

PFAS Still Abundant in Apparel, Study Finds



OUTERWEAR AND OTHER APPAREL FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE HAS BEEN FOUND TO CONTAIN PFAS CHEMICALS. PICTURE ALLIANCE / GETTY IMAGES

Despite calls for bans and commitments from brands, outerwear products around the world are still laden with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), new research shows.

Jackets and other apparel purchased in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America were found to contain the “forever chemicals,” which have been linked to severe health conditions including cancers, according to a study from Arnika, the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), and 13 IPEN members including international public interest NGOs. The groups tested items from 13 countries, finding that many were marketed to children and came into direct contact with the skin.

Typically found in outerwear products made to stand up against rain and harsh weather conditions, PFAS imbue fabrics with water- and stain-resistance. “PFAS are widely used in

textiles and people can be exposed when they wear jackets and clothing,” IPEN global researcher and study author Jitka Straková said.

“It’s especially troubling to find PFAS in children’s products, since children may be more vulnerable to PFAS exposure,” she added, pointing to a 2022 review from the American Academy of Pediatrics that found a likely association between PFAS and medical concerns like “elevated blood cholesterol levels, dyslipidemias, slightly lowered birth weight, and reduced antibody response to certain vaccines/infections.”

“As long as industry continues making PFAS the health threats to our children and families will continue,” Straková said.

Apparel from Germany, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, Serbia, Montenegro, Kenya, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the U.S. was tested for 58 types of PFAS and for extractable organic fluorine (EOF), a measurement that correlates with the use of any PFAS, the groups wrote. Out of 72 samples subjected to testing, 47 (65.3 percent) were found to contain PFAS or EOF levels that indicated their presence.

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Fifty-six jackets were tested, and 35 (62.5 percent) tested positive for PFAS. PFOA, a specific chemical that has been banned in 180 countries, was the most common PFAS found in outdoor jackets, with a presence detected in 17 products. Sixteen jackets contained PFAS at levels that exceed proposed EU safety limits.

Other clothing items also contained the compounds, from T-shirts to swimwear, pants and other garments. Out of 16 pieces tested, 11 contained PFAS or contained the requisite EOF levels needed to indicate their presence. PFDA, another PFAS chemical that has faced restrictions in the EU and has been recommended for a global ban, was found in 17 garments, from jackets to raincoats and an apron.

Overall, 15 types of PFAS were analyzed across the test subjects, and fluorotelomer alcohols (FTOHs) were found in the highest concentrations. The tests were unable to detect sidechain fluorotelomer-based polymers (SFPs), a type of polymeric PFAS commonly used to provide water and stain repellency. "However, we can infer that SFPs were used in certain textiles in the study because SFPs are known to degrade and form PFOA... and other toxic PFAS that were detected in several samples," the study said.

The study author said a global ban on the chemicals is essential to halting both environmental releases and human exposure.

Some PFAS chemicals have faced global or national bans, but there are thousands more that are currently in use. According to Straková, PFAS chemicals are often evaluated one by one or in small groups, and reviews can take several years. While some U.S. states like California, Maine, Washington and Colorado have banned PFAS chemicals as a class, "there are no comprehensive global regulations to protect the environment and human health from all PFAS," she said.

The study also underscored that apparel brands can create effective outerwear without the use of PFAS. Twenty-one jackets advertised as water- and stain-proof, including options by The North Face and Black Diamond, were found to be PFAS-free, using other agents to achieve the desired protections. Both companies have committed publicly to axing PFAS from their lines, along with other apparel and outdoor brands and retailers like REI, Patagonia, Deuter, Jack Wolfskin, Marmot, Ortovox, Polartec, and Vaude.

Link

<https://sourcingjournal.com/sustainability/sustainability-news/pfas-chemicals-outerwear-outdoor-childrens-apparel-waterproof-ipen-473700/>

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Vietnam to Hike Minimum Wage by 6% in 2024



WORKERS SEW ON A PRODUCTION LINE AT A GARMENT FACTORY IN HO CHI MINH CITY. STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES)

Vietnam is set to raise its minimum wage by 6 percent next year, pending government approval.

The National Wage Council voted unanimously on Wednesday to raise the Southeast Asian nation's monthly floor to between 3.45 million-4.96 million dong (\$141.80-\$203.86), depending on the region, beginning in July. Workers currently receive 3.25 million-4.68 million dong (\$133.58-\$192.36).

Le Van Thanh, chairman of the council and vice minister of labor, told reporters that the hike guarantees "harmonious" benefits for workers and businesses. The figure is a compromise: The Vietnam General Confederation of Labor, the country's sole national trade union center, had proposed an increase of 6.5-7.3 percent, citing inflationary

pressures that have jacked up the cost of food, housing and medicine. The Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which represents corporations, on the other hand, suggested that a 4.5-5 percent jump would be fairer for business, since factories continue to struggle with wobbly demand from the United States and Europe.

Last month, the Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association (VITAS) said that textile and apparel exports to date have added up to roughly \$40 billion, or 9 percent less than in 2022. Vu Duc Giang, the trade group's chairman, characterized this as a win amid challenging economic conditions and a surfeit of inventory due to weaker consumer sentiment. He also expected revenue from textile and apparel exports to reach \$44 billion in 2024 after orders rallied in the final quarter.

VITAS said that Vietnam's largest importers of fabric and garments are the United States, with a turnover of \$11 billion, Japan with \$3 billion, the Republic of Korea with \$2.43 billion and the European Union with \$2.9 billion. But the world's third-largest exporter of clothing after China and Bangladesh also expanded its export markets to 104 new countries and territories in 2023, diversifying its income streams.

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Still, the wage increase comes as Vietnam contended with a 4.27 percent uptick in inflation in the first 11 months of the year. A survey of workers and their families by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor found that the cost of living had risen by an average of 19 percent from 2022. Falling orders have also had a knock-on effect, resulting in garment manufacturers laying off some 70,000 workers in the first five months of 2023 alone, according to the labor ministry.

Among those who had to let thousands of employees go was Garmex Saigon, which saw a nearly 97 percent hit in income in the first nine months. "The company will lose a lot, so the company has reorganized its apparatus, continued to cut labor and temporarily stopped production to minimize losses," the technical outerwear specialist wrote in an earnings update to the Ho Chi Minh City Stock Exchange in November.

In August, Taiwan-based Pou Chen, whose clientele includes high-rollers like Adidas and Nike cut 1,200 permanent positions at its Pouyuen Vietnam Co. plant in Ho Chi Minh City. This was its third round of layoffs following the loss of 2,300 jobs in February and 5,700 in May. "Pouyuen Vietnam said the job cuts are due to no recovery in terms of orders," VnExpress reported. "Only a few clients made orders."

Rival hub Bangladesh has gone through its own minimum-wage adjustment process, albeit one that was and continues to be contentious because of strains between workers, suppliers and buyers about who is ultimately responsible for employees' salaries. And despite calls for a review, the government's gazette notification on Thursday appears to have settled the matter: The new monthly minimum wage will stay at 12,500 Bangladeshi taka (\$113.95), just over half of the 23,000 taka (\$209.66) that unions, workers and some U.S. lawmakers were asking to put millions of workers above the poverty line.

Link

<https://sourcingjournal.com/topics/labor/vietnam-minimum-wage-2024-orders-garment-workers-485515/>

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EU CLP revision in final stages after Parliament, Council of Ministers agreement

Compromise text brings MOCS exemption; changes broadly welcomed



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The European Council of Ministers and Parliament have reached a provisional agreement on the Commission's long-awaited proposal to revise the CLP regulation, paving the way for imminent entry into force.

The two bodies endorsed the Commission's final proposal, which amends the legislation from 2008, and included so-called 'compromise' provisions in a 5 December text. The final text, known as the compromise text, clarifies the rules on labelling substances and the required information for online selling.

This text would bring in the following changes:

- websites must display the hazardous properties of their products;
- companies have to provide clearer labelling of hazardous chemicals, including for online sales. The revision introduces advertising requirements and a minimum font size;
- businesses have the choice to use fold-out labels and digital labelling, while important safety information and hazard pictograms would remain on the packaging;

- new rules for refillable products to support the safe sale of household chemicals in bulk; and
- poison centres would receive better information more quickly during medical emergencies.

Under them, the Commission said it would be able to develop classification proposals on potentially hazardous substances, which would "speed up the pace" of their identification.

The CLP revision is an important objective of the EU's chemicals strategy for sustainability.

Reception

NGOs welcomed the institutional agreement on the Commission's proposal.

Monique Goyens, director general of BEUC, said the new chemical labels "will be easier to read for consumers, helping them to make more informed purchasing choices, off and online".

The consumer body praised the decision to keep essential information for health, safety and the environment on the label, and establish strict rules for 'digital labels' via a QR code, "which in the view of consumer organisations can only complement, but never replace, the physical label".

Natacha Cingotti, programme lead for health and chemicals for the Health and Environmental Alliance (HEAL), said the three EU institutions reached "an overall protective agreement on the reform of the CLP legislation in a timely way".

In particular, HEAL welcomed the "proper referencing" of the newly added hazard classes for endocrine disrupting, bioaccumulating, persistent and mobile chemicals throughout the text, as well as the Commission allowing classifications for entire groups of chemicals instead of one-by-one assessments.

Downstream users group DUCC and the association of the European Adhesive and Sealant Industry (FEICA) said they supported exemptions for small packaging, provisions for the increased use of fold-out labels, and efforts to increase compliance for online sales. But they repeated concerns over the wide-ranging impact of the new provisions.

Any change will "have a knock-on effect on various sectors, including but not limited to biocides, pesticides, detergents, cosmetics, toys and medical devices", the industry groups said. This "has been greatly underestimated in the European Commission's impact assessment, especially with regard to minimum font size requirements for labelling", they said.

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Next year, DUCG and FEICA said they want authorities to work with downstream user formulators to allow continued use of multilingual labels, despite the CLP amendments, to allow operators access to the entire single market.

MOCS

In their compromise text on the Commission's proposal, the European Parliament and Council of Ministers agreed to update rules for classifying more than one constituent substances (MOCS), with the EU executive set to review the scientific evidence after five years.

"This is a key development to support the future of the natural ingredients used in cosmetics and fragrances, which goes hand in hand with the EU's objective to boost the bioeconomy," John Chave, director general of Cosmetics Europe, said.

Maintaining classification rules as they stand within CLP for these natural substances "was critical to avoid the overclassification of a number [them] with a cascading effect on their continued use and authorisation in cosmetic products", the trade body said.

The agreement also "enshrines the need for clear scientific reasoning for the grouping of substances for harmonised classification and labelling", Aurélie Perrichet, Europe regional director for International Fragrance Association (IFRA), said.

The measure helps to put the grouping approach into operation and preserve legal clarity, she added.

The European Parliament and Council of Ministers will now formally adopt the new regulation, with its entry into force taking place 20 days after publication in the EU's *Official Journal*.

Link

<https://product.enhesa.com/914302/eu-clp-revision-in-final-stages-after-parliament-council-of-ministers-agreement>

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