

# Unilever raid 'part of collusion probe'

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The Competition Commission, which conducted a search-and-seizure operation at the offices of Unilever SA in Durban, and Sime Darby Hudson & Knight in Boksburg, Gauteng, says it is too early to say what documents and electronic data were seized.



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But it says the operation forms part of the commission's investigation into collusive conduct in markets for the manufacture and supply of edible oils and margarine to wholesale and retail customers.

"It is too early for the commission to say what data or documents were seized. Information and data are being analysed," the commission said last week.

The commission had said earlier this month that it was conducting the operations with due regard to the rights of both Unilever SA and Sime Darby and all affected persons.

It had also said it would seize documents and electronic data, to be "analysed together with other information gathered" to decide whether contravention of the Competition Act had occurred.

"The commission believes that information that will be obtained from (the) operation will enable (it) to determine whether or not Unilever SA and Sime Darby have indeed engaged in collusive conduct," acting commissioner Tembinkosi Bonakele said. "However, as part of any investigation, we also wish to urge anyone, be it business or individuals, with further information to come forward and assist the commission in concluding this investigation."

Asked if the operations affected any individuals at the raided companies, the commission told *Business Day* last week: "Not individuals, but the companies." It had earlier said that it had "reasonable grounds" to believe that information that was relevant to the investigation was in the possession of people employed by the two companies.

"We are co-operating fully with the authorities and are unable to comment further at this stage," Unathi Mgobozi, external affairs and media manager for Unilever SA, said last week.

Sime Darby executives were not available for comment.

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