



SOAP, DETERGENTS AND CLEANING PRODUCTS

[www.aise-net.org](http://www.aise-net.org)

## THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SOAPS, DETERGENTS, AND MAINTENANCE PRODUCTS

FOR THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (Johannesburg 2002)

### I. Introduction/Background presentation of the association

The "Association Internationale de la Savonnerie, de la Détergence et des Produits d'Entretien" (**A.I.S.E.**) is the official body that represents the soap, detergent and maintenance products industry towards European and other international organisations. Its head office is based in Brussels, Belgium.

Today **A.I.S.E.** represents the national associations of 28 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

A.I.S.E. is often qualified as representing a sector of "downstream-users" of chemicals. Indeed, our industry is indirectly linked to the chemical industry (CEFIC/ICCA) given the nature of the raw materials which are used to manufacture the products on the market, aimed ultimately at consumer use or at professional use.

Hereafter follows a short highlight of our various contributions as responsible industry formulating, manufacturing and delivering products to a wide variety of hundreds of millions of consumers.

**We propose through these summary notes to focus indeed on specific key activities taken on board at A.I.S.E. level towards the agenda of sustainable development**, whilst recognising that many other activities have been and are still being undertaken at industry but also at company level towards that agenda too.

### II. Economic and Social dimension

#### II.1. The economic perspective :

A.I.S.E.'s National Associations include approximately 1200 member companies, of which around 800 are directly involved in A.I.S.E. fields. Small-and-medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) account for 90% of the membership of National Associations of A.I.S.E, thus representing a positive contribution to the social and economic pillar of sustainable development (since generating employment, local resources etc) .

Today, total market value estimation for all 28 countries covered by A.I.S.E. is about 35 billion euros, composed largely by household laundry detergents (40%), Household cleaners and Maintenance products (together almost 30%); the specific market focusing on the unique needs of Industrial and Institutional customers (cleaning of hospitals, schools, industrial hygiene) being also important with more than 18% share.

The soap, detergent, and maintenance products market in Europe is highly competitive and characterised by strong innovation. Innovation is the lifeblood that enables all companies, large and small, to participate in an industry where consumer needs are evolving and opportunities are growing for both mass market and niche solutions to suit the diverse lifestyles and attitudes of European consumers.

Major developments and technological breakthroughs have been accomplished. These might be at formulation and technology levels, with the use of new ingredients and new processes, at product form level like with the introduction of unit (and often concentrated) doses, or at packaging level... and more is still to come. An important criterion linked to innovation in our market is also the way electrical

appliances are evolving (washing-machines, tumble dryers, dishwashers...) towards higher and higher standards, and where technological developments require close partnership between all the industries involved.

## **II.2. The social perspective :**

**Delivering hygiene to millions of consumers :** A.I.S.E. represents an industry whose products are essential to society. Soaps, detergents and maintenance products support public health and hygiene, and improve the quality of life. In that perspective, hygiene – delivered through our products that are present in all households - is the strongest contribution we make to the sustainable development of the society. A century ago, one company even included as part of its mission the objective aim to “reduce work for women”. Today, that need is just as true for the whole industry, but in a modern context. Quality of life at home is the result of a combination of factors relating to one’s physical and emotional well-being. For many people, cleanliness is one of these key factors, and one which is important for a healthy and comfortable home environment. Effective hygiene must be founded on good practices – especially hand hygiene, food hygiene and personal and surface hygiene – which can minimize the risks from harmful organisms. Soaps, detergents, cleaning products, anti-microbial products and household insecticides can all have a role in maintaining a high level of hygiene in the home.

## **III. Products that are safe for man and the environment**

The Detergent Industry happened to be ‘faced’ to the Environment nearly 50 years ago when the widespread introduction of the first synthetic surfactants led to the creation of foam on some rivers. The new surfactants were not biodegrading fast enough and the solution came quickly through a joint coordinated work programme leading to the development of more rapidly degrading surfactants. This experience led the industry to both fully appreciate the importance of the environment and to invest heavily in environmental research. As a result the industry has been able to develop products with greater margins of environmental but also human safety and, through joint collaborative studies, to make major contributions to the development of the human health and environmental sciences.

The Association is an active participant in the development of EU and national environmental policies, and of regulations for chemical product safety but also at global level. Its expertise contributes to ensuring that policy and legislation are based on sound and appropriate scientific data.

### **III.1. Contributing to legislation developments**

Recently, A.I.S.E.’s groups have been able to offer industry expertise to the debate on a number of key topics, including: the Dangerous Preparations Directive (99/45), the Dangerous Substances Directive (97/548/EEC), the Global Harmonisation system of classification and communication on chemicals (see box). A.I.S.E. is actively contributing to the update of the Detergent Biodegradability Directive (82/242, 82/243) with the European Commission, as well as to evolution of the packaging and packaging waste legislation. Indeed, the detergent and cleaning industry has been at the forefront of the packaging revolution observed in last recent years. New forms of packaging mean a reduction not only in packaging waste, but also in energy consumption and in emissions to air and water

### Focus on “Global harmonisation of Hazard Classification and Communication on chemicals”:

Background :The UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio in 1992 agreed that ‘a globally harmonised hazard classification and compatible labelling system (GHS), including material safety data sheets and easily understandable symbols should be available, if feasible by the year 2000’. Harmonisation means establishing a common and coherent basis for chemical hazard classification and communication, from which the appropriate elements relevant to means of transport, consumer, worker and environmental protection can be selected. Proposals for harmonisation are built on existing regulations. GHS is the foundation of global chemical safety programmes beyond year 2000. It will change the classification and labelling regulations for AISE products.

The goals of GHS include

- Enhancing the protection of mankind and the environment
- Providing a recognised framework for countries without an existing system
- Reducing the need for testing and evaluation of chemicals
- Facilitating international trade in chemicals whose hazards have been properly assessed on an international basis

The Focal Points for the technical work on harmonisation were Expert Groups in OECD, UNCETDG and ILO. Their ambitious and demanding work programmes are complete. The AISE Working Group on GHS contributed to that work via BIAC, IOE and EU Member States and worked with US SDA and CEFIC to try to achieve consensus.

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has the international responsibility for implementing and overseeing the completed GHS. It has formed a new Sub-Committee of Experts on GHS (SCEGHS), which met for the first time in July 2001. AISE has NGO status on the sub-committee. The functions of the SCEGHS include acting as custodian of GHS, managing and giving direction to the harmonisation process, ensuring GHS is kept up to date, promoting understanding, and making GHS and associated guidance available worldwide. The main objective in the biennium work programme of SCEGHS is the adoption and publication of GHS by the UN ECOSOC in July 2003. Other topics in the work programme include discussion of possible new areas for hazard classification, and refinements in existing areas like sensitisation, carcinogenicity and reproductive toxicity.

More on : [www.oecd.org/ehs/class](http://www.oecd.org/ehs/class) ; [www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/ghs](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/ghs) ; [www.unece.org/trans/danger/danger.htm](http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/danger.htm).

### III.2. Promoting risk assessment initiatives

A.I.S.E. plays a leading role in developing risk assessment tools to ensure that the industry’s products are safe when produced and used/consumed. It provides a forum for industry experts to discuss their experiences, to plan and carry out joint methodology studies and to assess the safety of chemical ingredients used. This has involved discussions around the current legislation requirements and more importantly, with the recently launched **HERA** initiative on Human and Environmental Risk



Assessment for ingredients of household cleaning products (see box).

## **A new A.I.S.E./CEFIC joint initiative on Human and Environmental Risk Assessment**

HERA is a recent partnership project between the suppliers of raw materials (CEFIC, member of ICCA) and the manufacturers of household cleaning products (A.I.S.E), which was set up in the course of 1999. It is aimed at providing the public and regulators with relevant information on the safety of ingredients of household cleaning products through objective, unbiased and transparent risk assessments.

Whereas hazard information is based only on intrinsic properties of a substance, risk information takes into account the likelihood that the hazard will actually materialise in normal use and foreseeable misuse. Hence, for a sound evaluation of the safety of a substance or product, risk assessment needs to be performed in addition to hazard assessment. As part of a continued commitment to assessing the human and environmental safety of chemicals as used in detergent and cleaning products, A.I.S.E. and CEFIC agree through this initiative to:

- gather safety data, including hazard identification data and exposure information,
- set risk-based priorities for assessment,
- evaluate safety for a prioritised list of chemicals in A.I.S.E. applications,
- consult and communicate with external stakeholders.
- draw conclusions of value to risk management,

As at early 2002, the HERA team published on the HERA website the proposed methodology to conduct such risk assessments as well as the first 2 risk assessments of the pilot phase (on optical brightener FWA5 and on Zeolite A). Work is currently under way to carry on the risk assessment of another 15 ingredients, taking into considerations also the valuable comments that the HERA team received on the occasion of a recent stakeholders workshop held end 2001. On this occasion, the project received encouragement as a valuable contribution towards more transparent information.

It is worth noting that this pioneer initiative in Europe is of paramount importance given the current proposed changes in the EU Chemicals legislation proposed by the European Commission through its White Paper and more particularly, the REACH system (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals on the EU market), launched early 2001. The HERA project fits in with important aspects of the White Paper such as

- Industry's responsible for risk assessment,
- the obligation for downstream users to be involved alongside with the producers and importers of chemicals, Transparency and information to the public.

HERA is showing with real examples that the risk assessment concept is an effective, efficient, and transparent way to assure the safe use of chemicals by the consumers. The project is one of the most important contributions of the chemical industry in collaboration with its downstream users to the drafting of a new chemicals policy in Europe.

More on : [www.heraproject.com](http://www.heraproject.com)

### **III.3. Addressing both sustainable production and sustainable consumption**

In addition to legislative requirements and to answer to the European Commission 5<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action programme, A.I.S.E. has undertaken proactive voluntary industry initiatives such as the Code of Good Environmental Practice, to promote sustainable development and consumption.

The Code of Good Environmental Practice, developed by A.I.S.E. for laundry products, was officially launched through the publication of a Recommendation by the European Commission (98/480/EC). Developed on a voluntary basis by A.I.S.E., it has targets, based on life cycle assessments, for reductions in the use of products itself, packaging, poorly biodegradable organics and energy during the wash phase. Its key interest lays on the principle of shared responsibility between :

- industry to ensure the sustainable formulation and production of its products and
- consumers to optimise the use of such products through sustainable consumption moves (see box).

Launched in 18 countries in Europe in 1998, the very last reports provided to the European Commission on progress made in the years 1999/2000 show the following :

- an increase by + 46% of companies committed to this initiative between 1996 and 2000, totalling more than 180 companies in 18 European countries (thus 90-95% coverage);
- good performances on the household laundry detergents consumption target (-4,6%\*) versus first initial trends; important decrease in the use of poorly-biodegradable organic ingredients (-14,5%\*) whilst additional efforts remain needed on the packaging consumption trend (-5,9%\*);
- these results have been achieved in a market environment where key factors influencing trends have been steadily increasing (e.g. more households, more washes);
- important initiatives developed at national level, with in several cases, the support of local authorities and/or consumer associations to promote this initiative;
- very strong and active consumer education campaign developed by various means through the "Washright campaign" (see Box)

(\* consumption per capita vs 1996)

### The Washright pan-European campaign towards Sustainable Consumption



To complement activities undertaken by companies at formulation and at manufacturing levels, the AISE suggested providing consumers with product information, particularly that pertaining to product use. As a result the multimedia awareness and education raising campaign "Washright" was developed, with the following key messages.

1. Reduce packaging waste:
2. Avoid under-filling the machine:
3. Measure according to soil level and water hardness:
4. Use the lowest recommended temperature:

Key tools for that campaign are ; The Washright website , on-pack material (information panel appearing on over 500 million packages carrying the Washright visuals across Europe each year), print advertising magazine, and finally, the Washright TV campaign conducted in 2000 and again in 2001.- the outcomes of which demonstrate some important and successful outcomes, quantitatively and qualitatively.

#### Quantitatively:

- Recall of the 2001 television campaign is very high and showing progress compared to 2000, with more than 40% spontaneous awareness on average across Europe, and more than 50% total awareness (which is considered to be a high rating)
- The initiative was rated by more than 80% of respondents as being Good to Excellent
- 45% said that they were very likely or very much likely to follow the Recommendations

#### Qualitatively several key successes were noted:

- The information from the television campaign is found to be relevant and easy to achieve (even if some say they do it already)
- The idea of achieving something together (consumers/industry/authorities) is considered as a first step in the direction of sustainability and it is a good proof of evolution
- Consumers are made more conscious about behaviour as result

All these elements are of course being taken into account to further develop the campaign. Indeed, industry's investment in a third wave of a successful pan-European television advertising campaign to communicate the Washright messages is now underway again for 2002.

More on : [www.washright.com](http://www.washright.com)

#### IV. The way ahead ; future challenges

The A.I.S.E. realises that such initiatives - as well as others which have not been presented here - contribute significantly to the long journey towards sustainable development to which our industry is committed to. Indeed, we believe that our industry can continue to contribute further to the well-being of people and to a lesser burden on the environment in the various regions of the world.

Besides such industry initiatives, companies in their own strategies play individually an active role as well. Nevertheless, through our industry association, there may be still a need for A.I.S.E. to encourage them to go beyond and “do more” in that domain. This is the intention of our industry through the current preparation of an A.I.S.E. Charter on Sustainable Development. The key principles of this Charter will particularly focus on the following four criteria :

- **Continuously improve through innovation the quality of the products (or services delivered to consumers), , to enhance the quality of life of our consumers without taking risks vis a vis human or environmental safety; promote further the need to integrate the concept of “sustainable product/service” design right from the start of the process ;**
- **Further address the wishes of consumers for objective, sound, reliable information, offering them also the necessary elements/information tools to use these products in a more sustainable way ;**
- **Work to continuously improve the overall life cycle impact of detergents;**
- **Promote the “sustainable development” mentality throughout industry and ensure that all the above is achievable for all players of our industry, including Small and Medium-sized Enterprises.**

This A.I.S.E. Charter, to be opened to all companies placing detergents on the market (within the scope of AISE area), would be subject to a more detailed programme of activity. The elaboration and integration of further thoughts on the contributions that the detergent industry should make in the domain of sustainable development is being developed through dialogue and exchange between industry and interested external stakeholders, so that all inputs and views are considered before the finalisation of the whole programme. This is a key element to make sure that future activities to be implemented match the requirements of the various actors in the society in which our industry operates.

**Through that initiative in particular and other A.I.S.E. activities, the detergent industry is aiming at pursuing its long-term commitment to sustainable development through practical, tangible tools.**

**Finally, AISE is committed to promote, share experiences and learning from these initiatives pioneered in Europe, with other regions of the world through its sister associations, for the benefit of all.**

#### Glossary :

AISE : International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products  
CEFIC : European Chemical Industry Council  
HERA: Health and Environmental Risk Assessment  
ICCA : International Council of Chemicals Associations  
EU : European Union  
OECD : Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development  
UNCETDG : UN Committee of experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods  
ILO : International Labour Organisation  
BIAC : Business and Advisory Committee to the OECD  
IOE : International Organisation of Employers  
US SDA : US Soap and Detergent Association

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