PRESS RELEASES

May 12, 2000

Ecolab Announces Plan To Repurchase Up To $200 Million Of Its Stock In 2000

ST. PAUL, Minn., May 12, 2000: Ecolab announced today that it expects to repurchase up to $200 million of its own stock in 2000.

“Ecolab is firmly committed to increasing shareholder value, and we view share repurchase as an attractive tool to help us accomplish that goal. With our strong operating results and outlook for double-digit growth this year, we believe Ecolab shares represent an excellent value at current levels.” said Allan L. Schuman, Ecolab’s Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer. “Further, because of our low debt to capital ratio, we expect to be able to accomplish this repurchase while maintaining ample financial reserves for our aggressive acquisition plans to help strategically build our business.”

Ecolab plans to purchase these shares under its current board authorizations and use the shares for stock incentive plans and for general corporate purposes. The company will conduct the purchases in the open market and in privately negotiated transactions from time to time, depending on market conditions. The company had 130 million shares outstanding at April 30, 2000. Ecolab is the leading global developer and marketer of premium cleaning, sanitizing, pest elimination, maintenance and repair products and services for the hospitality, institutional, food and beverage and industrial markets. For the year ended December 31, 1999, Ecolab reported sales of $2.1 billion; including European joint venture sales of $0.9 billion, Ecolab's global sales coverage was $3 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 new release contains various "Forward-Looking Statements" within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, concerning our intention to re-acquire shares, and our ability to finance stock repurchases consistent with acquisition requirements. 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. These include, but are not limited to, unexpected requirements for cash, including for acquisitions, changes in the Company's business prospects, the number of stock options exercised by employees, the market price of the Company's stock, unexpected changes in financial market conditions and the potential need to periodically refrain from market purchases due to securities law requirements as well as other uncertainties or risks reported from time to time in the Company's reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

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