

# Soft drink makers thirst for new sweetener

By Karen Robinson-Jacobs, Dallas Morning News

Steps from the lobby of the Dr Pepper Snapple Group headquarters, a row of inauspicious Rubbermaid bins holds the crystallized future of the nation's third largest soft drink player.

The tubs contain sugar, the artificial sweetener aspartame and similar snowflake-like substances.

Like its competitors Coke and Pepsi, Plano-based Dr Pepper is deep in the hunt for a new sweetener that can replace existing artificial sweeteners. It has to taste like sugar yet be lower in calories. And it has to be natural.

The stakes are high. The Big Three soda makers lead an industry that's rounding out a decade of declining sales.

As regular sodas, and now diets, lose their fizz, soft drink makers are spending increasing amounts of time and energy looking for ways to sweeten the pot.

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