

Unilever profit up 60% on disposals, sees solid growth

ZURICH (Dow Jones)--Unilever PLC (UN, UL) Thursday said exceptional items drove its third-quarter net profit up by 60% and that it's still upbeat about its full-year performance.

The Anglo-Dutch food and consumer goods giant posted a third-quarter net profit of EUR1.71 billion compared with EUR1.07 billion a year earlier, boosted by disposals. The result beat analyst expectations of EUR1.58 billion.

The maker of Ben & Jerry's ice cream and household products such as Dove, Lynx and Cif, posted sales of EUR10.43 billion from continuing operations, compared with expectations of EUR10.2 billion.

Underlying third-quarter sales growth was 8.3%.

Unilever said it now expects to post underlying sales growth "well in excess of" its long-term target range of 3% to 5%.

It has so far guided for a 5%-plus increase in organic growth.

Food industry consultant *James Amoroso* said the figures were impressive, saying Unilever has now reached the "top of the class" in terms of organic growth.

Unilever's chief executive "Cescau can now retire secure in the knowledge that he made the difference that Unilever needed and has passed on a healthy business with good momentum," *Amoroso* said.

Chief Executive Officer Patrick Cescau will hand over the reins to Paul Polman, a former Nestle SA (NESN.VX) executive, at the end of the year.

Nestle last Thursday upgraded its full-year outlook on a better-than-expected third quarter organic growth rate of 8.9%.

Also last week, French dairy company Groupe Danone SA (BN.FR) reported a 31% increase in third-quarter sales EUR3.85 billion from EUR2.93 billion, and organic growth at 8.3%.

Company Web site: <http://www.unilever.com>.

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