CMB International Securities | Equity Research | Company Update

WH Group (288 HK)

4Q19 momentum continued and a positive 2020

We hosted investors' meeting recently. 4Q19 China and US fresh pork segments profit were strong. We estimate 4Q19E OP could iump 72% (vs +55% in 3Q19). We think FY19E dividend payout could increase from 36% in FY18 on record high NP. Management expects NP to increase YoY in FY20E led by US market. Tariffs exclusion is a potential big catalyst. Maintain BUY and raised TP from HK\$9.60 to HK\$10.80 on 6-8% earnings upgrade and rolled forward valuation. Our FY19/20E NP is 11%/5% above consensus.

- Expect 117% US OP growth in 4Q19E. (1) Fresh pork: OP/head notably increased YoY driven by widened price spread between pork and hog price. (2) Hog production: though the business was loss-making due to seasonal low hog price, the segment remained profitable due to hedging gains. (3) Packaged meat: segment would see stable growth on better product mix.
- Anticipate 20% China OP growth in 4Q19E. (1) Packaged meat: the Company raised ASP by a total 10% in Oct and Nov to increase OP/tonne YoY (but less than 3Q19) amid surge of hog price. Sales volume was stable YoY. (2) **Fresh pork:** Average daily processing volume fell from ~30,000 head/day in 3Q19 to >20,000 head/day in 4Q19E due to hog shortage. However, segment OP would grow strongly YoY thanks to more sales of frozen pork and high pork price.
- FY20E outlook. Management expects NP would rise in FY20E led by US market while China market is challenging. Tyson Foods and JBS (top 2 and 3 US pork producers) will increase pork export to China in 2020 after removing ractopamine from their hog farms in 2H19. US hog and pork prices are expected to increase driven by more export. In China, fresh pork profitability would remain good in 1Q20E. FY20 OP would decrease after an exceptional FY19 as a result of falling hog processing volume and rising frozen pork cost. Packaged meat ASP could be increased to keep stable OP of RMB2,800-3,000/tonne. Management believes hog price could reach high level around CNY holiday and soften in 2H on recovering hog supply.
- Tariffs exclusion a potential big catalyst. The Company expects "positive" results from the applications of 25% tariffs exclusion. If approved by government, the pork price spread between China and US could narrow, this would be positive for WH's China and US business. Also, the tariffs returned could be booked as profit.
- Lifted TP to HK\$10.80. We upped our FY19-21E adjusted net profit by 6-8% mainly to factor in better fresh pork margins in US and China. Our SOTPbased TP is lifted from HK\$9.60 to HK\$10.80 as we rolled forward valuation basis, representing 15.3x FY20E P/E (vs 14.7x FY19E P/E previously). Catalyst: China approves tariff exclusion, reduces tariff or sharply increases import from US. Risk: Packaged meat and fresh pork margins below expectation.

Earnings Summary

(YE 31 Dec)	FY17A	FY18A	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E
Revenue (US\$ mn)	22,379	22,605	24,340	25,958	26,726
Net profit (US\$ mn)	1,127	1,047	1,323	1,433	1,443
Adj. net profit (US\$ mn)	1,090	1,046	1,323	1,433	1,443
Adj. EPS (US\$)	0.075	0.071	0.090	0.097	0.098
YoY growth (%)	1.0	(4.9)	26.3	8.2	0.7
Adj. P/E (x)	14.9	15.6	12.4	11.5	11.4
Р/В (х)	2.2	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.6
Yield (%)	3.1%	2.3%	3.6%	3.9%	3.9%
Adj. ROAE (%)	15.8	13.8	16.1	15.7	14.5
Net gearing (%)	22	30	27	15	6

Source: Company data, CMBIS estimates



BUY (Maintain)

Target Price	HK\$10.80
(Previous TP	HK\$9.60)
Up/Downside	+24%
Current Price	HK\$8.73

China Staples Sector

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Stock Data

Mkt Cap (HK\$ mn)	128,512
Avg 3 mths t/o (HK\$ mn)	369.36
52w High/Low (HK\$)	9.95/ 6.00
Total Issued Shares (mn)	14,720.8
Source: Bloomberg	

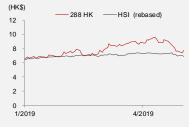
Shareholding Structure

Rise Grand	35.94%
Source: HKEx	

Share Performance

	Absolute	Relative
1-mth	10.0%	2.1%
3-mth	24.5%	12.0%
6-mth	16.0%	14.2%
Source: Bloomberg	1	

12-mth Price Performance



Source: Bloomberg

Auditor: EY

Related Reports

- 1. "WH Group 3Q19 NP +79%, China's packaged meat and fresh pork margins could continue in 4Q19E " -29 Oct 2019
- "WH Group NDR takeaways; China 2. market is improving in 3Q19E" - 25 Sep 2019
- "WH Group US hog futures rallied as 3. trade tensions ease" - 14 Sep 2019
- 4. "WH Group - Expect a better 2H19" -14 Aug 2019
- "WH Group 1H19 preview; expect a 5. better 2H19" – 24 Jul 2019 "WH Group – US ham price up after
- 6. Mexico dropped tariff" - 24 May 2019

Figure 1: Earnings revision



		New			Old		Diff (%)			
US\$ mn	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E	
Revenue	24,340	25,958	26,726	24,100	24,697	24,877	1%	5%	7%	
Gross Profit	4,927	5,288	5,511	4,596	4,942	5,013	7%	7%	10%	
Operating Profit	2,133	2,297	2,330	2,000	2,135	2,194	7%	8%	6%	
Adj. net profit	1,323	1,433	1,443	1,231	1,325	1,356	7%	8%	6%	
Gross Margin	20.2%	20.4%	20.6%	19.1%	20.0%	20.1%	+1.1ppt	+0.4ppt	+0.5ppt	
Operating Margin	8.8%	8.8%	8.7%	8.3%	8.6%	8.8%	+0.5ppt	+0.1ppt	-0.2ppt	
Net Margin	5.4%	5.5%	5.4%	5.1%	5.4%	5.5%	+0.3ppt	flat	-0.2ppt	

Source: Company data, CMBIS estimates

Figure 2: CMBI estimates vs consensus

		CMBI			Consensus		Diff (%)		
US\$ mn	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E
Revenue	24,340	25,958	26,726	23,883	25,445	26,046	2%	2%	3%
Gross Profit	4,927	5,288	5,511	4,774	5,156	5,375	3%	3%	3%
Operating Profit	2,133	2,297	2,330	1,926	2,106	2,249	11%	9%	4%
Net profit	1,323	1,433	1,443	1,195	1,367	1,453	11%	5%	-1%
Gross Margin	20.2%	20.4%	20.6%	20.0%	20.3%	20.6%	+0.2ppt	+0.1ppt	flat
Operating Margin	8.8%	8.8%	8.7%	8.1%	8.3%	8.6%	+0.7ppt	+0.5ppt	+0.1ppt
Net Margin	5.4%	5.5%	5.4%	5.0%	5.4%	5.6%	+0.4ppt	+0.1ppt	-0.2ppt

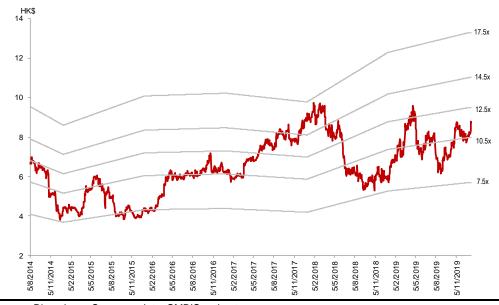
Source: Bloomberg, CMBIS estimates

Figure 3: SOTP-based valuation

Segment	FY20 P/E	FY20E net profit (US\$mn)	Valuation (US\$mn)	Remarks
US & Europe businesses	12.0	899.3	10,792	12x FY20E P/E
China business	17.8	534.1	9,507	30% discount on HK listed peers' average 25.5x FY20E P/E
Total			20,299	
Value per share (HK\$)			10.8	
Implied FY20E P/E			15.3	

Source: Company data, Bloomberg, CMBIS estimates

Figure 4: P/E band



Source: Bloomberg, Company data, CMBIS estimates



Premium/discount (%)

80%

60%

40%

20% 0%

-20%

-40%

-60%

-80%

-100%

Oct-19

Jul-19

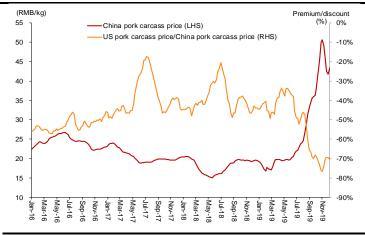
Figure 5: The discount of US pork carcass price to China's was 71% on 8 Dec 2019

Figure 6: The discount of US hog price to China's widened to 74% on 1 Jan 2020

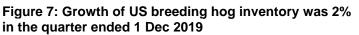
China hog price (LHS)

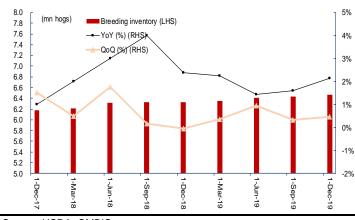
US hog price/China hog price (RHS)

Apr-17 Jul-17 Oct-17 P Oct-1

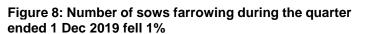








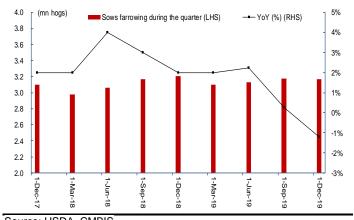
Source: USDA, CMBIS



Oct-15 Apr-16 Oct-16 Jan-17

Jan Jul-16

Oct-1 P



Source: USDA, CMBIS

(RMB/ka

40

35

30

25

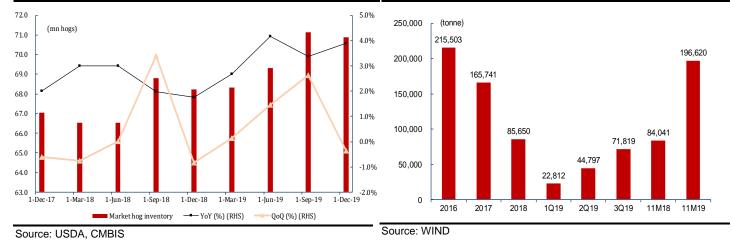
20

15

10

Source: Bloomberg, CMBIS

Figure 9: Growth of US total hog inventory was 3% in the Figure 10: China's pork import volume from US jumped quarter ended 1 Dec 2019 134% in 11M19





10%

0%

-10%

-20%

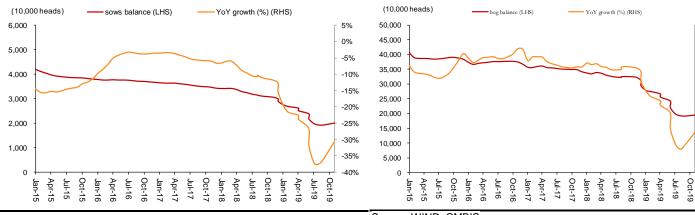
-30%

-40%

-50%

Figure 11: Sows balance decline in China narrowed to 31% YoY in Nov 2019

Figure 12: Hogs balance decline in China narrowed to 34% YoY in Nov 2019



Source: WIND, CMBIS

Source: WIND, CMBIS

Figure 13: US total pork export volume growth accelerated to 26% in Nov 2019, driven by China market

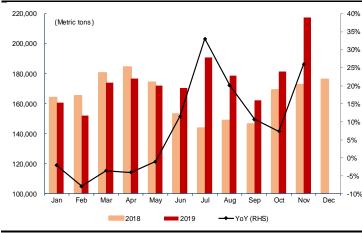
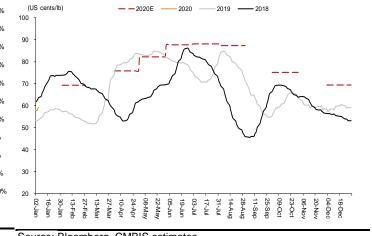


Figure 14: 2020E US hog futures prices are trading above 2019 hog price

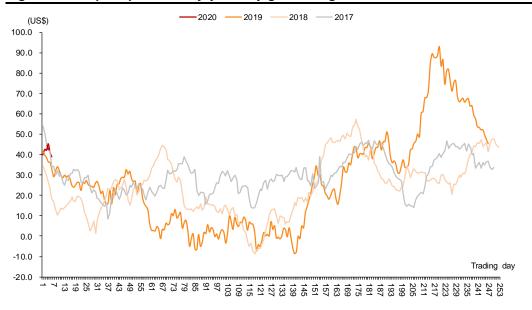


Source: US meat export federation

Source: Bloomberg, CMBIS estimates







Source: Bloomberg, CMBIS





Source: Bloomberg, CMBIS estimates

Figure 17: Major assumptions for US market

(US\$mn)	FY17	FY18	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E
Packaged meat segment					
External revenue	7,807	7,773	7,962	8,322	8,321
growth %	9.6%	-0.4%	2.4%	4.5%	0.0%
Sales volume (mn metric tons)	1.45	1.46	1.45	1.46	1.47
growth %	3.3%	0.9%	-0.5%	0.5%	1.0%
ASP (US\$/ton)	5,395	5,324	5,484	5,703	5,646
growth %	6.1%	-1.3%	3.0%	4.0%	-1.0%
OP margin	9.3%	10.1%	10.6%	10.9%	11.2%
Fresh pork segment					
External revenue	4,961	4,790	5,255	6,196	5,970
growth %	11.7%	-3.4%	9.7%	17.9%	-3.6%
Hog processed (mn heads)	34.43	33.95	34.62	35.32	36.02
growth %	8.0%	-1.4%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%
OP/head (US\$)	12.6	1.4	4.2	5.0	5.0
Hog production segment					
External revenue	510	619	666	782	749
growth %	-35.8%	21.4%	7.6%	17.3%	-4.1%
Hog produced (mn heads)	16.38	16.47	17.13	17.47	17.82
growth %	4.8%	0.5%	4.0%	2.0%	2.0%
OP/head (US\$)	(4.2)	(8.9)	3.3	15.0	8.5
Total external revenue	13,278	13,182	13,883	15,300	15,041
Packaged meat	7,807	7,773	7,962	8,322	8,321
Fresh pork	4,961	4,790	5,255	6,196	5,970
Hog production	510	619	666	782	749
Segment profit	923	615	954	1,245	1,154
growth %	3.9%	-33.4%	55.1%	30.5%	-7.3%
Packaged meat	726	785	844	908	932
Fresh pork	433	48	145	177	180
Hog production	(68)	(147)	57	262	151
Others	(168)	(71)	(92)	(102)	(110)
Segment profit margin	7.0%	4.7%	6.9%	8.1%	7.7%

Source: Company data, CMBIS estimates



Figure 18: Major assumptions for China market

(US\$mn)	FY17	FY18	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E
Packaged meat segment					
External revenue	3,312	3,458	3,614	4,088	4,170
growth %	-1.0%	4.4%	4.5%	13.1%	2.0%
Sales volume (mn metric tons)	1.58	1.60	1.60	1.62	1.65
growth %	-1.4%	1.1%	0.0%	1.0%	2.0%
ASP (Rmb/ton)	14,126	14,303	15,804	17,701	17,701
growth %	2.2%	1.3%	10.5%	12.0%	0.0%
OP margin %	20.9%	20.6%	18.1%	16.3%	19.5%
Fresh pork segment					
External revenue	3,888	3,584	4,086	3,433	4,229
growth %	-7.3%	-7.8%	14.0%	-16.0%	23.2%
Hog processed (mn heads)	14.27	16.31	13.37	8.02	11.23
growth %	15.5%	14.3%	-18.0%	-40.0%	40.0%
OP/head (Rmb)	48.8	72.7	145.0	80.0	50.0
Hog production segment					
External revenue	11	8	10	7	9
growth %	-21.4%	-27.3%	26.5%	-30.0%	32.0%
Hog produced (mn heads)	0.31	0.29	0.27	0.13	0.20
growth %	0.0%	-6.1%	-9.0%	-50.0%	50.0%
OP/head (Rmb)	498.0	113.0	-300.0	1000.0	400.0
Total external revenue	7,446	7,328	8,066	7,972	8,812
Packaged meat	3,312	3,458	3,614	4,088	4,170
Fresh pork	3,888	3,584	4,086	3,433	4,229
Hog production	11	8	10	7	9
Others	235	278	355	444	404
Segment profit	525	922	959	827	950
growth %	-36.2%	75.6%	4.1%	-13.8%	1 4.9 %
Packaged meat	692	712	654	666	813
Fresh pork	103	179	277	92	80
Hog production	23	5	(11)	19	11
Others	(293)	26	40	50	45
Segment profit margin	7.1%	12.6%	11.9%	10.4%	10.8%

Source: Company data, CMBIS estimates



Figure 19: Major assumptions for Europe market

(US\$mn)	FY17	FY18	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E
Packaged meat segment					
External revenue	658	916	971	1,072	1,163
growth %	8.4%	39.2%	6.0%	10.5%	8.5%
Sales volume (mn metric tons)	0.24	0.29	0.30	0.32	0.34
growth %	11.6%	18.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%
ASP (EUR/ton)	3,105	3,818	3,627	3,881	4,075
growth %	-0.5%	23.0%	-5.0%	7.0%	5.0%
OP margin	2.6%	5.5%	5.7%	6.2%	6.7%
Fresh pork segment					
External revenue	677	762	939	1,077	1,120
growth %	24.7%	12.6%	23.3%	14.6%	4.0%
Hog processed (mn heads)	5.09	5.83	6.70	7.37	8.11
growth %	0.6%	14.6%	15.0%	10.0%	10.0%
OP/head (EUR)	2.5	3.9	-5.0	-5.0	-2.0
Hog production segment					
External revenue	51	61	72	79	75
growth %	41.7%	19.6%	17.4%	10.3%	-4.6%
Hog produced (mn heads)	3.53	4.17	4.34	4.47	4.60
growth %	8.9%	18.0%	4.0%	3.0%	3.0%
OP/head (EUR)	32.4	8.2	25.0	23.0	16.0
Total external revenue	1,655	2,095	2,391	2,687	2,873
Packaged meat	658	916	971	1,072	1,163
Fresh pork	677	762	939	1,077	1,120
Hog production	51	61	72	79	75
Others	269	356	409	458	514
Segment profit	135	113	141	147	147
growth %	75.3%	-16.3%	25.1%	4.2%	-0.4%
Packaged meat	17	50	55	67	78
Fresh pork	11	19	(30)	(32)	(14)
Hog production	101	29	96	89	62
Others	6	15	20	24	20
Segment profit margin	8.2%	5.4%	5.9%	5.5%	5.1%

Source: Company data, CMBIS estimates





Income statement						Cash flow summary					
YE 31 Dec (US\$ mn)	FY17A	FY18A	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E	YE 31 Dec (US\$ mn)	FY17A	FY18A	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E
Revenue	22,379	22,605	24,340	25,958	26,726	Profit before tax	1,501	1,411	1,941	2,121	2,160
China	7,446	7,328	8,066	7,972	8,812	Depreciation and amortization	394	441	469	501	514
US	13,278	13,182	13,883	15,300	15,041	Change in working capital	(321)	(570)	(737)	178	89
EUR	1,655	2,095	2,391	2,687	2,873	Others	(62)	(27)	(354)	(393)	(441)
Cost of sales	(17,766)	(18,103)	(19,413)	(20,669)	(21,216)	Net cash from operating	1,512	1,255	1,319	2,407	2,322
Gross profit	4,613	4,502	4,927	5,288	5,511						
						Capex & investments	(530)	(811)	(800)	(600)	(600)
Other income and gains	113	98	89	93	102	Interest received	12	6	17	18	26
SG&A expenses	(2,753)	(2,871)	(2,883)	(3,085)	(3,283)	Others	(266)	(412)	(58)	(57)	(56)
Operating profit	1,973	1,729	2,133	2,297	2,330	Net cash from investing	(784)	(1,217)	(841)	(639)	(630)
Finance cost	(198)	(115)	(140)	(126)	(121)	Change of borrowings	64	4	300	(200)	(400)
Other expenses	(326)	(74)	(74)	(74)	(74)	Dividend paid	(668)	(795)	(447)	(776)	(842)
Other gains/(losses)	7	(21)	0	0	0	Others	13	1	0	0	0
Share of profit of associate	8	8	3	3	4	Net cash from financing	(591)	(790)	(147)	(976)	(1,242)
Share of profit of JV	14	23	18	20	22	-					
Profit before tax	1,478	1,550	1,941	2,121	2,160						
Income tax	(165)	(293)	(403)	(461)	(470)	Net change in cash	137	(752)	331	792	449
Non-controlling interests	(186)	(210)	(215)	(226)	(248)	Cash at the beginning	1,123	1,279	484	815	1,607
Net profit	1,127	1,047	1,323	1,433	1,443	Exchange difference	19	(43)	0	0	0
Adj. net profit	1,090	1,046	1,323	1,433	1,443	Cash at the end	1,279	484	815	1,607	2,056
						Bank and cash balance	1,371	525	856	1,648	2,097
						Bank overdraft	(92)	(41)	(41)	(41)	(41)

Balance sheet						Key ratios					
YE 31 Dec (US\$ mn)	FY17A	FY18A	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E	YE 31 Dec	FY17A	FY18A	FY19E	FY20E	FY21E
Non-current assets	9,592	9,838	10,191	10,313	10,425	Sales mix (%)					
PPE	5,037	5,300	5,644	5,756	5,855	China	33.3	32.4	33.1	30.7	33.0
Goodwill	3,580	3,581	3,572	3,563	3,554	US	59.3	58.3	57.0	58.9	56.3
JV/associates	295	352	374	397	423	EUR	7.4	9.3	9.8	10.3	10.7
Others	680	605	601	597	593						
						P&L ratios (%)					
Current assets	5,666	5,460	6,702	7,483	7,916	Gross profit margin	20.6	19.9	20.2	20.4	20.6
Cash and pledged deposits	1,440	579	1,235	1,748	2,060	Operating profit margin	8.8	7.6	8.8	8.8	8.7
Inventory	1,905	2,022	2,494	2,655	2,725	Net profit margin	5.0	4.6	5.4	5.5	5.4
Trade receivables	989	1,135	1,222	1,303	1,342	Adj. net profit margin	4.9	4.6	5.4	5.5	5.4
Others	1,332	1,724	1,751	1,777	1,789	Payout ratio	44.7	35.8	45.0	45.0	45.0
Current liabilities	3,499	3,328	3,831	3,804	3,478	Balance sheet ratios					
Borrowings	901	860	1,210	1,010	610	Current ratio (x)	1.6	1.4	1.7	2.0	2.3
Trade payables	1.076	977	1,048	1,116	1,145	Receivables turnover days	15	17	18	18	18
Other payables	1,472	1,430	1,533	1,633	1,676	Payables turnover days	20	21	19	19	19
Others	50	61	40	46	47	Inventory turnover days	37	40	46	49	46
						Asset turnover (x)	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5
Non-current liabilities	3,537	3,552	3,553	3,600	3,623	Net gearing ratio (%)	22	30	27	15	6
Borrowings	2,297	2,259	2,209	2,209	2,209	5 5 ()					
Deferred revenue	601	695	746	793	816	Returns (%)					
Others	639	598	598	598	598	Adj. ROAE	15.8	13.8	16.1	15.7	14.5
						Adj. ROAA	8.8	8.2	9.6	9.6	9.4
Minority Interest	777	672	815	861	911						
Total net assets	8,222	8,418	9,509	10,392	11,241	Per share data					
Shareholders' equity	7,445	7,746	8,694	9,531	10,329	Adj. EPS (US\$)	0.075	0.071	0.090	0.097	0.098
						DPS (HK\$)	0.27	0.20	0.32	0.34	0.34
						BVPS (US\$)	0.51	0.53	0.59	0.65	0.70

Source: Company data, CMBIS estimates

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