PRESS RELEASES

Apr 15, 1998

Ecolab Expects 15% EPS Gain In First Quarter

ST. PAUL, Minn., April 15, 1998: Ecolab Inc. announced today that it expects earnings per share to exceed analysts' expectations and rise 15% to $0.23 per diluted share in the first quarter ended March 31, 1998. This compares with $0.20 per share earned in the year-ago period.

"We enjoyed very strong growth across the board in the first quarter," commented Allan L. Schuman, Ecolab's President and Chief Executive Officer. "We achieved double-digit sales and operating income gains in our domestic operations, and good results in Latin America and Asia Pacific. This was driven by our aggressive sales efforts, an excellent response to major new products and our broadened base of services to our customers. We are especially pleased with these better than expected results since they compare with an exceptional earnings gain in last year's first quarter.

"Our outlook for the full year remains strong. Our major market trends remain very favorable and are complemented by a variety of new products which have been well-received. Further, our expanded sales-and-service force continues to gain market share. We expect continued healthy momentum in our domestic and Latin American businesses, and we are cautiously optimistic our Asia Pacific operations will show further gains despite the challenging economies in that region. As a result, we expect our full-year earnings to once again meet our financial objectives and show yet another year of solid double-digit earnings growth in 1998."

Ecolab is the leading global developer and marketer of premium cleaning, sanitizing and maintenance products and services for the hospitality, healthcare and light industrial markets. For the year ended December 31, 1997, Ecolab reported sales of $1.6 billion; including European Joint Venture sales of $0.9 billion, Ecolab's global coverage reached $2.5 billion. Ecolab shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange and the Pacific Stock Exchange under the symbol ECL.

Ecolab news releases and other investor information are now available on the Internet at http://www.ecolab.com and by telephone at 1-800-FACT-ECL.

This news release contains various "Forward-Looking Statements" within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements, which represent Ecolab's expectations or beliefs concerning various future events, are based on current expectations that involve a number of risks and uncertainties which could cause actual results to differ materially from those of such Forward-Looking Statements. Readers are referred to the Company's statement entitled "Forward-Looking Statements and Risk Factors" which is contained in the Company's Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 1997 which discusses risk factors. Additional risk factors may be described from time to time in Ecolab's filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

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