

→ Formal Notice

December 7, 2023

ISSUES

On 7 December 2023, a number of organisations sent a formal notice to the Franco-Italian chip manufacturer STMicroelectronics, asking it to disclose the risks posed by the extension of its industrial activity at the Grenoble site, in accordance with the law on the duty of vigilance.

STMicroelectronics is accused of failing to meet its environmental and social obligations in connection with a project to expand its site at Crolles (Isère). At this site, STMicroelectronics is involved in the creation of a new megafactory in partnership with the American chipmaker GlobalFoundries. The signatories criticise the semiconductor manufacturer for failing to map and prioritise risks relating to water consumption and pollution, soil artificialisation and human rights violations in connection with the expansion of its site.

ACTORS

The signatories of the letter are the following organisations: Actionnaires pour le climat, Collectif Stop Micro, Observatoire Finance-Climat-Biodiversité, Confédération paysanne, France Nature Environnement Isère, Collectif Grignon pour l'autonomie alimentaire du Grésivaudan, Grési Citoyen.nes, as well as the cooperative Métamorphose, the latter acting as shareholder.



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To go further



La Tribune, STMicroelectronics mis en demeure de
« respecter ses obligations environnementales »
8 décembre 2023

CASE DESCRIPTION

The public enquiry, conducted from 28 September to 9 October 2023 by decision of the prefect, was concluded on 16 November 2023 with a favourable opinion, albeit with four reservations concerning: water consumption, copper, nitrogen and phosphorus discharges. The conclusions of this same enquiry pointed to 'insufficient' data and 'uncertainties' regarding the environmental impact of the project, as well as non-compliance with certain provisions of the Environmental Code. As this opinion is only advisory, the final decision to authorise the project rests with the Prefect.

The "Mission régionale de l'Autorité Environnementale" (MRAE), in its advisory opinion issued in February 2023 on the proposed expansion of the Crolles plant, highlighted the lack of risk mapping and 'gaps' in the presentation file.

The organisations involved in this action point to the water consumption that the Crolles plant is expected to double to 10 million cubic meters per year. To meet its needs, STMicroelectronics has obtained permission to drill two boreholes on the site and to draw water from the water table, whereas until now the company has relied mainly on mains water.

In particular, a number of risks known to the company's stakeholders have not been identified:

- Risks of pollution: STMicroelectronics reportedly discharges large quantities of copper, nitrogen and phosphorus into the Isère river, requiring it to apply for increasingly frequent exemptions from the prefecture;
- Risks of violating the embargo on arms exports to Russia: STMicroelectronics does not describe the risks of its products being used by Russia, particularly in light of the embargo on arms exports to Russia;
- Economic risks for farmers in the Grésivaudan region: by withdrawing an annual quantity of water of the order of 10 million m³, STMicroelectronics could jeopardise the economic activity of farmers in the Grésivaudan region, who had to restrict their use of water during the drought of 2022;
- Risks associated with greenhouse gas emissions: with 164,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions for the Crolles site alone, STMicroelectronics is said to be in breach of the Environmental Code, since it has not published its Greenhouse Gas Emission Balance (BEGES);
- Risks identified by the MRAE, relating in particular to the quality of surface water into which aqueous effluents are discharged, to air quality and the quality of life of local residents, particularly noise, and to climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.



CASE DESCRIPTION

The organisations are giving STMicroelectronics three months to complete its vigilance plan, in particular by introducing a water-saving plan and a system to avoid discharging copper, nitrogen and phosphorus. Failure to do so could result in legal action.

STMicroelectronics points out that the Crolles site is committed to an ISO 14001 and EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) certified approach to environmental protection, with a water recycling rate of 49% today, rising to 43% by 2022, and that the objective is to reach over 60%. The company also points out that all the water taken is returned to nature, either in liquid form after treatment (85%) or in the form of evaporation (15%).

The company has three months to respond to the formal notice. 'STMicroelectronics draws up and publishes an annual vigilance plan, and implements it effectively', replied STMicroelectronics, contacted by AFP.

