China / Hong Kong Company Update

WH Group Ltd.

Bloomberg: 288 HK Equity | Reuters: 0288.HK

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

DBS Group Research . Equity

29 Mar 2022

BUY

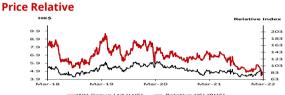
Last Traded Price (28 Mar 2022): HK\$4.74 (HSI: 21,685) Price Target 12-mth: HK\$6.57 (39% upside) (Prev HK\$6.30)

Analyst

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What's New

- FY21 earnings grew 7.2% y-o-y, slightly below consensus
- Profitability to improve in China, especially for 1H22 on low hog prices. US operations should also benefit from further revival across the restaurant & catering channels
- Maintain BUY with TP of \$6.57 in view of better recovery ahead in both China and the US.



8.9	Mar-20 td (LHS) — Re	Mar-21	18 16 14 12 10 83 Mar-22	3 3 3
Forecasts and Valuati	on			
FY Dec (US\$m) Turnover EBITDA	2020A 25,589 2,113	2021A 27,293 2,435	2022F 28,147 2,421	

FY Dec (US\$m)	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Turnover	25,589	27,293	28,147	29,170
EBITDA	2,113	2,435	2,421	2,556
Pre-tax Profit	1,500	1,658	2,212	2,363
Net Profit	973	1,047	1,404	1,519
Net Pft (Pre Ex) (core profit)	973	1,047	1,404	1,519
Net Profit Gth (Pre-ex) (%)	(29.5)	7.6	34.1	8.1
EPS (US\$)	0.07	0.07	0.11	0.12
EPS (HK\$)	0.52	0.58	0.86	0.93
Core EPS (US\$)	0.07	0.07	0.11	0.12
Core EPS (HK\$)	0.52	0.58	0.86	0.93
EPS Gth (%)	(29.4)	12.5	47.9	8.1
Core EPS Gth (%)	(29.4)	12.5	47.9	8.1
Diluted EPS (HK\$)	0.52	0.58	0.86	0.93
DPS (HK\$)	0.18	0.20	0.30	0.32
BV Per Share (HK\$)	5.30	4.84	5.98	6.61
PE (X)	9.2	8.2	5.5	5.1
CorePE (X)	9.2	8.2	5.5	5.1
P/Cash Flow (X)	3.8	3.8	6.0	5.8
P/Free CF (X)	5.0	5.2	11.2	10.6
EV/EBITDA (X)	5.2	4.9	4.5	4.2
Net Div Yield (%)	3.7	4.2	6.2	6.7
P/Book Value (X)	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.7
Net Debt/Eauitv (X)	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
ROAE(%)	10.4	11.2	15.1	14.7
Earnings Rev (%):			9	7
Consensus EPS (US\$)			0.10	0.11
Other Broker Recs:		B:18	S:0	H:1

Source of all data on this page: Company, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBS HK"), Thomson Reuters

Steady recovery ahead

Investment Thesis

China operations to recover. WH Group should ride on the relatively lower hog prices in China for better profitability, especially in 1H22. Hog prices should also remain manageable even with market expectations of a steady increase by 2H22, while this could also provide additional opportunities for its imported frozen meat division in China. We expect mid- to high-single digit volume growth in both pork and packaged meat segments and higher unit profit this year.

US business to stage stronger. We expect WH Group's packaged meat business in the US to enjoy ongoing recovery of the food service channels. Hence, FY22 sales volume could be comparable to the pre-COVID level and margins should stay supportive.

Long-term growth. The company could continue to seek suitable M&A targets in Europe, and further expand its hog production in China over the longer run to foster better growth prospects.

Valuation:

We raised FY22/FY23 earnings by 9%/7%, in view of better sales recovery and profitability ahead. Our new TP of HK\$6.57 is based on SOTP valuation, where we value China operations at 13x FY22 PE and US operations at 6x, same basis of previous TP.

Where we differ:

We are slightly more prudent on FY22/FY23 earnings while we expect to see faster sales growth in FY22/FY23. Consensus EPS estimates are skewed downwards as we believe that the number of shares has not fully accounted for the company's share buybacks.

Key Risks to Our View:

Declining domestic demand; volatility in raw material prices; regulatory changes; food safety issues; disease outbreaks.

At A Glance

Issued Capital (m shrs)	14,747
Mkt Cap (HK\$m/US\$m)	69,901 / 8,927
Major Shareholders (%)	
Rise Grand Group Ltd.	27.1
Wan (Long)	7.2
Mondrian Investment Partners Ltd.	6.0
Free Float (%)	59.7
3m Avg. Daily Val. (US\$m)	22.27
GICS Industry: Consumer Staples / Food, Beverage	& Tobacco







WHAT'S NEW

Results highlights. Revenue grew 6.7% y-o-y to US\$27.3bn, supported by the increase in revenue from packaged meat. Specifically, revenue/sales volume of packaged meat rose by 1.3%/13.5%. Gross margin declined slightly by 0.4ppt to 17.2% in FY21. Net earnings went up by 7.2% to US\$1,043m, below our expectations and market consensus, mainly due to lower-than-expected gross profit and higher-than expected tax expenses.

In China, sales volume decreased by 1.6% in packaged meat along with stagnant market demand. Operating profit from packaged meat rose 7.9%, thanks to weaker pork prices in FY21 vs. FY20. On the other hand, the fresh pork segment saw a 57% processing volume growth in FY21, while its operating loss amounted to US\$53m as a result of the significant price decline in fresh and imported pork.

In the North America (US & Mexico), with the recovery of catering channels and the surge of pork prices in the US last year, sales volume/revenue grew 3%/19% for the packaged meat segment while operating profit surged 55%. In the meantime, the processing volume of fresh pork declined slightly by 1% amid tightened hog supplies. The pork segment also saw a 94% increase in operating profit, to US\$64m, mainly due to the reduction in COVID-19 related expenses.

In Europe, packaged meat continued to expand at 13%/11% in sales volume/revenue during FY21. WH Group also attained a 17% growth in operating profit from packaged meat along with favourable pork prices. Pork segment saw a slight revenue decline and incurred operating loss of US\$8m.

China operations to see margin rebound in FY22. With hog prices hovering at a relatively low level at the moment, WH Group's pork segment in China should see better profitability in FY22 vs. FY21 as it benefits from a better meat-hog price spread. As the market expects hog prices to recover steadily by 2H22, WH Group could also resume its imports of frozen pork upon seeing potentially a more favourable price spread between China and the US then. Meanwhile, packaged meat sales may see near-term pressure due to the COVID-19 resurgence that have disrupted various channels including restaurants in selected cities of China. However, leveraging the current low pork prices and its strong pricing power, the company should continue to enjoy a unit profit of c.US\$600/mt in

the packaged meat segment in 1H22. WH Group should also further secure profits from packaged meat through product-mix upgrades, with increasing contribution from featured products that demand c.40% higher average selling prices.

US business continues to enjoy higher demand. While the US business has benefited from a reopening of the economy, we expect WH Group to continue to enjoy the ongoing recovery in food service channels (with c.30% revenue contribution) and achieve a sales volume that approaches the 2019 level. As both feeds and pork prices have seen uptrends in the US, cost pressure should remain well under control this year, on a better upstream integration as well as potential adjustments in selling prices to mitigate rising cost impacts. We believe WH Group could also leverage on its hedging strategies and global sourcing powers to further cope with rising costs.

Ongoing expansion. We believe WH Group will continue to look for M&A targets in Europe, while expanding its hog production capacity in China over the longer run in order to achieve better upstream integration. We raised FY22/FY23 earnings by 9%/7%, in view of a better outlook in its sales recovery and profitability. We maintain a BUY on WH Group and revise up our TP slightly of HK\$6.57, based on SOTP valuation with China operations valued at 13x and US operations at 6x.

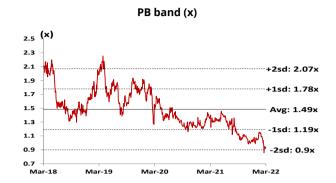
Company Background

WH Group is the largest pork company in the world, with leading positions in China, the US, and key markets in Europe. The group operates an integrated pork business chain including hog production, fresh pork, and packaged meat. WH Group is a controlling shareholder of Shuanghui Development (000895:CH), with a 70.33% stake, Asia's largest meat processing business, and controls 100% of Smithfield. As at end-2021, the group had a total of 4.26m tonnes of packaged meat production capacity (US: 2.06m tonnes; China: 1.73m tonnes; Europe: 0.48m tonnes), and 64.78m heads of fresh pork production capacity (China: 23.13m heads; US: 34.02m heads; Europe: 7.63m heads).



Historical PE and PB band

Forward PE band (x) 18.4 16.4 12.4 10.4 8.4 -1sd: 13.7x Avg: 10.9x -1sd: 8.1x 6.4 4.4 Mar-18 Mar-19 Mar-20 Mar-21 Mar-22



Source: Thomson Reuters, DBS HK





Segmental Breakdown (US\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Revenues (US\$ m)					
China	8,756	10,828	10,516	11,113	11,506
US	13,159	12,363	14,184	14,429	14,999
Others	2,188	2,398	2,593	2,604	2,665
Total	24,103	25,589	27,293	28,147	29,170
Segment result (US\$ m)					
China	957	1,140	930	1,210	1,218
US	932	415	919	936	1,047
Others	142	174	117	144	177
Total	2,031	1,729	1,966	2,291	2,442
Segment result Margins					
(%)					
China	10.9	10.5	8.8	10.9	10.6
US	7.1	3.4	6.5	6.5	7.0
Others	6.5	7.3	4.5	5.5	6.6
Total	8.4	6.8	7.2	8.1	8.4

Source: Company, DBS HK

Income Statement (US\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Revenue	24,103	25,589	27,293	28,147	29,170
Cost of Goods Sold	(18,102)	(21,096)	(22,587)	(22,926)	(23,692)
Gross Profit	6,001	4,493	4,706	5,221	5,478
Other Opng (Exp)/Inc	(3,977)	(2,788)	(2,841)	(2,930)	(3,036)
Operating Profit	2,024	1,705	1,865	2,291	2,442
Other Non Opg (Exp)/Inc	0	0	0	0	0
Associates & JV Inc	52	(87)	(98)	24	24
Net Interest (Exp)/Inc	(130)	(118)	(109)	(103)	(103)
Dividend Income	0	0	0	0	0
Exceptional Gain/(Loss)	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-tax Profit	1,946	1,500	1,658	2,212	2,363
Tax	(336)	(263)	(381)	(508)	(543)
Minority Interest	(230)	(264)	(230)	(299)	(301)
Preference Dividend	0	0	0	0	0
Net Profit	1,380	973	1,047	1,404	1,519
Net Profit before Except.	1,380	973	1,047	1,404	1,519
EBITDA	2,518	2,113	2,435	2,421	2,556
Growth					
Revenue Gth (%)	6.6	6.2	6.7	3.1	3.6
EBITDA Gth (%)	21.0	(16.1)	15.2	(0.6)	5.6
Opg Profit Gth (%)	24.1	(15.8)	9.4	22.8	6.6
Net Profit Gth (%)	31.8	(29.5)	7.6	34.1	8.1
Margins & Ratio					
Gross Margins (%)	24.9	17.6	17.2	18.5	18.8
Opg Profit Margin (%)	8.4	6.7	6.8	8.1	8.4
Net Profit Margin (%)	5.7	3.8	3.8	5.0	5.2
ROAE (%)	16.8	10.4	11.2	15.1	14.7
ROA (%)	8.5	5.4	5.5	7.0	7.2
ROCE (%)	12.4	9.4	9.2	10.8	10.8
Div Payout Ratio (%)	43.3	34.2	34.5	34.5	34.5
Net Interest Cover (x)	15.6	14.4	17.1	22.2	23.7
Source: Company, DBS HK					





Balance Sheet (US\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Net Fixed Assets	5,406	5,531	6,367	6,862	7,374
Invts in Associates & JVs	347	354	253	253	253
Other LT Assets	4,822	4,996	5,169	5,169	5,169
Cash & ST Invts	593	1,650	1,600	2,021	2,231
Inventory	2,903	2,641	2,625	2,664	2,753
Debtors	1,555	1,427	1,732	1,832	1,945
Other Current Assets	1,656	2,116	1,665	1,829	2,015
Total Assets	17,282	18,715	19,411	20,631	21,740
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ST Debt	905	796	874	1,000	1,000
Creditors	720	1,223	1,222	1,276	1,310
Other Current Liab	2,244	2,048	2,479	2,513	2,591
LT Debt	2,187	1,840	3,140	3,140	3,140
Other LT Liabilities	1,774	1,823	2,009	1,969	1,930
Shareholder's Equity	8,684	10,005	8,748	9,794	10,829
Minority Interests	768	980	939	939	939
Total Cap. & Liab.	17,282	18,715	19,411	20,631	21,740
Non-Cash Wkg. Capital	3,150	2,913	2,321	2,536	2,812
Net Cash/(Debt)	(2,499)	(986)	(2,414)	(2,119)	(1,909)
Debtors Turn (avg days)	58.5	45.7	42.4	42.4	42.4
Creditors Turn (avg days)	21.7	15.8	18.6	18.6	18.6
Inventory Turn (avg days)	58.5	45.7	42.4	42.4	42.4
Asset Turnover (x)	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Current Ratio (x)	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.8
Quick Ratio (x)	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.9
Net Debt/Equity (X)	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Net Debt/Equity ex MI (X)	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2
Capex to Debt (%)	22.0	20.9	14.9	14.5	14.5
Z-Score (X)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Source: Company, DBS HK					

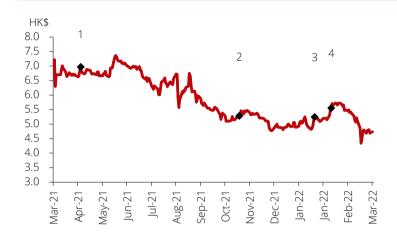
Cash Flow Statement (US\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Pre-Tax Profit	2,052	1,315	1,658	2,212	2,363
Dep. & Amort.	451	503	679	106	90
Tax Paid	(233)	(418)	(381)	(508)	(543)
Assoc. & JV Inc/(loss)	0	0	0	0	0
(Pft)/Loss on disposal of FAs	136	587	(230)	(299)	(301)
Chg in Wkg. Cap.	(930)	382	535	(215)	(276)
Other Operating CF	(13)	(12)	0	0	0
Net Operating CF	1,463	2,357	2,261	1,295	1,333
Capital Exp. (net)	(680)	(551)	(600)	(601)	(601)
Other Invts. (net)	0	0	0	0	0
Invts in Assoc. & JV	0	0	0	0	0
Div from Assoc & JV	0	0	0	0	0
Other Investing CF	(116)	(412)	(791)	(40)	(38)
Net Investing CF	(796)	(963)	(1,391)	(641)	(639)
Div Paid	(375)	(599)	(333)	(358)	(484)
Chg in Gross Debt	2,457	3,279	1,378	126	0
Capital Issues	(132)	880	(1,917)	0	0
Other Financing CF	(2,543)	(4,039)	(41)	0	0
Net Financing CF	(593)	(479)	(913)	(232)	(484)
Currency Adjustments	0	0	0	0	0
Chg in Cash	74	915	(43)	421	209
Opg CFPS (US\$)	0.16	0.13	0.12	0.12	0.13
Free CFPS (US\$)	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.05	0.06

Source: Company, DBS HK



Target Price & Ratings History



S.N	o. Date	Closing Price	12-mth Target Price	Rating
1:	29-Apr-21	HK\$6.87	HK\$7.60	Buy
2:	27-Oct-21	HK\$5.23	HK\$7.30	Buy
3:	21-Jan-22	HK\$5.13	HK\$8.30	Buy
4:	9-Feb-22	HK\$5.30	HK\$6.30	Buy

Source: DBS HK

Analyst: Mavis Hui

Clement Xu



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SELL (negative total return of > -20% over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

Completed Date: 29 Mar 2022 12:02:44 (HKT) Dissemination Date: 29 Mar 2022 12:14:02 (HKT)

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