PRESS RELEASES

Apr 22, 1999

Ecolab Reports 13% Earnings Per Share Gain, Record Results For First Quarter 1999

1999 FIRST QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS:

* Record earnings per share +13% to $0.26

* Record earnings +15% to $35 million

* Record sales +12% to $489 million

* Strong domestic sales and profits lead growth

* Seventeenth consecutive quarter of double-digit EPS growth

(Millions, except per share)	First Quarter Ended March 31		
	1999	1998	% Increase
Net Sales	$ 489.3	$ 436.4	12%
Operating Income	$ 62.3	$ 53.7	16%
Pretax Income	$ 56.5	$ 48.3	17%
Taxes	23.6	20.3	16
Earnings from Henkel-Ecolab	2.1	2.6	(16)
Net Income	$ 35.0	$ 30.6	15%
Diluted Net Income Per Share	$ 0.26	$ 0.23	13%
Diluted Average Shares Outstanding	134.6	133.9	1%

ST. PAUL, Minn., April 22, 1999: Continued strong trends from its major domestic businesses and improved results in its Asia Pacific operations led Ecolab?s first quarter as diluted earnings per share increased 13% to a record $0.26 for the period ended March 31, 1999.

Ecolab's consolidated sales increased 12% to a record $489 million in 1999's first quarter. Net income rose 15% to a record $35 million, reflecting the higher sales volume, cost efficiencies and favorable sales mix.

Commenting on the quarter, Allan L. Schuman, Ecolab?s President and Chief Executive Officer said, ?We are very pleased with the first quarter?s robust performances by our U.S. Institutional, Food & Beverage, Pest Elimination and Kay businesses, as well as the better than expected results from Asia Pacific operations. Comparing against impressive sales and operating income gains last year, they reflected the strength and dedication of our people, the balance of our businesses, and our performance-oriented culture. Through these efforts, we were able to more than offset the impact of economic and currency problems elsewhere.

?We continue to believe 1999 will be another year of record performance by Ecolab. We expect the year will once again be led by our domestic business, with its good fundamental market trends bolstered by the rollout of new products and services. Asia Pacific is showing signs of gradual improvement in sales and more so in profits as our people work hard to offset still-difficult economies. In addition, we are cautiously optimistic regarding prospects in our other geographic regions. We will continue to invest in our sales force in 1999, and be aggressive in our actions to expand our business using the Circle the Customer ? Circle the Globe strategy to provide new value-added product and system solutions for our customers through both internal development and acquisitions. We believe these investments will enable Ecolab to set new standards of industry performance and once again achieve above-average earnings gains in 1999 and beyond.?

First quarter sales for Ecolab's United States Cleaning and Sanitizing operations rose 11% over the first quarter of 1998 to $337 million, led by double-digit gains in the

Institutional, Food & Beverage, and Kay operations. Ecolab's United States Cleaning and Sanitizing operating income rose 14% to $51 million reflecting the higher sales, new products and close attention to costs. United States Other Services sales increased 62% to $47 million in the first quarter. Excluding the results of GCS, which was acquired in July 1998, sales rose 15%. Operating income grew 55% to $5 million; excluding GCS, operating income increased 34%. Sales and profits benefited from a very strong performance by Pest Elimination.

Sales of Ecolab's International Cleaning and Sanitizing operations rose 5% in the first quarter when measured at fixed currency rates. In Asia Pacific, aggressive new account development and new product sales served to more than offset poor general economic trends. Latin American sales increased at a modest rate, as Brazil?s economic weakness was more than offset by strong results primarily from Mexico. Fixed currency operating income rose 23% to $8 million. The income improvement was due to Asia Pacific, where higher sales volumes and cost controls benefited margins and offset Latin American and Canadian profit declines.

Earnings of the Henkel-Ecolab joint venture are included in the financial statements using the equity method of accounting. Henkel-Ecolab sales growth slowed in the first quarter, reflecting soft economic conditions in most of Europe?s geographic regions and unusually severe winter weather in the central region. When measured in deutsche marks, Henkel-Ecolab sales increased 5%. When translated into U.S. dollars, joint venture sales increased 12% to $223 million compared with $200 million in the first quarter of last year. Ecolab's equity in the earnings of the Henkel-Ecolab joint venture declined 16% to $2.1 million compared with $2.6 million in the first quarter of last year due to business investments and the lower than expected sales gain.

Ecolab reacquired 253,000 shares of its common stock during the first quarter under its two authorized share repurchase programs. Under one plan, Ecolab reacquires shares to fund current share needs for employee incentive and benefit plans. During any fiscal quarter, the number of shares reacquired is not intended to exceed approximate plan needs for such quarter. Under a second program, established in 1995, Ecolab reacquires shares for general corporate purposes, including certain acquisitions; as of March 31, 1999, approximately 3.5 million shares remained authorized under this plan. The company anticipates that it will continue to periodically reacquire shares under these two programs.

Ecolab is the leading global developer and marketer of premium cleaning, sanitizing, maintenance and pest elimination products and services for the hospitality, institutional and industrial markets. For the year ended December 31, 1998, Ecolab reported sales of $1.9 billion; including European joint venture sales of $0.9 billion, Ecolab's global sales coverage was $2.8 billion. Ecolab shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange and the Pacific Exchange under the symbol ECL. Ecolab news releases and other investor information are 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 that 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, 1998, for further discussion of risk factors. Additional risk factors may be described from time to time in Ecolab?s filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

ECOLAB INC.
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF INCOME
FIRST QUARTER ENDED MARCH 31, 1999
(unaudited)

(thousands, except per share)	1999	1998
Net Sales	$489,304	$436,362
Cost of Sales	220,425	195,909
Selling, General and Administrative Expenses	206,616	186,733
Operating Income	62,263	53,720
Interest Expense, Net	5,750	5,406
Income Before Income Taxes and Equity in Earnings of Henkel-Ecolab	56,513	48,314
Provision for Income Taxes	23,622	20,289
Equity in Earnings of Henkel-Ecolab Joint Venture	2,147	2,563
Net Income	$ 35,038	$ 30,588
Net Income Per Common Share		
Basic	$ 0.27	$ 0.24
Diluted	$ 0.26	$ 0.23
Weighted-Average Common Shares Outstanding		
Basic	129,539	128,958

Diluted	134,626	133,934

ECOLAB INC.

OPERATING SEGMENT INFORMATION

FIRST QUARTER ENDED MARCH 31, 1999

(unaudited)

(thousands)

	1999	1998
Net Sales		
United States		
Cleaning & Sanitizing	$ 336,822	$ 303,435
Other Services	47,328	29,179
Total	384,150	332,614
International Cleaning & Sanitizing	102,759	97,936
Effect of Foreign Currency Translation	2,395	5,812
Consolidated	$ 489,304	$ 436,362
Operating Income		
United States		
Cleaning & Sanitizing	$ 50,863	$ 44,606
Other Services	4,551	2,930
Total	55,414	47,536
International Cleaning & Sanitizing	7,618	6,198
Corporate	(1,099)	(910)
Effect of Foreign Currency Translation	330	896
Consolidated	$ 62,263	$ 53,720

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