

27 March 2012: Agricultural cooperatives

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The *Autorité de la concurrence* clears - subject to commitments - the merger of the agricultural cooperative groups Champagne Céréales and Nouricia

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Yesterday the *Autorité de la concurrence* issued a decision by which it clears – subject to commitments – the merger of the two cooperative groups Champagne Céréales and Nouricia which are active in the agricultural sector.

Through the merger with Nouricia, the second largest agricultural cooperative in the Champagne-Ardenne region, Champagne Céréales will significantly strengthen its position as the fifth largest agricultural cooperative in France in terms of turnover, and will bring together over 11,000 farmer members in the northeast quarter of France.

The *Autorité de la concurrence* considered that the transaction would not impede effective competition on the national and international markets bringing together cooperatives with third parties.

However, regarding local markets which bring together cooperatives and farmers, the *Autorité* seeks to ensure that farmers have a local choice of at least two suppliers of agricultural products (seeds, fertilizer, phytosanitary products). Similarly, farmers must retain a choice in terms of the collection of the crops they produce.

To this end, in view of the competitive situation in the agricultural crop supplies market in the *département* of Haute-Marne, the parties have agreed to review the

terms of the cooperative relationships with their main competitor in this local market.

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