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## ABO-Group Environment sets up free information line to address the concerns of citizens

At the beginning of last year, we learned about the word COVID-19. This year we learned about a new word: PFAS. As market leader in the field of soil research and as company that was the first to raise the alarm in December last year with an article by our CEO Frank De Palmenaer in 'De Tijd': ['A wave of covid-like pollution is heading our way'](#), we are now trying to help the worried citizens in a structural way. As there are now so many questions about PFAS, we at ABO want to provide answers. We try to give advice within our speciality and expertise: the soil. We will do this through a free ABO-PFAS info line (0800 26 166), where both individuals and professionals can ask all of their questions about potential soil contamination.

PFAS (poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances) refers to some 6 000 chemical substances, the common denominator being that they are extremely harmful and difficult to break down. The media have been reporting on this for several weeks now, but the reports often lack correct and concrete data. ABO is an independent soil remediation expert whose expertise stretches back to the start of the soil remediation decree, now just over 25 years ago. Every day, ABO and its 100 employees take soil and water samples from dozens of locations, which are analysed and integrated according to the regulations in force. Based on this, its experts give further advice in order to provide a tailor-made solution for each specific soil contamination. ABO-Group also considers it to be its social responsibility to offer advice from its area of expertise wherever possible. The main focus lies on its knowledge of soil and all its aspects.

"We are now systematically trying to take samples from existing customers, subject to their approval, in order to detect PFAS", says Frank De Palmenaer, CEO of ABO-Group Environment. "By analogy with the Netherlands and other countries, we can expect to find hundreds of hotspots in Flanders. The sooner we know this, the sooner we can take relevant measures. Today, we are working hard to map locations where PFAS contamination can be found. Mapping these contaminated areas allows us to support the policy and set up a comprehensive inventory for Flanders as soon as possible. Apart from all the debates that are currently going on concerning the subject, this is how we are trying to take the first step towards a global solution."

More specifically, a database could be set up using this data that would map out the current situation in Flanders and the potential risk locations. An important note is that today's discussion is reduced to PFOS/PFOA, but that the entire group of PFAS substances needs to be examined. "PFOS may no longer be produced today, but it has been replaced by all kinds of other PFAS

compounds, many of which are likely to be toxic as well," emphasises Jan De Vos, PFAS expert at ABO-Group.

In the meantime, ABO-Group is entering into dialogue with the various institutions, OVAM, VITO and the political authorities in order to share the knowledge it has acquired. The group emphasises that its approach is pragmatic: "We want to apply our knowledge to finding the solution, and then it will be up to others to work out who is responsible for this," emphasises the group's CEO. "We are already reaching out for constructive cooperation with governments and researchers".

### About ABO-Group Environment

ABO-Group is a specialised engineering company focused on geotechnical engineering, the environment and soil remediation. Through its consultancy and testing & monitoring departments, the ABO-Group is active in Belgium, the Netherlands and France, as well as internationally. ABO-Group guarantees its customers a sustainable solution. For a more detailed description of the operations of the group, please consult the ABO-Group website ([www.abo-group.eu](http://www.abo-group.eu)).

#### For more information:

Frank De Palmenaer  
CEO ABO-GROUP Environment NV  
frank.depalmenaer@abo-group.eu  
T +32 (0)9 242 88 88

#### ABO-PFAS Hotline

+32 (0)800 26 166