

Garden Fresh Will Go Private in a \$98 Million Transaction

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SAN DIEGO (Dow Jones/AP) – **Garden Fresh Restaurant Corp.** said Tuesday it agreed to be taken private by an affiliate of investment firm **Fairmont Capital, Inc.** in a deal valued at roughly \$98 million.

San Diego-based Garden Fresh operates 97 salad-buffet restaurants under the names “Souplantation” and “Sweet Tomatoes” in 15 states, including Utah. It had revenue of \$214.3 million for the year ended Sept. 30, 2002.

Under the agreement, Fairmont will pay \$16.35 in cash for each Garden Fresh share held.

The offer represents a 48.9 percent premium to Garden Fresh’s Monday stock closing price of \$10.98. News of the deal sent Garden Fresh's shares soaring \$4.93, or 45 percent, to close Tuesday at \$15.91 on the NASDAQ Stock Market.

Its restaurants offer salad selections, soups, bakery items, pastas and desserts in a self-serve format.

The deal will go to shareholders for a vote at a special meeting in November or December, the company said. If it is approved, the transaction would close soon afterward, the company said.

Garden Fresh said it has urged shareholders to support the offer.

It said it intends to retain its San Diego headquarters and expects to retain its current senior management.

Fairmont Capital Inc. is a California-based private investment company.