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For immediate release

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Two official documents enforce the consumption of animal products in school canteens

The Government publishes two decrees outlining their position

The decrees, published on the 30th September 2011* contain bylaws outlining precisely what must be contained within children's canteen meals. Absolutely no alternatives to eating meat, fish or dairy products are offered. Even in the face of existing nutritional knowledge, absolutely no mention is given of sources of vegetable protein, calcium, iron or other trace elements.

These documents attack the basic freedom of the teaching establishments, their pupils and parents who would wish for their children to eat more healthily and in a way which demonstrates interdependence and respect for animals and the environment.

These measures are all the more questionable given that a growing number of French people are making the personal decision to reduce meat consumption in their diet, and given that recent scientific studies actually warn public authorities as to the health risks associated with meat consumption.

Furthermore, many of the references quoted in the new bylaws are both biased and obsolete. The bylaws are founded on recommendations published on the 4th May 2007 by the Group study of public eating places and nutrition (Groupe d'étude des marchés de restauration collective et de nutrition – GEMRCN), even though the same organisation updated all its recommendations on the 15th June 2011 with the express recognition of the nutritional value of vegetable protein (page 65).

The Vegetarian Association of France and other organisations raised their concern for the documents undergoing preparation to the Ministers in question during the summer period of 2011. These associations are currently looking into taking possible legal action. Meanwhile, the Vegetarian Association of France has urgently requested all school canteen managers to base their actions on existing laws and the numerous ambiguities contained within these legal measures, in order to respect the free choices of the families of the children who eat in their canteens.

The Vegetarian Association would like to make clear their availability to help on any issue arising from this and regarding the decrees. The Association reiterates Law 2010-874 of July 2010 regarding the modernisation of fishing and agriculture, which states: ***“Public food policy aims to allow every individual the ability to choose what they wish to eat, in concordance with their beliefs, constraints and nutritional needs, and for their optimal health and well-being.”***

*Decree 2011-1227 of 30th September 2011; the decree and the order were published on the 2nd October.