

Sources and legal basis

[1] Directive (EU) 2024/3019 concerning urban wastewater treatment, in particular Art. 14, 21, 33 and the provisions on advanced treatment and producer responsibility. **Open source**.

[2] Directive (EU) 2026/805 and the amended Water Framework, Groundwater and Environmental Quality Standards Directives; note annexes and application rules. **Open source**.

[3] Regulation (EU) 2024/1244 on the Industrial Emissions Portal, in particular operator reporting and Annex II. **Open source**.

[4] Environment Agency Austria (Umweltbundesamt): Questions and answers on PFAS, in particular wastewater and emissions register. **Open source**.

[5] Austrian AEV Abfallbehandlung (wastewater emissions ordinance for waste treatment); additionally the Indirekteinleiterverordnung (Indirect Dischargers Ordinance), in particular the selection of relevant constituents and discharge consent. **Open source**.

[6] POP Regulation (EU) 2019/1021 and amendments, including (EU) 2022/2400, (EU) 2023/1608 and (EU) 2025/718. **Open source**.

[7] Regulation (EU) 2025/40 on packaging and packaging waste, Art. 5(5). **Open source**.

[8] Regulation (EU) 2024/2462 on the PFHxA restriction under REACH. **Open source**.

[9] Regulation (EU) 2025/1988 on PFAS in firefighting foams. **Open source**.

[10] Industrial Emissions Directive 2010/75/EU, as amended by Directive (EU) 2024/1785. **Open source**.

[11] Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/2267; specification of reporting and the first reporting years. **Open source**.

[12] Regulation (EU) 2023/915 on maximum levels for certain contaminants in food; check specific food categories and current annexes. **Open source**.

Forever does not end by itself.

It ends when we start working together to end it technically.

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