THREE COMPANIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND FEATURE ON LEAGUE TABLE OF BRITAIN’S BIGGEST PRIVATE COMPANIES

Published this weekend, the 15th annual Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100 league table ranks Britain’s 100 private companies with the biggest sales.

The three companies headquartered in Northern Ireland have made a significant contribution to the regional economy. Together they achieved sales of £2.3bn and profits of £91m in their last financial year, and collectively employ more than 6,700 people.

The highest-ranked company in the country is Dunbia at No 69 with sales to £827m. The County Tyrone-based meat processing company is led by managing directors Jack and Jim Dobson, the brothers who founded the business in 1976, who have reportedly put it up for sale.

The three Northern Ireland companies include one new entrant to the league table, Belfast’s W&R Barnett at No 73 with sales of £815m. The grain merchant was founded in 1896 but now has a wide range of interests, including international commodity trading, storage, agribusiness and industrial companies.

County Antrim-based Henderson Group (No 91) supplies Northern Ireland’s Spar, Eurospar, Vivo and Vivoxtra franchises, as well as operating 78 of its own stores. It is led by brothers Martin and Geoffrey Agnew, who last year announced a £10m redevelopment of the company’s headquarters.

The companies in Northern Ireland appear with businesses from around the UK, including high-profile brands such as Clarks, Dyson, Specsavers and Virgin Atlantic.

The league table is sponsored by HSBC and Linklaters, and is compiled by Fast Track, the Oxford-based research and networking events company.

Dan Howlett, Head of UK Corporate Banking at HSBC, commented:

“At a time of unprecedented uncertainty, we can take real comfort from the dynamic private companies across the UK as recognised by the Top Track 100 league table. Firms such as these are fundamental in helping to get Britain back to business during this post-Brexit period of uncertainty and the inevitable challenges ahead. These businesses are ambitious, agile and passionate about what they do and will play an important part in helping to drive the British economy forward, domestically and internationally.”

Biggest private companies in Northern Ireland, by rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Company Activity</th>
<th>HQ location</th>
<th>Sales £m</th>
<th>Profits £m ‡</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Year end</th>
<th>Main shareholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Dunbia Red meat processor</td>
<td>Dungannon, County Tyrone</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3,605</td>
<td>Mar 15</td>
<td>Jack and James Dobson (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>W&amp;R Barnett Conglomerate</td>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>Jul 15</td>
<td>Robert Barnett and family (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Henderson Group Food wholesaler and retailer</td>
<td>Newtownabbey, County Antrim</td>
<td>*659</td>
<td>*32</td>
<td>2,680</td>
<td>Dec 15</td>
<td>Geoffrey Agnew (12%), Martin Agnew (12%), Ardbarron Trust (76%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‡ Profits = EBITDA (Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation)
* Supplied by the company
The national picture

This year’s Top Track 100 achieved, on average, annual sales growth of 3% to a total of £173bn, and profit growth of 12% to a total of £18.7bn. They employ 936,000 staff, having added 19,000 employees to their combined workforce in their latest year.

The dominant region for company HQs is London (33), followed by the southeast (23) and the Midlands (16). Of the remainder, 10 companies are based in the northwest, four each in Yorkshire, Scotland and the southwest, and three in Northern Ireland, two in the east and one in Wales.

Previous Top Track 100 success stories include payment processor Worldpay, which featured three times from 2013 to 2015 before listing in London last year valued at £4.8bn. Value retailer B&M Retail featured in 2012 and 2013 and went on to list, also in London, in 2014, valued at £2.7bn.

The full league table is published as a six-page broadsheet supplement with the business section of The Sunday Times on 10 July, both in print and on the digital edition, and on www.fasttrack.co.uk.

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PLEASE CREDIT IN FULL: “THE SUNDAY TIMES HSBC TOP TRACK 100”

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Notes for editors

Fast Track has published league tables of top-performing private companies with The Sunday Times for the past 19 years. The company was founded and is run by Dr Hamish Stevenson, who also holds an associate fellowship at Green Templeton College, Oxford University.

League table criteria

Companies are ranked by sales as reported in their latest available accounts, or more up-to-date figures as reported directly to Fast Track by the companies. Companies have to be registered in the UK, unquoted, and not subsidiaries. Companies may have their ultimate holding company offshore.

Companies with fewer than 100 employees are also excluded, as are not-for-profit companies, cooperative societies, member-owned buying groups, mutual societies, provident associations, and partnerships such as lawyers and accountants. The research was carried out by Fast Track predominantly between 20 March and 1 July 2016.

About HSBC

HSBC is the title sponsor of The Sunday Times HSBC Top Track 100 for a third year.

For nearly 150 years HSBC has been where the growth is, connecting customers to opportunities. Today, HSBC Commercial Banking serves businesses ranging from small enterprises to large multinationals in almost 60 developed and faster-growing markets around the world. Whether it is working capital, trade finance or payments and cash management solutions, HSBC provides the tools and expertise that businesses need to thrive. With their network covering three quarters of global commerce, HSBC is the world’s leading international trade and business bank.
About Linklaters

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