



## News Release

*For Immediate Release*

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### **TWO OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST ORGANIC CERTIFIERS JOIN FORCES IN JAPAN**

Anaheim, CA – (March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002) France-based ECOCERT SA and San Diego, California-based Quality Assurance International (QAI, Inc.) announced today the first ever equity tie-up between a European and US organic certifier. The announcement was made at the Natural Products Expo West ([www.naturalproductexpo.com](http://www.naturalproductexpo.com)), currently being held in Anaheim, California.

Under the terms of the agreement, signed by the two companies on February 16<sup>th</sup> at the BioFach show in Nürnberg, Germany ([www.biofach.de](http://www.biofach.de)), ECOCERT will acquire a stake in QAI's Japanese subsidiary, QAI Japan, Ltd. The move will enable ECOCERT to provide Japan Agricultural Standards (JAS) certification to its clients worldwide, and enable its current client base access to the Japanese organic food market, currently the third largest in the world. The agreement also means that QAI's existing Japanese client base will gain greater access to the European organic market. Within the next few weeks QAI's subsidiary in Japan will be renamed ECOCERT-QAI Japan, Ltd.

"This new partnership is the result of the strong and historical relationship between ECOCERT and QAI," says ECOCERT co-founder and CEO William Vidal. "We believe this new partnership will be the beginning of a long, positive experience for both organic producers and consumers in Japan."

"This agreement comes at a time when the issues of food safety and purity are on the minds of virtually every Japanese consumer," says Donald Nordeng, president of QAI Japan, Ltd. "Recent scandals over mislabeled or contaminated food products have increased demand for the services of companies like QAI, as well as overall demand for organic food in general. We see this partnership with ECOCERT as leading to enormous growth for our company and the clients we serve over the coming months and years."

"It is essential for us to create these types of collegial relationships in order to overcome regulatory hurdles" according to Joe Smillie, QAI's Senior Vice President.

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*ECOCERT SA was formed in 1991 and quickly became the largest organic certifier in the European Community. The company currently serves more than 10,000 organic producers in France, and thousands of others in more than 75 other countries.*

*QAI, with offices in the US, Canada and Japan, verifies the authenticity of products, including organic, for more than 2,700 participating companies, including producers, co-packers, manufacturers and distributors. QAI's certification program is designed to verify every link in the custody chain in order to provide assurance that the integrity of the products destined to enter the marketplace is indeed preserved. For more information about QAI, please visit our website at [www.qai-inc.com](http://www.qai-inc.com).*