

Occupation Road Allotments

Produce Sampling Results and Summary – March 2025

Introduction

Wyre Council requested the Environment Agency inspect soil around the Thornton facility due to concerns about historic emissions and potential PFOA deposition. The inspection, conducted between September 2024 and January 2025, focused on public land near the facility, including the Occupation Road Allotments.

The inspection of the [Occupation Road](#) allotments was carried out in three stages, progressively becoming more detailed, building on the findings of the preceding stage. 163 soil samples were taken from 43 hand-dug pits at varying depths (up to 600mm). Produce such as leeks, sprouts, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, beetroot, and kale were also tested.

Findings

All soil samples reported detectable PFOA concentrations. The maximum was 20.2µg/kg with an average of 5.92µg/kg, exceeding the precautionary screening value of 1.4µg/kg. PFOA levels were found in most vegetables tested, with beetroot, kale, chard, and cabbage showing the highest concentrations.

UK Food Standards Agency Assessment

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) assessed the results, noting that PFOA concentrations appear to be elevated in the majority of vegetables tested. The FSA stated that regular consumption of large quantities of these vegetables could significantly increase PFOA exposure, potentially resulting in the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) derived tolerable weekly intake (TWI) for PFAS being exceeded by up to 8 times when taking into account average background intake from the rest of the diet.

It should be noted that a proportion of the UK population, as well as people in other countries, already exceed this TWI from their regular dietary intake of PFAS.

In addition, a UK scientific committee, the Committee on Toxicity, is currently conducting its own assessment of PFAS. The risks are therefore currently uncertain. However, people who regularly eat large amounts of vegetables and fruit grown on the Occupations Road allotments are likely to be significantly increasing their dietary intakes of PFAS. Occasional or modest consumption is unlikely to greatly affect long term background intakes of PFAS. allotments are likely to be significantly increasing their dietary intakes of PFAS.

Official advice from the Food Standards Agency is to wash and peel home grown produce to remove soil dust and bacteria before eating.

Wyre Council precautionary advice

Wyre Council has issued precautionary advice for those who grow their own fruit and vegetables and who live within 1km of Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone. As levels of PFOA in sampled produce is

higher than desirable, this advice is to consider a 'better safe than sorry' approach to eating home grown produce until further information becomes available.