

COCA-COLA HELLENIC BOTTLING CO SA
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Subject Company:

Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company S.A.

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The Times: Coca-Cola's bottler breaks out the bubbly

Europe's biggest Coca-Cola bottler is on track to join the FTSE 100 after a switch in its main listing from Athens to London sent its shares fizzing to a 13 per cent premium.

Trading in Coca-Cola HBC, formerly Coca-Cola Hellenic, opened and closed the day at £17.50, giving it a market value of more than £6.2 billion, a healthy increase on its closing value on Friday of £5.52 billion on the Athens Exchange. At that price, the soft drinks company would be catapulted into the Footsie at a level just outside the top 50, putting it on a par with Marks & Spencer and Capita, the outsourcing group. It is expected to be included at the next reshuffle in June, or in September at the latest.

The strong start vindicates the decision by the board, led by Dimitris Lois, the chief executive, to risk the wrath of the Greek financial and political community by shifting its corporate headquarters to Switzerland and its principal listing to London.

Mr Lois described the move yesterday as a milestone, and added: We expect this to benefit our shareholders through enhanced liquidity, as well as our company through better access to the international capital markets and a wider potential investor base.

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Although, in the longer term, the move will give CCH the currency to pursue acquisitions, it will focus initially on cashing in on what Mr Lois has called the huge organic growth potential of the 28 countries in which we already operate .

In addition, in the next few months the group will seek to tap the financial markets to refinance two tranches of bonds totalling almost 1 billion that are due to expire in September and next January.

Mr Lois has insisted that it should not be regarded as a blow to Greece, which accounts for only 5 per cent of its volumes, confirming that it would be retaining its Athenian group corporate services centre, which makes, distributes and sells its products, and its Greek workforce of about 2,000. We are committed more than ever to Greece, he said. There is no income loss to the Greek Government.

CCH, created in its present form from the merger in 2000 between HBC and the London-listed Coca-Cola Beverages, derives about 96 per cent of its volumes from brands owned by the Coca-Cola Company, which include Fanta and Sprite. The Coca-Cola Company has a 23 per cent stake, the same as Kar-Tess Holding, a Luxembourg-based company.

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Coca-Cola HBC AG (Coca-Cola HBC) has filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (the SEC) a registration statement on Form F-4, which includes an offer to exchange/prospectus. Coca-Cola Hellenic has filed a related solicitation/recommendation statement on Schedule 14D-9 with the SEC. This document is not a substitute for the registration statement, offer to exchange/prospectus or any other offering materials or other documents that Coca-Cola HBC or Coca-Cola Hellenic have filed or will file with the SEC or have sent or will send to shareholders. INVESTORS ARE URGED TO READ ANY DOCUMENTS FILED OR TO BE FILED WITH THE SEC IF AND WHEN THEY BECOME AVAILABLE, BECAUSE THEY WILL CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION. Investors will be able to obtain a free copy of such filings without charge, at the SEC's website (<http://www.sec.gov>) once such documents are filed with the SEC. Copies of such documents may also be obtained from Coca-Cola HBC and Coca-Cola Hellenic, without charge, once they are filed with the SEC. No offering of securities shall be made in the United States except by means of a prospectus meeting the requirements of Section 10 of the U.S. Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the Securities Act).

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