

Document 0334

[20334001]

Marks & Spencer PLC reported a 12 % gain in first-half pretax profit , mainly because of improving performances in the U.K. and continental Europe .

[20334002]

In the six months ended Sept. 30 , pretax profit at the British clothing and food retailer rose to # 208.7 million (\$ 330.1 million) from # 185.5 million a year ago .

[20334004]

Profit after tax and minority interest but before extraordinary items rose 12 % to # 135.2 million ; per-share earnings rose to five pence from 4.5 pence .

[20334005]

Marks declared an interim per-share dividend of 1.85 pence , compared with 1.7 pence a year earlier .

[20334006]

Sales increased 11 % to # 2.5 billion from # 2.25 billion , while operating profit climbed 13 % to # 225.7 million from # 199.8 million .

[20334007]

Sales in North America and the Far East were inflated by acquisitions , rising 62 % to # 278 million .

[20334008]

Operating profit dropped 35 % , however , to # 3.8 million .

[20334009]

Brooks Brothers , which Marks bought last year , saw operating profit drop in half to # 5 million .