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Nestle on Target as Rivals Face Slump

By Annika Breidthardt

ZURICH -- Nestle confirmed its 2004 guidance Tuesday, defying profit warnings from rivals Unilever and Colgate-Palmolive, which had cast doubt over the consumer goods industry's outlook.

Shares of the world's largest food group rose more than 1 percent to 297 Swiss francs (\$233) on the news.

"The weather is bad, the weather is good, that says nothing about the firm's long-term positioning," said **James Amoroso**, an analyst at Pictet. "But Unilever's problems -- apart from those in ice cream - - are in home and personal care. Nestle doesn't have that," he added.

Nestle was better positioned in growth areas, such as pet food and health and wellness products, **Amoroso** added, making it less dependent on weather swings.

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