

HD REFILE-**China's** Bright Food to **buy** Australian **dairy firm** Mundella

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SHANGHAI, Jan 14 (Reuters) - **China's** Bright Food (**Group**) Co Ltd said it had agreed to **buy** Australian **dairy company** Mundella Foods through its Australian subsidiary, expanding the state-owned conglomerate's overseas reach and boosting its exposure to the growing **dairy** market.

Manassen Foods, the Australian **company** that Bright Food bought in 2011, has signed an agreement to **buy** Western Australia's Mundella, Bright Food spokesman Pan Jianjun said on Tuesday.

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The terms of the deal have been decided but the transaction value will be finalised once Mundella's 2013 financial results are available, Pan said.

Interest in Australian **dairy** assets has grown due to surging sales in Asia of both traditional products such as **milk** and **cheese** and for high-tech nutraceuticals and probiotics.

A takeover battle for the country's oldest **dairy** producer, Warrnambool **Cheese** and **Butter** Factory Holdings Co, has been one of the most hotly contested in recent months, as Canada's Saputo Inc attempts to outbid local **dairy** companies Murray Goulburn Co-operative Co Ltd and Bega **Cheese** Ltd.

Saputo's A\$515 **million** offer is steadily gathering support as Murray Goulburn's rival A\$530 **million** bid awaits regulatory approval.

Mundella representatives were not immediately available for comment on the Bright Food deal.

Established as a family **business** in 1974, Mundella produces soft **cheese**, yoghurt and probiotic yoghurt drinks. It began exporting to Asia in 2010 and has a contract for sour cream with Wesfarmers Ltd's Australian supermarket chain Coles.

Bright Food's overseas expansion has seen it **buy** Manassen, which supplies food brands to Australian retailers, and New Zealand's Synlait **Milk** Ltd. It is also in talks with Tnuva, Israel's biggest food manufacturer and distributor.

Bright Food owns four mainland-listed companies including Shanghai Jinfeng **Wine** Co, Shanghai Haibo Co, Shanghai Maling Aquarius Co and Bright **Dairy** & Food Co.

RF BRIGHTFOOD-MUNDELLA/ (CORRECTED) | AUF | CANT | ABN | E | RBN | Z | FCA | U | RNP | DNP | PCO

CO brgfdc : Bright Food (Group) Co Ltd | mnssfd : Manassen Foods | wcbfch : Warrnambool Cheese and Butter Factory Company Holdings Ltd | amezza : Castle Harlan Australian Mezzanine Partners Pty Ltd

IN i41 : Food/Beverages/Tobacco | i413 : Dairy Products | i4131 : Non-frozen Dairy Products | icnp : Consumer Goods | ifood : Food Products

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