



Association Internationale de la Savonnerie, de la Détergence et des Produits d'Entretien
International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products

Brussels, 3rd March 2009

Speech by Susanne Zänker, Director General of A.I.S.E., on the occasion of the Launch of the Retail Forum

Commissioners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me, as Director of A.I.S.E., the International Association for the Soaps, Detergents, and Maintenance products industry, to join with you today in the launch of the Retail Forum. I would like to thank the organisers of this event for giving us the opportunity to share our perspective on this occasion.

Why us? The retail environment is where consumers actually make the final decision to buy a product – or not –. What they do with that product once they leave the store – whether they use it economically or wastefully, for example – is quite another matter. There, the companies behind those products – through labelling, advertising and other means of communication with the consumer, and through the brand's relationship with the consumer – can have considerable influence.

The A.I.S.E – through its broad network across 41 countries – represents an important European industry sector delivering cleanliness and hygiene for millions of people. Whether it's laundry detergent, hand soap or floor cleaner, the products made by our member companies are used every day in homes, schools, offices and other public places across Europe.

Therefore we have a responsibility to influence how sustainably those products are used. And we take that responsibility very seriously. Health and safety have long been top priorities for us. Sustainability follows on from that and has been a specified top priority for this industry organisation for the past decade. We have a long track record of voluntary initiatives in this area, demonstrating our commitment.

The A.I.S.E. therefore fully supports the overall objectives of the European Commission Action Plan to encourage sustainable consumption and production of products and services. We support the principle of addressing the full life cycle of products and believe that means all the different actors along the product chain have to share responsibility to promote sustainable consumption and production. We are also glad to see the clear priority given to voluntary self-regulatory measures, as we strongly believe that these often deliver the quickest and most cost-effective benefits for society.

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So the A.I.S.E. welcomes the launch of this Retail Forum. Retailers have a tremendous influence on consumers' purchasing decisions – and so do manufacturers. Both have a vested interest in pursuing sustainability and in building their reputation for sustainability with consumers. Manufacturers also often have considerable R&D resources as well as marketing expertise and a very close connection with consumers.

Let me give you a practical example. Take laundry detergents. Our industry has for some time been working on improving the environmental performance of our products, including by compacting and concentrating products to improve resource and packaging efficiency. However, from life-cycle analysis, it is clear that most of the environmental impact actually occurs when using the product. That is why, since 1998, we have been running a campaign called Washright, a pan-European advertising campaign promoting more sustainable laundry habits. This Washright panel has been featured since then on billions of packs and in numerous media.

There's now also a similar campaign for the optimal use of automatic dishwashing detergents and – last year – launched jointly with Cefic (the European Chemicals Industry Council), the "www.cleanright.eu" website, which provides useful information ranging from simple sustainable consumption tips to details on safety, legislative requirements and ingredients etc. The success of Washright in influencing consumers to do laundry more sustainably and hence save on energy, water and other resources has been well-documented.

What I would like to add though is that, working together with retailers and other partners along the value chain, we can still do more.

Consider these findings from a recent survey commissioned by the A.I.S.E., based on a sample of 4500 consumers in 23 countries in the EU.

We found that...

- 103 million washes are done every day!
- But out of those, only 49% of machines were fully loaded!
 - ⇒ *If all loads were washed full, 715 million litres of water a day would be saved, the equivalent of water used by a city the size of Barcelona!...*
- The average wash temperature is 42.6 °C, but 19% of washes are still done at 60°C or higher!
 - ⇒ *If everyone who washes at 40°C or higher were to wash at 10 degrees less ... the energy saved would be equivalent to lighting every home in Poland for a year!*

One last finding...

- Only 43% of consumers are aware of the difference between regular and concentrated detergents!
 - ⇒ *Concentrates clearly offer important sustainability improvements in terms of packaging, ingredients and energy, with significantly fewer truck journeys needed*

Joint efforts to try to raise that awareness among consumers is therefore one example of an area where we could, together, deliver further sustainability improvements.

Finally, I would just like to mention our all-encompassing project in the domain of sustainable production: the Charter for Sustainable Cleaning. Rolled out in 2005, the Charter aims to steer sustainability practices of the sector at horizontal level, and for all life cycle stages. Through this, it allows us to report annually on the industry's achievements on a number of key performance indicators. We now have 82 headquarter companies on board, representing 720 local companies covering most of the household products and professional cleaning sector in Europe. And among those 82 major companies are 33 retailers! The Charter fits perfectly with the SCP Action Plan in terms of objectives and quick, cost-effective delivery. We are very proud of the take-up of this voluntary initiative, and expect it to grow further when we complete an upgrade of this scheme this year.

We know that achieving concrete behavioural change does take significant time and effort. Communicating together – as manufacturers, retailers, civil society and authorities – reinforcing each others' messages consistently, is a very powerful way to engage consumers. We see a great number of opportunities to promote sustainability consistently and effectively via the Retail Forum, particularly in the area of how to encourage and support consumers in using products safely and responsibly – something which we have been calling for multi-stakeholder attention to for some time.

So I would just like to say congratulations on the launch of the Retail Forum, thank you for your openness to working with all concerned stakeholders, and we look forward to contributing, as appropriate, to this dialogue.

Thank you.

Quote from A.I.S.E. for EC press release :

“In the cleaning and maintenance products industry, we recognise that all actors in the value chain have an equally important role to play in improving sustainable consumption and production, with manufacturers providing innovative and sustainable products as well as information about best and safe use, retailers helping to convey this information to their consumers, and consumers using the products responsibly”, said Susanne Zänker, Director General of A.I.S.E.

MORE INFO : A.I.S.E. :

The International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products, is the official representative body in Europe for this industry. Membership includes 10 direct member companies as well as 37 National Associations from 41 countries, covering approximately 900 companies ranging from multinationals to SMEs.

www.aise.eu – see also www.washright.com ; www.saveenergyandwater.com ; www.sustainable-cleaning.com ; www.cleanright.eu

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AN OVERVIEW OF A.I.S.E.'S VOLUNTARY INITIATIVES

Over the past years, we have seen a growing awareness around the world of the importance of climate change and a strengthening political and social resolve to act. A.I.S.E. has a long track record of being proactive on the sustainability front and sees its role as a leading one in driving the sustainability agenda forward among its members.

Through our various initiatives we have taken measures to ensure that both the industry and the consumer abide by the principle of 'shared responsibility'. This means that just as our industry contributes to sustainable production practices in the sourcing and manufacturing of products, consumers can also contribute by supporting sustainable consumption practices in the use and disposal of their product.

Below is an overview of A.I.S.E.'s voluntary initiatives which promote the sustainable production and sustainable consumption of our products.

		Sustainable Production	Sustainable Consumption
1999	WASHRIGHT® A pan-European awareness-raising campaign to promote good washing practices to consumers www.washright.com		
1999	HERA (Human and Environmental Risk Assessment on Ingredients of Household Cleaning Products) A joint A.I.S.E./Cefic initiative, five years ahead of REACH www.heraproject.com		
2001	DUCC (Downstream Users of Chemicals Co-ordination group) A platform to address REACH's objectives www.duccplatform.org		
2004	CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CLEANING Promoting a life-cycle approach to sustainability through independent assessment, with annual reporting www.sustainable-cleaning.com		
2005	SAFE USE ICONS Helping consumers use our products in a safe way		
2006	LAUNDRY SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS Educating consumers to dose 'compact' powders correctly		
2006	SAVE ENERGY AND WATER PROJECT Promoting the use of low-temperature dishwasher programmes www.saveenergyandwater.com www.aise.eu/saveenergyandwater		
2007	AIR FRESHENERS PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME An initiative to promote responsible manufacturing, communication and use of Air Fresheners www.aise.eu/airfresheners		
2008	WWW.CLEANRIGHT.EU A joint Cefic and A.I.S.E. industry website initiative providing consumers across Europe with information and advice on the safe and sustainable use of soaps, detergents and maintenance products. www.cleanright.eu		

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