

Maisons-Alfort, France, 6 January 2010

## Press Release

### Afssa-Afsset merger:

### **The creation on 1 July of a national agency responsible for food, environmental and occupational health safety**

During a cabinet meeting, the government has adopted an **order establishing a new health safety body**, combining the French Food Safety Agency (Afssa) and the French Agency for Environmental and Occupational Health Safety (Afsset). The new, legally created agency, will be operational by 1 July 2010 at the latest, following the publication of an implementing order which is currently being prepared. This new body **will take on all of the missions, the funding and the personnel** of both of the agencies.

**The scientific output of this new institution will be developed around its key fields of activity**, and a *de facto* existing continuum between animal safety and food, the environment and work. By **accommodating and being sensitive to their specific features**, each of these aforementioned fields of activity **will better cover certain problems areas at the crossover between the two agencies**, such as water, the health of farm workers, or even chemical products (pesticides, biocides, substances covered by the European REACH regulations).

This joining of forces will enable the assessment and the prevention of **emerging risks**, and risks linked to long-term multiple exposures to low doses of chemical contaminants to be built upon.

Since 21 September 2009, Marc Mortureux, the Director General of Afssa, a forerunner of the new institution, and Martin Guespereau, Director General of Afsset, have engaged in a **consultation process with all interested parties** (general public authorities, workers, trade unions, consumer associations, environmental NGOs, associations for victims of occupational accidents, elected members and qualified public figures) as well as with members of staff from the two agencies.

The consultation led to the reconfirmation of the knowledge of the two agencies:

- **Scientific Competence**, through internal and external expertise, open to the whole scientific community;
- **independent** risk assessments and the distinction between the assessment and the management of risks; **openness, transparency** and **high quality expert appraisals**, through its collective, transdisciplinary and contrasting nature.

It has given rise to innovative governance through:

- the implementation of an **ethics committee and a committee on the prevention of conflicts of interest**, made up exclusively of external public figures, that can be called upon for queries on compliance with ethics rules or with rules on the prevention of conflicts of interest.
- a board of directors made up of **five colleges**– public authorities, social partners, professional organisations, NGOs and associations and elected members – in addition to qualified public figures and representatives from the agency's members of staff. Specific steering committees will deal with the large-scale themes (environmental health, occupational health, food safety and nutritional quality and animal and plant health).

This new organisation gives an opportunity to **bring together all partners concerned, in order to encourage a dialogue about the major concerns** society faces today.

The agency will be able to be instructed by consumer associations, environmental protection associations and those defending the rights of patients and victims of occupational accidents or illnesses.

This joining of forces brings a clearly identifiable player to the international arena, and a key voice at European level.

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