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Whole Foods Plans To Sell 35 Stores Owned by Wild Oats

By DAVID KESMODEL

June 21, 2007; Page C2

Whole Foods Market Inc. said it plans to sell 35 natural-foods stores owned by Wild Oats Markets Inc. to private-equity firm Apollo Management LP if Whole Foods succeeds in its effort to acquire Wild Oats.

Whole Foods, based in Austin, Texas, said it would transfer each of the Henry's and Sun Harvest farmers-market locations, as well as a Riverside, Calif., distribution center, to [Smart & Final Inc.](#), a closely held Los Angeles food retailer controlled by Apollo. Terms weren't disclosed.

Whole Foods' proposed \$565 million purchase of Wild Oats, its smaller rival, faces opposition from the Federal Trade Commission. The antitrust enforcer sued to block the deal June 6, saying it would reduce competition and raise prices for consumers.

The planned divestiture of the Wild Oats stores raises the possibility that New York-based Apollo could be a suitor for Wild Oats, Boulder, Colo., if its deal with Whole Foods is scuttled. In a court filing in the FTC's lawsuit made public yesterday, Apollo said it previously explored a potential purchase of all of Wild Oats. An Apollo spokesman declined to comment.

Whole Foods Chief Executive John Mackey said in a statement yesterday that the Henry's and Sun Harvest stores -- all in California or Texas -- don't fit into the company's "long-term real estate and brand strategy." In an earlier entry on his blog, Mr. Mackey said the brands are a poor fit in part because they sell "a number of products that don't meet Whole Foods' quality standards."

Mr. Mackey said the stores account for about 30% of Wild Oats' total sales, which were \$1.2 billion last year. Smart & Final operates 255 warehouse stores, primarily on the West Coast. Its 2006 sales were more than \$2.1 billion.

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COMPANIES

Dow Jones, Reuters

[Whole Foods Market Inc. \(WFM\)](#)

PRICE	38.30
CHANGE	-0.05
	6/22

[Smart Final Inc. \(SMF\)](#)

PRICE	22.01
CHANGE	0.04
	5/31

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