



Determination of the Competition Authority

Determination No. M/03/022 of the Competition Authority, dated August 6, under Section 21 of the Competition Act, 2002

Notification No. M/03/022 – Acquisition by The Agricultural Trust of The Irish Field

Introduction

1. On 11th July 2003 the Competition Authority, in accordance with Section 18 (1) of the Competition Act, 2002 (“the Act”) was notified, on a mandatory basis, of a proposal whereby The Agricultural Trust would acquire the titles, goodwill and records of The Irish Field from The Irish Times Limited. The Authority advised the notifying party and the Minister that it considers the acquisition to be a media merger within the meaning of the Act.

The Parties

2. The Agricultural Trust is a charitable trust set up for the purposes of promoting farming and rural development. It publishes The Irish Farmers Journal, which is Ireland’s leading agricultural newspaper, with a circulation of approximately 70,000 copies per week. The Irish Farmers Journal contains a five page section of equestrian news called The Irish Horse,
3. The Irish Field is a weekly newspaper published by the Irish Times, which provides information for persons involved in the Irish horse industry to include news on racing, equestrian events and breeding. It has a circulation of about 12,000 copies per week.

Analysis

4. On a broad view of the market concerned, as consisting of the supply of newspapers in Ireland, the proposed transaction will in fact lessen concentration. The circulation of the Irish Times and the Irish Field, both owned by the Irish Times Limited is far higher than the circulation figures for the Irish Farmers Journal.
5. If the relevant product market is defined more narrowly as the supply of agricultural newspapers and periodicals in Ireland, to include special interest publications relating to animals, then the proposed transaction increases concentration. However, the “Farming” supplements of both the Irish Examiner and the Irish Independent, which are closer substitutes for the Irish Farmers Journal than the Irish Field, will exercise strong competitive constraints on it. Moreover, two UK publications, The Racing Post, a specialist newspaper providing racing news and analysis and the Horse and Hound magazine, an equestrian weekly, are closer substitutes for The Irish Field and will continue to exercise competitive constraints on it.
6. If the relevant product market is defined even more narrowly as weekly horse industry publications, then the proposed transaction gives rise to increased



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concentration. The Irish Horse section of the Irish Farmers Journal and The Irish Field both contain news and information specifically related to the horse industry. However both can be differentiated from each other by reason of the depth and type of coverage provided. Market enquiries have shown that The Irish Horse is more inclined to provide news on the sport horse or non-thoroughbred sector of the industry. In contrast, The Irish Field, consisting of c. 64 pages, concentrates far more on the thoroughbred sector. In addition to providing horseracing information and results, The Irish Field contains detailed information on the horse industry and is a publication which is unique of its kind in Ireland. With regard to racehorse coverage, competitive constraints are exercised by the racing sections of daily newspapers and by The Racing Post, and, as mentioned above, the Horse & Hound also exercises a competitive constraint.

7. Therefore, regardless of the product market definition, the proposed transaction will not give rise to a substantial lessening of competition in the downstream market.
8. Finally market enquiries have shown that advertising in the horse classifieds section of the Irish Farmers Journal is generally aimed at different readers than advertising contained in the classified section of The Irish Field. The placing of advertisements in The Irish Field is considerably more expensive and advertisements are aimed at the thoroughbred sector of the industry. On the contrary advertisements in the Irish Farmers Journal are cheaper and aimed at the non-thoroughbred sector. Therefore the proposed transaction will not create competition concerns with regard to the placing of advertisements pertaining to the horse industry.

Determination

The Competition Authority, in accordance with Section 21(2) of the Competition Act, 2002, has determined that, in its opinion, the result of the proposed acquisition will not be to substantially lessen competition in markets for goods and services in the State and, accordingly, that the acquisition may be put into effect.

For the Competition Authority

Terry Calvani
Member of the Competition Authority
6 August 2003