Buyout firm Epiris has appetite to swallow Princes Foods

A British buyout firm is hoping to triumph in a two-way battle for Princes Foods, one of Britain's biggest tinned produce manufacturers.

Sky News understands that Epiris wants to secure a deal to buy Princes within days.

Epiris has been bidding against Italy's Newlat in recent weeks, with both said to remain in the running.

Princes produces tinned fish and fruits, as well as a range of soft drinks and sunflower oil under the Flora brand.

The auction is the latest attempt by Mitsubishi Corporation, the giant Japanese conglomerate which owns Princes, to offload the company.

An earlier process conducted this year failed to draw interest at a sufficiently attractive price.

A deal is expected to cost the winning bidder at least £400m.

The company has been owned by Mitsubishi since 1989, but traces its roots back to 1900.

Read more business news:
Telegraph finance chief to leave amid Abu Dhabi deal probe
Chocolate giant sued over 'misleading' treats

Advertisement

Its sales declined in 2022, but remains one of the UK's biggest food groups, with revenues of close to £1.5bn in the year to the end of March 2022.

Bankers had previously suggested that a break-up of the company was possible, with its oils business one candidate to be disposed of separately.

Neither Epiris nor Houlihan Lokey, the investment bank running the auction, responded to a number of requests for comment.