PRESS RELEASES

Dec 20, 1999

Ecolab Raises Dividend 14 Percent

ST. PAUL, Minn., December 20, 1999: The Board of Directors of Ecolab Inc. today increased the company's quarterly cash dividend by 14% to $0.12 per common share, to be paid January 18, 2000 to shareholders of record at the close of business on December 31, 1999. This results in a new indicated annual cash dividend of $0.48 per share. It is the eighth consecutive annual dividend rate increase.

Ecolab has paid cash dividends on its common stock for 63 consecutive years. Ecolab last increased its dividend in December 1998.

Commenting on the increase, Allan L. Schuman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Ecolab, said, "As 1999 draws to a close, it is clear we will achieve yet another year of record results. This dividend increase is in keeping with our desire to provide steady improvement in our cash dividend to shareholders."

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 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 future events, including anticipated financial performance and business prospects, are based on current expectations and involve a number of risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those of such Forward-Looking Statements. Many factors, including those discussed more fully elsewhere in this release, and in Ecolab's filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, particularly its latest quarterly report on Form 10-Q under the statement entitled "Forward-Looking Statements and Risk Factors," could cause results to differ materially from those stated. These factors include, but are not limited to, pricing flexibility, ability to carry out the company's acquisition strategies, loss of key customers, severe weather conditions affecting the food service and hospitality industry, market growth, economic conditions, the company's ability to continue product introductions and technological innovations and Year 2000 issues.

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