

US: Sara Lee silent over personal care sale talk

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Sara Lee Corp., the US food group, has refused to be drawn on reports that it is looking at possible plans to sell off its European household and personal-care businesses.

Reports in the US have claimed that Sara Lee, which owns Hillshire Farm lunch meat and Sara Lee bread, is mulling a disposal off a business that includes brands like Sanex and Ambi Pur.



[view image](#)

Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch consumer goods giant, and Reckitt Benckiser, the owner of brands like Vanish and Harpic, have been mooted as potential suitors for the business.

A Sara Lee spokesman declined to comment when contacted by just-food today (13 March). "We don't have any comment on rumour or speculation," he said.

Sara Lee is in the process of lowering costs and driving efficiency under its "Project Accelerate" programme.

At a conference last month, Sara Lee chairman and CEO Brenda Barnes said the company would place greater emphasis on the value of its products in a bid to appeal to cost-conscious consumers in the current economic downturn.

Last month, Sara Lee also revealed it was evaluating its product portfolio and trimming unprofitable lines.

Independent food analyst James Amoroso played down the prospect of Sara Lee selling the businesses. "I just don't see the need for Sara Lee to sell it right now," Amoroso told just-food. "It sounds like one of those broker rumours designed to drive up the price of Sara Lee - which it has."

Shares in Sara Lee were up 7% at US\$7.78 at 11:53 EST today.

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