

HD Universal Robina buys Griffin's Food

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Australian buyout shop Pacific **Equity** Partners on Monday arranged the latest of a series of exits with a deal to sell New Zealand portfolio **company** Griffin's Food Ltd. to Manila-listed Universal Robina Corp. for NZ\$700 **million** (\$608 **million**).

The deal follows Pacific **Equity** initial public offerings for toilet paper maker Asaleo Care Ltd. and catering and cleaning services **company** Spotless **Group** Ltd. this year and its **sale** in May of Australia's Peters Food **Group** Ltd. to PAI Partners SAS portfolio **company** R&R Ice Cream plc for a price known to be about A\$450 **million** (\$422 **million**).

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Griffin's makes cookies, potato chips and biscuits under brands including Cookie Bear, Huntley & Palmers and Nice & Natural. United Robina said the purchase will be "value accretive," noting that Griffin's had sales last year of NZ\$280 **million** and Ebitda of NZ\$78 **million**.

It will use long-term debt to help fund the takeover.

The deal is one of several involving the acquisition of Australian or New Zealand foodmakers by international buyers who have in their sights the enormous **Chinese** market, where Western brands can command premium prices.

Recent such deals include Singapore's Wilmar International Ltd. and **Hong Kong**'s First Pacific Co. Ltd.'s A\$1.32 **billion** agreement to **buy** baker and **dairy company** Goodman Fielder Ltd. in May and the January victory of Canada's Saputo Inc. in a long-running bid battle for Warrnambool **Cheese & Butter** Factory Co.

"We believe Griffin's is a natural strategic fit to our existing snack foods portfolio given its strong **brand** heritage in New Zealand — a country trusted worldwide in having high credibility when it comes to food quality, safety and authenticity," said Universal Robina president and CEO Lance Gokongwei in a statement. "The global trend of snacking is fast transforming the sector and our plan is to continue offering our consumers in Asia new and exciting premium brands such as Griffin's Biscuits, ETA Salty Snacks and Nice & Natural Wrapped Snacks."

Universal Robina had a market value of 344.7 **billion** pesos (\$7.9 **billion**) as of Monday's close and had revenue last year of P81 **billion**. It is 60.5%-owned by separately listed JG Summit Holdings Inc.

Pacific **Equity** Partners bought Griffin's from Groupe Danone SA for \$385 **million** in 2006. Pacific **Equity** Partners managing director David Brown said Griffin's had increased its Ebitda "substantially" under the **firm**'s ownership through initiatives including the establishment of two manufacturing "supercenters," the formation of an export division and the purchase of nut bar maker Nice & Natural.

It didn't say what it made on the Griffin's investment.

The transaction requires New Zealand government clearance under the 2005 Overseas Investment Act 2005.

Credit Suisse **Group** and First NZ Capital advised Pacific **Equity** Partners.

CO paipar : PAI partners | peprt : Pacific Equity Partners | qlhkne : Asaleo Care Ltd | spless : Spotless Group Ltd | unvrob : Universal Robina Corp | jgsum : JG Summit Holdings Inc | scahld : Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget

IN i8150203 : Private Equity | i81502 : Trusts/Funds/Financial Vehicles | ialtin : Alternative Investments | ifinal : Financial Services | iinv : Investing/Securities | i41 : Food/Beverages/Tobacco | i472 : Converted Paper Products | i981 : Dry Cleaning/Laundry Services | ibcs : Business/Consumer Services | icnp : Consumer Goods | iscsv : Specialized Consumer Services

RE nz : New Zealand | austr : Australia | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

IPD \$ 500 Million to 1 Billion

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