

France's Cooper Acquires Gummy Specialist Lashilé, Hires CEO From Reckitt

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Cooper Consumer Health has expanded its dietary supplements offering by acquiring French nutricosmetics firm Lashilé Beauty for undisclosed sum. The deal comes as Paris, France-based Cooper announces a change of leadership and finalizes its takeover by new private-equity owners.

With the acquisition of Lashilé Beauty, Cooper said it had added to its portfolio the market-leader in France's fast-growing gummy dietary supplement category.

"The business fits well with the bolt-on strategy of Cooper," the company explained, "with a complementary product portfolio with attractive underlying growth, a scalable business model that can be rolled-out internationally, and strong online and digital marketing know-how."

Under the terms of the deal, Lashilé Beauty's founders will remain with the business and also become shareholders in Cooper.

Established in 2019, Lashilé Beauty markets beauty supplements for men and women across a number of categories, including skin and hair care, slimming and immunity. Marketed as 100% vegan, gluten free and containing no artificial coloring, a one month's supply of any single product is priced at €24.90 (\$28). The supplements are mainly sold in pharmacies and para-pharmacies across France, although the company does have some international distribution in select countries across Europe, North America, Africa and Asia.

Reckitt's Meermans Named CEO

Alongside the acquisition of Lashilé Beauty, Cooper announced the appointment of Reckitt's Bart Meermans as its new CEO, replacing Bauke Rouwers with immediate effect.

Meermans has been installed by Cooper's new owners, a consortium of investors including private-equity firm CVC Capital Partners, Vemedia founder Yvan Vindevogel, specialized healthcare fund Avista Capital Partners, Cooper's management team, and former owner Charterhouse. The deal was first announced in the spring. (Also see "[Cooper Consumer Health Gets New Private Equity Owners](#)" - HBW Insight, 23 Mar, 2021.)

CVC said Meermans brought to Cooper a "wealth of industry experience," having spent the past 10 years at Reckitt in a number of roles, most recently as senior vice president responsible for leading the company's Health businesses in Africa, Middle East, Turkey and Pakistan. These businesses had undergone a significant digital transformation under Meermans' leadership, CVC noted, which had helped to tripled online sales.

Prior to joining Reckitt, Meermans spent 15 years in managerial roles at Omega Pharma – since acquired by Perrigo – and consumer goods corporation Procter & Gamble.

Commenting on his appointment, Meermans said he would work to transform Cooper into a "leading European Healthcare company."

"I believe that providing self-care, by empowering people to take better care of their health, is meaningful and inspirational, and equally unlocking a significant runway for growth."

"The need for self-care has never been higher and will continue to increase," Meermans pointed out. "Populations are getting older. Mental health problems are on the rise. Government health budgets are stretched. The Cooper brands...can help empower consumers, with superior brands and cutting-edge solutions leveraging rich industry partnerships."

The Cooper business comprises France's Cooperation Pharmaceutique Francaise – which Charterhouse acquired in 2016 – as well as Netherlands-based Vemedia Consumer Health, Switzerland's Laboratoires Diepharmex and Italy's Stardea. Cooper recently expanded its portfolio further through the acquisition of France's Laboratoire Tradiphar for an undisclosed sum.

The company has direct presence in six European markets and exports to an additional 30 countries. With annual sales of around €500m, Cooper's leading brands include the Excilor nail fungus treatment, Pouxit anti-lice line, Audispray ear-care spray and Valdispert supplements.