

We can imagine that you might have some questions about our climate lawsuit against Shell. Here we answer some of the more important questions.

1. Why this lawsuit?

We initiated this lawsuit to protect the climate. Shell is the cause of major damage to the climate. As one of the world's largest polluters, Shell bears its own responsibility for preventing the destruction of our society and climate. Since Shell refuses to take any responsibility itself, Friends of the Earth Netherlands and its co-plaintiffs have decided to take Shell to court.

2. Can I still participate as a co-plaintiff?

No. Because the case has already begun, you can no longer sign on as a co-plaintiff. But if you still want to support us, you can help us defray the high costs of the court case by donating. But you can also donate time. Groups throughout the country are also busy organising crowdfunding events.

3. What is the goal of this lawsuit?

Our goal is to stop Shell from causing further serious climate damage. We are asking the judge to force Shell to stop being a major cause of climate change. Our climate lawsuit is unique because we are not asking Shell for compensation, but for it to change course. We are demanding that Shell commit to reducing its CO2 emissions by 45% by the year 2030.

4. What are your chances of winning?

Of course we're convinced that we're right, otherwise we would have never pursued this case. We have investigated the options with various lawyers and climate experts and think we really do have a good chance and think our prospects look very promising.

5. Why Shell?

Shell is the largest polluter in the Netherlands, emitting more than 2 times the total CO2 of the entire Netherlands combined. If Shell were to stop polluting, it would have a dramatic effect! Because Shell's headquarters is located in the Netherlands and because this headquarters is responsible for Shell's climate policy, we decided to launch our lawsuit here in the Netherlands.

6. What if Friends of the Earth Netherlands wins?

That would be great news for all of us – for ourselves and our children. Shell will need to amend its policies to ensure that it dramatically reduces its CO2 emissions. The judge has no jurisdiction over how Shell should go about it, but the company will certainly no longer be able to continue extracting as much oil and gas as it currently does. Even if Shell does decide to appeal, the ruling will certainly lead to more lawsuits worldwide and politicians and oil and gas companies will feel increased pressure to change course.

7. What are some of the alternatives to oil and gas?

To avert further disastrous climate change, it will be necessary to promptly convert our oil and gas production and consumption to sustainable energy sources. This is essential to ensure that the earth remain habitable. That is why we need to eliminate all CO₂ emissions by the year 2050. And besides, it's totally feasible! Denmark is focussing on becoming completely oil, gas and coal free by 2050. Costa Rica, Belize and France have all passed legislation that will limit oil and gas extraction. There are more and more countries that are swiftly converting to 100% renewable electricity. Rapid sustainable conversion is therefore feasible and imperative.

8. How can Shell help avert dangerous climate change?

People are switching to green energy, eating less meat and driving more electric cars. But as long as Shell continues extracting oil and gas and continues promoting fossil fuels, it will remain difficult for consumers to make sustainable choices. Shell has a lot of influence on our energy system. Their lobbying power influences decisions on, for example, new infrastructure, which includes pipelines, that could leave us dependent on gas and oil for decades to come. A powerful company like Shell plays an important role in determining the energy supply, and thus also determines the ability of consumers to make sustainable choices. If Shell were to opt for sustainability, it would make a huge difference.

9. Why doesn't Shell take climate change more seriously?

Shell's investments and investment plans reveal that the company still doesn't take climate change very seriously. For example, Shell will continue to focus on oil and gas extraction for the coming years, even though, to avert disastrous climate change, the vast majority of the known reserves must remain in the ground. Shell continues to invest approximately 95% of its funds in oil and gas – this is the problem, in other words – and less than 5% in solutions. Shell claims that it wants to reduce the carbon footprint of its products by 65% by 2050. However, this is not enough to achieve the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, although Shell would have us believe otherwise. Moreover, these plans are still not concrete goals, but mere ambitions. Experts and critics point out that Shell's plans are bringing dangerous climate change a step closer every day. So, Shell is not averting the climate crisis, but actually exacerbating it.

10. Is Shell actually contributing so much to climate change?

Shell is one of the 10 largest climate polluters in the world. Shell is historically responsible for one-fiftieth of the world's total emissions of CO₂ and methane in the period 1854 to 2018. The past cannot be changed, of course, and that is not the purpose of our lawsuit. We can, however, ensure that Shell adjusts its plans and stops causing dangerous climate change. Shell's current plans are, however, not helping to stop serious climate damage.

11. How can Shell become a sustainable company?

Shell has known for over 30 years that oil and gas extraction and consumption are the cause of catastrophic climate change. This was revealed by leaked internal Shell documents. If Shell wants to survive, it will have to switch very rapidly to alternative energy sources such as wind, sun and water. And, if Shell moves too slowly the company will not survive the transition to sustainable energy sources.

12. What is the importance of a climate issue like this?

This case is not only about the Netherlands and Shell, it also has consequences far beyond our national borders. By holding Shell accountable for its contribution to climate change, we are demanding that Shell adapt its policies, which will, in turn, be observed by other environmental organisations, governments and oil companies. This will allow our lawsuit to create a new reality.

13. Does this lawsuit affect other oil companies?

A ruling in this case will also have consequences for other oil and gas companies. In fact, our initiating of this lawsuit will increase the pressure on other oil and gas companies. They'll be forced to realise that ignoring climate issues also poses a risk for them. This lawsuit will ensure that they understand that they, like Shell, are also responsible for the destruction of the climate. If they refuse to take action, they may be the next ones to end up being taken to court. Moreover, the pressure on companies to go green is increasing in a number of countries and in a variety of ways, including by governments.

14. Why is the government still letting Shell get away with so much?

The government is responsible for preventing companies from causing damage, including serious destruction of the climate. Urgenda already sued the state before for not doing enough to prevent severe climate change. Urgenda won its case. But large multinationals wield a lot of power and operate in numerous countries simultaneously, which makes it difficult for any one government to oversee them. Friends of the Earth Netherlands is taking Shell to court to force it to participate in greening efforts.

15. When does the lawsuit begin?

We'll be in court by the beginning of December 2020. The 4 days of hearings are scheduled for December 1, 3, 15 and 17, 2020. We hope that as many co-plaintiffs as possible will follow the hearings, at least via the video link. The verdict is usually announced several months after the end of the hearings.

16. Why are you asking for donations for this lawsuit?

A lawsuit is expensive. Especially against a large company with deep pockets like Shell. To get a judge to make a ruling to prevent Shell from causing further climate change, we need about €300,000. The donations go to pay for our lawyer and his assistants. We have also hired researchers, scientists and content staff to help us gather evidence. We have to hire translators to translate all of the legal documents into English and possibly Spanish and

French as well. In this way, we can help other organisations force fossil fuel companies in their own country to become greener.

17. Is it true that you're involved in another lawsuit against Shell?

Yes, we, together with 4 Nigerian farmers, have for 12.5 years been involved in a lawsuit against Shell that focuses on oil pollution in Nigeria. One of the largest oil spill disasters in the world is ongoing in the Niger Delta. The Nigeria trial is a very different one from the climate lawsuit, but it is ultimately also about Shell's involvement in environmental destruction and human rights violations. The verdict in that case will be announced on December 18, 2020, one day after the last climate case hearing.

18. What do you mean by severe climate change?

By severe climate change we mean global warming of over 1.5 degrees celcius.