



The Business Case for Eliminating PFAS Chemicals from Consumer Products

Many businesses have taken the lead to make products safer, more sustainable and free from harmful chemicals, including the class of chemicals known as PFAS. Listening to the demands of consumers and governments, these manufacturers and retailers have found, over the past five years, that making and selling products without harmful chemicals is both safer and profitable.

Responsible manufacturers and retailers have adopted alternatives to PFAS, per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances used to greaseproof, stainproof or waterproof consumer products, including cookware, apparel, furniture, carpeting and food packaging. Threats to human health and the environment are major reasons why using alternatives to PFAS is important.

Responsible businesses support regulation of PFAS to:

- *Provide a level playing field* for businesses that choose to manufacture, distribute, and sell PFAS-free products to compete with businesses that do not factor human health and the environment into their decisions.
- *Support market expansion of responsible companies* that are innovating safer and greener products.
- *Increase consumer trust* in the marketplace by letting them know which products are PFAS-free.

Firms in many industry sectors are eliminating PFAS and other harmful chemicals from their products.

Furniture and Carpeting | Buyers for large health care, corporate and government facilities demand that products they purchase be free of harmful chemicals. In response, furniture manufacturers are removing PFAS and other harmful chemicals from stainproofing treatments. For example:

- In 2016, 66% of furniture purchased by **University Hospitals** in Ohio was free of formaldehyde, flame retardants, PFAS, PVC, and antimicrobials.
- **Hackensack Meridian Health** has implemented a chemical purchasing policy that eliminates formaldehyde, PFAS, PVC, antimicrobials, and all flame retardants from furnishings.¹



- In 2017, 18 companies — representing over \$100 million in purchasing power — signed a pledge to purchase furniture free of PFAS and many other chemicals of concern. These firms include **LinkedIn, Genentech, Pacific Gas & Electric, Partners HealthCare, Perkins + Will** and others.²
- **IKEA, Crate and Barrel,³ and Room & Board⁴** have eliminated the use of fluorinated stain treatments.
- Although PFAS are widely used for stain release in carpeting, leading carpet manufacturer **Engineered Floors** has never used PFAS treatment on its solution-dyed polyester products.



What are PFAS?

PFAS are chemicals that are resistant to heat, water and oil and are used in many industrial and consumer products, such as carpeting, food wrappings, and textiles.



What is the concern about PFAS?

While scientists are still learning about the effects on health, some scientific studies have linked higher levels of PFAS with high cholesterol, weakened immune systems, and compromised growth and learning in children.

¹ Center for Environmental Health, https://www.ceh.org/safer_office/

² Center for Environmental Health, https://www.ceh.org/safer_office/

³ Green Science Policy Institute. "Fluorinated Alternatives: Myths versus Facts."

⁴ Steve Freeman, Vendor Resource Manager, Room & Board.

BUSINESS CASE

- **Minnesota's Sustainable Procurement Program** for state agency purchasing restricts PFASs and other chemicals of concern.⁵
- Nearly 400 retailers, designers, and manufacturers have signed a **Pledge to ASK** about harmful chemicals (including fluorinated stain treatments) in the products they make, use and sell through the Sustainable Furnishings Council and the American Sustainable Business Council's **What's It Made Of? Initiative**.

Foodware | PFAS are commonly used in non-stick cookware and as a grease and/or water barrier in paper food packaging. These retailers and certification agencies have taken action to eliminate PFAS from foodware:

- **Whole Foods** announced the removal of PFAS from certain containers in December, 2018 and pledged to work with their suppliers to "find and scale new compostable packaging options."⁶
- **Trader Joe's** announced in 2018 that it will ask vendors to avoid PFAS in packaging.⁷
- **The Biodegradable Product Institute (BPI)**, which provides third-party certification for compostable foodware products, will include a new requirement as of January 2020 that compostable products be free of intentionally-added PFAS chemicals. BPI certification will be required for compostable foodware by the **City of San Francisco** as of January 2020.
- **The Compost Manufacturing Alliance (CMA)**, field tests foodware products through members' composting facilities, including at the Cedar Grove facility in Washington state, to determine their feasibility as feedstock in municipal composting facilities. As of January 2020, CMA will not accept products for field testing that contain over 100

73% of small business owners support government regulation to ensure the products companies buy and sell are non-toxic.

<http://asbcouncil.org/toxic-chemicals-poll>.

parts-per-million fluorine and they expect their list of compostable products will be PFAS-free by 2021.

Textiles | PFAS are frequently used in clothing for water-proofing and stainproofing.

- Most (72%) of the 80 companies that pledged to eliminate 11 priority chemical groups of concern from their manufacturing supply chain report complete elimination of PFAS.⁸
 - Outdoor clothing companies **Paroma** and **Rotauf** were 100% PFAS-free since before 2016.
 - Seven retailers, including **Aldi** have eliminated all PFAS.
 - Major clothing brands that have eliminated all PFAS include **Levi's**, **H&M**, **Fast Retailing**, **Limited Brands**, **Valentino**, **Mango**, **Esprit**, **Primark** and others. **Benetton** and **Burberry** have eliminated over 99% of PFAS.
 - **Nike** has set a goal to eliminate PFAS by 2021.
- Outdoor brands **Jack Wolfskin** and **The North Face** have committed to 100% non-fluorinated durable water-repellent use in apparel by 2019 and 2020 respectively.⁹
- Despite challenges, **Gore-Tex**, the leading supplier of outdoor waterproofing technology, is on target to meeting its commitment to eliminate PFAS from all consumer fabrics by 2022.^{10, 11}
- **Target** Corporation has a goal to eliminate PFAS from their store brand textile products by 2022.¹² ★

The AMERICAN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK is a coalition of business organizations and companies advancing market solutions and public policies to support a sustainable economy.

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⁵ Minnesota's Participating Addendum to the NASPO Office furniture contract.

⁶ Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, "Whole Foods, Trader Joe's pledge initial action on toxic PFAS," December 2018.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Greenpeace, July 2018, "Destination Zero: Seven Years of Detoxing The Clothing Industry."

⁹ Chemical Watch, "The extreme challenge of PFCs," March 7, 2019.

¹⁰ Greenpeace, July 2018, "Destination Zero: Seven Years of Detoxing The Clothing Industry."

¹¹ Stringer L, Chemical Watch, February 28, 2019, "Gore-tex struggles to stay wedded to Teflon (PTFE) and fluorinated chemicals," #PFAS. Chemical Watch, February 28, 2019.

¹² Target 2018 Corporate Responsibility Report.

