

Dutch activists in legal battle to urge action on pollution

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Environmentalists went to court Wednesday to demand that the Dutch government take urgent action to improve air quality, arguing that authorities haven't done enough to meet European Union-mandated targets.

The summary hearing in The Hague was part of a crowd-funded legal battle by the Dutch arm of Friends of the Earth, which says that the government must do more to reduce harmful airborne pollution.

Lawyer Edward Brans, representing the state, said that the national government is working with provincial and local authorities to tackle "bottlenecks" in areas—mainly in busy cities—where pollution limits aren't met. He said there already is a "clearly positive trend" in reducing pollution.

The hearing is not the first time Dutch environmentalists have clashed in court with the government. In a landmark victory in 2015, a court in The Hague ordered the government to slash greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25 per cent by 2020. The government has appealed that ruling.

Hearings for a more comprehensive challenge by Friends of the Earth to the government's clean air efforts are scheduled to begin in November.

The court will issue its decision in the summary case on Sept. 7.

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