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A customer buying some ice cream from a street vendor in St. Petersburg, where Unilever operates two factories. MT

## Unilever Buys Ice Cream Manufacturer

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Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch food and household products group, said Monday it would acquire leading Russian ice cream firm Inmarko for an undisclosed sum.

"The acquisition will further strengthen Unilever's position as the world's No. 1 ice cream business," the company said in a statement.

Inmarko had a turnover of some 115 million euros (\$171 million) in 2007, the statement said.

Vindi Banga, Unilever's president for

foods, described Inmarko as "a great brand that is well-recognized by Russian consumers."

Inmarko, which says it is the country's largest ice cream producer with 9 percent market share, was founded in 1993 and operates in Russia and Kazakhstan. It has factories in Novosibirsk, Omsk and Tula and employs more than 4,500 people, Unilever said.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has a 28.9 percent stake in Inmarko, while the rest of the firm's shares are closely held.

Herman Verstraeten, Unilever's general director for Russia, Ukraine

and Belarus, told reporters Monday that the group's Russian sales were rising about 20 percent per year, and it plans to seek further local purchases.

Since 1991, Unilever has opened a chain of offices across the country and has factories in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Tula. It stopped making its Algida brand ice cream in Russia in 2001.

Unilever operates a plant for making personal-hygiene products and cosmetics and a tea-packing plant in St. Petersburg, and a margarine plant in Moscow. The group also produces bouillon cubes, instant soups, seasonings and instant mashed potato mix at a plant in Tula.