

**Reuters International****Alfa Wasserman, Sigma-Tau agree to merge Italian businesses**

MILAN, March 5 Thu Mar 5, 2015 2:26pm EST

(Reuters) - Italian drugmakers Alfa Wasserman and Sigma-Tau said on Thursday they had agreed to merge pharmaceutical activities to create a domestic champion with sales of more than 900 million euros (\$992 million). In October sources told Reuters the two companies were in advanced talks to combine their Italian operations. In a joint statement, the drugmakers said the new company would be 75 percent owned by the Golinelli family, the main owner of Alfa Wasserman. The Cavazza family, which controls Sigma-Tau, will hold 20 percent of the new company, while Italy's biggest retail lender Intesa Sanpaolo, a current shareholder of Sigma-Tau, will have the remaining 5 percent, it said. The new company will be one of the top five pharmaceutical groups in Italy and will be present in 18 countries, employing a total of 2,800 people. "We will consolidate our presence on the domestic market, strengthen our position in other important countries and lay the basis for further development," Alfa Wasserman CEO Stefano Golinelli said. The merger will not include Sigma-Tau's rare disease business or financial stakes in some pharma sector companies which will stay under the control of the Cavazza family. The deal should be completed before the end of April this year. (\$1 = 0.9069 euros) (Reporting by Stephen Jewkes, editing by William Hardy)