

The Hershey Company

Cocoa impact not as severe as expected;
bumping estimates

Reiterate Rating: NEUTRAL | PO: 210.00 USD | Price: 202.31 USD

Savings help offset inflation

4Q23 adj. EPS and 2024 financial outlook beat expectations (see [our results note](#)). Given the sustained increase in cocoa prices, we (and the market) were braced for a potential down earnings year in FY24. The combination of modestly lower than anticipated net inflation and the introduction of incremental cost savings resulted in a less of a blow from Cocoa and modestly better than expected EPS. HSY expects margins to contract YoY aligning with our expectations (down -200bps YoY, commodity inflation up low-double digits). Also HSY announced its Advancing Agility & Automation (AAA) cost saving initiative. The initiative is expected to generate \$300mm of pre-tax savings by 2026, targeting \$100mm of savings in FY24 with \$90mm coming from SG&A. There were investor concerns around whether the announced initiative was reactive to current inflation conditions vs proactive, though HSY has clarified that its work around initiatives have been ongoing for the past ~18 months. All things considered, HSY expects earnings growth to be flat for the year. The question mark moving forward is consumer demand (for one, will Salty softness improve?) and potential for incremental pricing actions.

Raising adj. EPS estimates for FY24, maintain FY25E-26E

We are raising our FY24 adj. EPS estimate to \$9.59 from \$9.50 & maintain our FY25/26 EPS estimates of \$10.10 & \$10.70. Our FY24 estimate contemplates GM contraction of ~200bps (in-line with outlook) & EBIT margin YoY decline driven by NA Confection.

FY24 modeling and phasing callouts

Sales: Total company organic sales growth largely driven by price, with volumes flat/slightly down. NA Confection and International organic sales growth in-line with LT algo, NA Salty below LT algo. **Margins:** most gross margin contraction in 1H24, with 2H24 seeing contraction but sequential improvement. NA Confection margins down YoY, Salty up YoY, Corporate down YoY driven by savings related to its AAA initiative.

Reiterate Neutral rating & raise PO to \$210

Reiterate Neutral & raise PO to \$210 (prior \$195) now based on 21x our CY25 EPS estimate (prior 19x). This is justified, in our view, as HSY has a range of dynamics coming into play in FY24: potential for gross margin pressure & some topline weakness driven by timing & increased demand elasticity, offset by the launch of its cost savings initiative, its innovation pipeline and low private label exposure compared to its peer set.

Estimates (Dec) (US\$)	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
EPS	8.52	9.59	9.59	10.10	10.70
EPS Change (YoY)	18.7%	12.6%	0%	5.3%	5.9%
Consensus EPS (Bloomberg)			9.82	10.35	10.93
DPS	4.01	4.61	4.89	5.13	5.37
Valuation (Dec)					
P/E	23.7x	21.1x	21.1x	20.0x	18.9x
Dividend Yield	2.0%	2.3%	2.4%	2.5%	2.7%
EV / EBITDA*	16.6x	14.9x	15.1x	14.5x	13.9x
Free Cash Flow Yield*	4.3%	4.4%	3.6%	5.2%	5.7%

* For full definitions of *IQmethod*SM measures, see page 5.

09 February 2024

Equity

Key Changes

(US\$)	Previous	Current
Price Obj.	195.00	210.00
2024E Rev (m)	11,522.9	11,428.1
2025E Rev (m)	11,799.0	11,701.7
2026E Rev (m)	12,067.9	11,968.1
2024E EPS	9.50	9.59

Bryan D. Spillane
Research Analyst
BofA
+1 646 855 1979
bryan.spillane@bofa.com

Peter T. Galbo, CFA
Research Analyst
BofA
+1 646 743 0175
peter.galbo@bofa.com

Yasmine Deswandhy
Research Analyst
BofA
+1 646 855 3745
yasmine.deswandhy@bofa.com

Stock Data

Price	202.31 USD
Price Objective	210.00 USD
Date Established	9-Feb-2024
Investment Opinion	A-2-7
52-Week Range	178.82 USD - 276.88 USD
Mkt Val (mn) / Shares Out (mn)	41,581 USD / 205.5
Free Float	92.0%
Average Daily Value (mn)	320.30 USD
BofA Ticker / Exchange	HSY / NYS
Bloomberg / Reuters	HSY US / HSY.N
ROE (2024E)	44.0%
Net Dbt to Eqty (Dec-2023A)	106.9%
ESGMeter TM	High

ESGMeter is not indicative of a company's future stock price performance and is not an investment recommendation or rating. ESGMeter is independent of BofA Global Research's equity investment rating, volatility risk rating, income rating, and price objective for that company. For full details, refer to "[BofA ESGMeter Methodology](#)".

LT algo: long-term algorithm

BofA Securities does and seeks to do business with issuers covered in its research reports. As a result, investors should be aware that the firm may have a conflict of interest that could affect the objectivity of this report. Investors should consider this report as only a single factor in making their investment decision. Refer to important disclosures on page 6 to 8. Analyst Certification on page 4. Price Objective Basis/Risk on page 4.

12657490

Timestamp: 09 February 2024 05:00AM EST

iQprofileSM The Hershey Company

iQmethodSM – Bus Performance*

(US\$ Millions)	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
Return on Capital Employed	22.8%	24.2%	22.4%	21.6%	20.6%
Return on Equity	58.2%	53.1%	44.0%	39.4%	34.6%
Operating Margin	23.1%	24.2%	23.1%	23.6%	24.1%
Free Cash Flow	1,808	1,833	1,492	2,149	2,363

iQmethodSM – Quality of Earnings*

(US\$ Millions)	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
Cash Realization Ratio	1.3x	1.3x	1.1x	1.3x	1.4x
Asset Replacement Ratio	1.4x	2.1x	1.6x	1.4x	1.4x
Tax Rate	14.6%	14.7%	13.3%	14.2%	13.9%
Net Debt-to-Equity Ratio	131.2%	106.9%	90.2%	60.8%	35.3%
Interest Cover	17.5x	17.8x	15.6x	17.3x	18.0x

Income Statement Data (Dec)

(US\$ Millions)	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
Sales	10,419	11,165	11,428	11,702	11,968
% Change	16.1%	7.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%
Gross Profit	4,582	5,056	4,947	5,100	5,252
% Change	13.6%	10.3%	-2.2%	3.1%	3.0%
EBITDA	2,784	3,093	3,046	3,175	3,304
% Change	17.9%	11.1%	-1.5%	4.3%	4.1%
Net Interest & Other Income	(344)	(389)	(395)	(385)	(385)
Net Income (Adjusted)	1,760	1,971	1,950	2,043	2,153
% Change	17.9%	12.0%	-1.1%	4.8%	5.4%

Free Cash Flow Data (Dec)

(US\$ Millions)	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
Net Income from Cont Operations (GAAP)	1,760	1,971	1,950	2,043	2,153
Depreciation & Amortization	379	394	400	410	419
Change in Working Capital	(108)	(79)	(531)	(83)	26
Deferred Taxation Charge	37	0	0	0	0
Other Adjustments, Net	260	365	299	364	364
Capital Expenditure	(519)	(817)	(625)	(585)	(598)
Free Cash Flow	1,808	1,833	1,492	2,149	2,363
% Change	103.0%	1.4%	-18.6%	44.0%	10.0%
Share / Issue Repurchase	(389)	(315)	(400)	(300)	(300)
Cost of Dividends Paid	(775)	(896)	(994)	(1,038)	(1,080)
Change in Debt	(250)	117	0	0	0

Balance Sheet Data (Dec)

(US\$ Millions)	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
Cash & Equivalents	464	402	540	1,391	2,414
Trade Receivables	711	824	852	872	891
Other Current Assets	1,445	1,687	1,737	1,727	1,715
Property, Plant & Equipment	2,770	3,310	3,535	3,710	3,890
Other Non-Current Assets	5,559	5,681	5,552	5,445	5,445
Total Assets	10,949	11,903	12,216	13,145	14,355
Short-Term Debt	1,447	1,025	1,025	1,025	1,025
Other Current Liabilities	1,810	1,983	1,660	1,694	1,728
Long-Term Debt	3,344	3,789	3,789	3,789	3,789
Other Non-Current Liabilities	1,048	1,006	1,006	1,006	1,006
Total Liabilities	7,649	7,804	7,480	7,514	7,548
Total Equity	3,300	4,126	4,736	5,631	6,806
Total Equity & Liabilities	10,949	11,930	12,216	13,145	14,354

* For full definitions of iQmethodSM measures, see page 5.

Company Sector

Food Processors

Company Description

The Hershey Company (HSY) is the No. 1 confectionery company in the US, with sales over \$11.1 billion and operating profit over \$2.6bn. Key brands include Hershey's, Reese's, Kit Kat, Twizzlers and Ice Breakers. HSY also produces salty snacks, popcorn, cookies, snack bars, baking ingredients, and toppings. HSY generates just over 90% of net sales in North America with remaining sales from international markets.

Investment Rationale

We rate HSY shares as a Neutral. As we look to CY24, we believe that HSY could see lower than average growth. Our valuation also reflects limited scope for the market to put upward pressure on consumer staples valuations.

Stock Data

Average Daily Volume

1,583,197

Quarterly Earnings Estimates

	2023	2024
Q1	2.96A	2.80E
Q2	2.01A	1.84E
Q3	2.60A	2.80E
Q4	2.02A	2.15E

Income statement

Exhibit 1: HSY summary income statement

We raise our FY24 adj. EPS to \$9.59

Income Statement		Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23		Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24			
(\$ in millions, except per share data)	2022	1Q23	2Q23	3Q23	4Q23	2023	1Q24E	2Q24E	3Q24E	4Q24E	2024E	2025E	2026E
Sales	\$10,419.3	\$2,987.6	\$2,490.3	\$3,030.0	\$2,657.1	\$11,165.0	\$3,173.4	\$2,414.5	\$3,064.1	\$2,776.2	\$11,428.1	\$11,701.7	\$11,968.1
Cost Of Goods	\$5,837.7	\$1,594.0	\$1,364.4	\$1,668.5	\$1,482.5	\$6,109.4	\$1,788.3	\$1,383.3	\$1,733.2	\$1,576.7	\$6,481.5	\$6,601.6	\$6,716.0
As % Sales	56.0%	53.4%	54.8%	55.1%	55.8%	54.7%	56.4%	57.3%	56.6%	56.8%	56.7%	56.4%	56.1%
Gross Profit	\$4,581.6	\$1,393.6	\$1,125.8	\$1,361.5	\$1,174.6	\$5,055.6	\$1,385.1	\$1,031.2	\$1,330.9	\$1,199.5	\$4,946.6	\$5,100.1	\$5,252.1
Gross Margin	44.0%	46.6%	45.2%	44.9%	44.2%	45.3%	43.6%	42.7%	43.4%	43.2%	43.3%	43.6%	43.9%
SM&A Expenses	\$2,176.2	\$563.0	\$555.0	\$608.1	\$630.4	\$2,356.5	\$618.1	\$517.7	\$562.3	\$603.0	\$2,301.1	\$2,334.5	\$2,366.6
SM&A % Sales	20.9%	18.8%	22.3%	20.1%	23.7%	21.1%	19.5%	21.4%	18.4%	21.7%	20.1%	20.0%	19.8%
Operating Profit	\$2,405.4	\$830.6	\$570.9	\$753.4	\$544.2	\$2,699.1	\$767.0	\$513.6	\$768.5	\$596.5	\$2,645.6	\$2,765.6	\$2,885.5
Operating Profit Margin	23.1%	27.8%	22.9%	24.9%	20.5%	24.2%	24.2%	21.3%	25.1%	21.5%	23.1%	23.6%	24.1%
Interest Expense, Net	\$137.6	\$37.7	\$36.7	\$39.8	\$37.7	\$151.8	\$42.5	\$42.5	\$42.5	\$42.5	\$170.1	\$160.0	\$160.0
Other Expense (Income), net	\$206.2	\$3.0	\$84.5	\$42.8	\$107.0	\$237.2	\$10.0	\$12.0	\$48.0	\$155.0	\$225.0	\$225.0	\$225.0
Pretax Income	\$2,061.7	\$790.0	\$449.7	\$670.9	\$399.6	\$2,310.1	\$714.4	\$459.0	\$678.0	\$399.0	\$2,250.5	\$2,380.6	\$2,500.5
Income Taxes	\$301.7	\$180.5	\$37.2	\$136.7	(\$15.1)	\$339.3	\$142.9	\$84.9	\$108.5	(\$35.9)	\$300.4	\$337.3	\$347.7
Tax Rate	14.6%	22.8%	8.3%	20.4%	(3.8%)	14.7%	20.0%	18.5%	16.0%	(9.0%)	13.3%	14.2%	13.9%
Net Income Before Extraordinary Items	\$1,760.1	\$609.5	\$412.5	\$534.1	\$414.7	\$1,970.8	\$571.6	\$374.1	\$569.5	\$434.9	\$1,950.1	\$2,043.3	\$2,152.8
Net Margin	16.9%	20.4%	16.6%	17.6%	15.6%	17.7%	18.0%	15.5%	18.6%	15.7%	17.1%	17.5%	18.0%
Extraordinary Items	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Net Income	\$1,760.1	\$609.5	\$412.5	\$534.1	\$414.7	\$1,970.8	\$571.6	\$374.1	\$569.5	\$434.9	\$1,950.1	\$2,043.3	\$2,152.8
Net Margin	16.9%	20.4%	16.6%	17.6%	15.6%	17.7%	18.0%	15.5%	18.6%	15.7%	17.1%	17.5%	18.0%
Fully Diluted Adj EPS	\$8.52	\$2.96	\$2.01	\$2.60	\$2.02	\$9.59	\$2.80	\$1.84	\$2.80	\$2.15	\$9.59	\$10.10	\$10.70
EPS (1)	\$8.52	\$2.96	\$2.01	\$2.60	\$2.02	\$9.59	\$2.80	\$1.84	\$2.80	\$2.15	\$9.59	\$10.10	\$10.70
Diluted Shares Outstanding	206.6	205.8	205.5	205.5	205.4	205.6	204.4	203.6	203.1	202.6	203.4	202.4	201.2
Dividends Per Share	\$4.01	\$1.04	\$1.19	\$1.19	\$1.19	\$4.61	\$1.19	\$1.19	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$4.89	\$5.13	\$5.37
Year-Over-Year Growth	2022	1Q23	2Q23	3Q23	4Q23	2023	1Q24E	2Q24E	3Q24E	4Q24E	2024E	2025E	2026E
Sales	16.1%	12.1%	5.0%	11.1%	0.2%	7.2%	6.2%	(3.0%)	1.1%	4.5%	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%
Gross Profit	13.6%	14.1%	8.1%	17.5%	1.3%	10.3%	(0.6%)	(8.4%)	(2.2%)	2.1%	(2.2%)	3.1%	3.0%
Operating Profit	17.1%	17.3%	8.3%	22.4%	(2.0%)	12.2%	(7.7%)	(10.0%)	2.0%	9.6%	(2.0%)	4.5%	4.3%
Net Income Before Extraordinary Items	17.9%	16.4%	10.8%	19.5%	(0.6%)	12.0%	(6.2%)	(9.3%)	6.6%	4.9%	(1.1%)	4.8%	5.4%
Fully Diluted Adj EPS	18.6%	17.2%	11.3%	19.9%	(0.1%)	12.5%	(5.5%)	(8.5%)	7.9%	6.3%	(0.0%)	5.3%	6.0%
Diluted Shares Outstanding	(0.6%)	(0.7%)	(0.4%)	(0.4%)	(0.5%)	(0.5%)	(0.7%)	(0.9%)	(1.2%)	(1.3%)	(1.0%)	(0.5%)	(0.6%)
Dividends Per Share	17.6%	15.0%	15.1%	15.1%	15.1%	15.0%	15.1%	0.0%	5.0%	5.0%	6.0%	4.9%	4.7%
Dividend Payout Ratio	47.1%	35.0%	59.4%	45.9%	59.0%	48.1%	42.6%	64.9%	44.6%	58.3%	51.0%	50.8%	50.2%
Margin Analysis	2022	1Q23	2Q23	3Q23	4Q23	2023	1Q24E	2Q24E	3Q24E	4Q24E	2024E	2025E	2026E
Gross Margin	44.0%	46.6%	45.2%	44.9%	44.2%	45.3%	43.6%	42.7%	43.4%	43.2%	43.3%	43.6%	43.9%
bp change	-97 bp	83 bp	132 bp	247 bp	47 bp	131 bp	-300 bp	-250 bp	-150 bp	-100 bp	-200 bp	30 bp	30 bp
Operating Profit Margin	23.1%	27.8%	22.9%	24.9%	20.5%	24.2%	24.2%	21.3%	25.1%	21.5%	23.1%	23.6%	24.1%
bp change	19 bp	125 bp	72 bp	231 bp	-46 bp	109 bp	-363 bp	-165 bp	22 bp	100 bp	-103 bp	48 bp	48 bp
EBITDA margin	26.7%	31.1%	27.0%	28.3%	23.9%	27.7%	27.7%	24.8%	28.6%	25.0%	26.6%	27.1%	27.6%
bp change	39 bp	112 bp	84 bp	227 bp	-81 bp	98 bp	-342 bp	-223 bp	31 bp	110 bp	-105 bp	48 bp	48 bp
Credit Analysis	2022	1Q23	2Q23	3Q23	4Q23	2023	1Q24E	2Q24E	3Q24E	4Q24E	2024E	2025E	2026E
Operating profit / interest expense	17.5x	22.0x	15.6x	19.0x	14.4x	17.8x	18.0x	12.1x	18.1x	14.0x	15.6x	17.3x	18.0x
EBITDA	2,784	929	672	857	635	3,093	878	598	876	694	3,046	3,175	3,304
Net debt / EBITDA	1.6x	1.5x	1.5x	1.4x	1.4x	1.4x	1.4x	1.6x	1.6x	1.4x	1.4x	1.1x	0.7x

Source: HSY, BofA Global Research estimates

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH



Price objective basis & risk

The Hershey Company (HSY)

Our \$210 price objective is based on 21x our CY25 EPS estimate. This is justified, in our view, as HSY has a range of dynamics coming into play in FY24 including potential for gross margin pressure and some topline weakness driven by timing and increased demand elasticity, offset by its cost savings initiative, innovation pipeline coming on-line and low private label exposure compared to its peer set..

Upside risks to our PO are 1) innovation pipeline to drive market share gains in a low private label exposure environment, 2) faster moderation of inflation, particularly in cocoa/sugar 3) elasticities coming in better than expected.

Downside risks to our PO are 1) elevated inflation taking longer than expected to taper off, particularly if cocoa/sugar prices are sticky, 2) competitors taking market share from HSY, 3) negative surprises on packaging, logistics, or special ingredient costs that aren't traditionally hedged by HSY, 4) weaker volume lift from innovation pipeline.

Analyst Certification

I, Bryan D. Spillane, hereby certify that the views expressed in this research report accurately reflect my personal views about the subject securities and issuers. I also certify that no part of my compensation was, is, or will be, directly or indirectly, related to the specific recommendations or view expressed in this research report.

US - Consumables Coverage Cluster

Investment rating	Company	BofA Ticker	Bloomberg symbol	Analyst
BUY				
	BellRing Brands Inc	BRBR	BRBR US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Coca-Cola Europacific Partners plc	CCEP	CCEP US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Colgate-Palmolive Company	CL	CL US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Constellation Brands	STZ	STZ US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Coty Inc.	COTY	COTY US	Anna Lizzul
	e.l.f. Beauty	ELF	ELF US	Anna Lizzul
	Freshpet, Inc.	FRPT	FRPT US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Kenvue Inc.	KVUE	KVUE US	Anna Lizzul
	Keurig Dr Pepper	KDP	KDP US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Kraft Heinz Company	KHC	KHC US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Lamb Weston Holdings Inc	LW	LW US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	McCormick & Co.	MKC	MKC US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	Mondelez International	MDLZ	MDLZ US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Monster Beverage Corporation	MNST	MNST US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	PepsiCo	PEP	PEP US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Philip Morris International	PM	PM US	Lisa K. Lewandowski
	Pilgrim's Pride Corp.	PPC	PPC US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	The Coca Cola Company	KO	KO US	Bryan D. Spillane
	The Procter & Gamble Company	PG	PG US	Bryan D. Spillane
NEUTRAL				
	Altria Group	MO	MO US	Lisa K. Lewandowski
	Celsius Holdings Inc	CELH	CELH US	Jonathan Keypour
	Church & Dwight	CHD	CHD US	Anna Lizzul
	Clorox	CLX	CLX US	Anna Lizzul
	Conagra Brands, Inc.	CAG	CAG US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	Estee Lauder Companies Inc.	EL	EL US	Bryan D. Spillane
	General Mills	GIS	GIS US	Bryan D. Spillane
	JM Smucker Company	SJM	SJM US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	Kellanova	K	K US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	Molson Coors Beverage Company	TAP	TAP US	Bryan D. Spillane
	The Duckhorn Portfolio, Inc.	NAPA	NAPA US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	The Hershey Company	HSY	HSY US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Tyson Foods, Inc.	TSN	TSN US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA

US - Consumables Coverage Cluster

Investment rating	Company	BofA Ticker	Bloomberg symbol	Analyst
	Utz Brands	UTZ	UTZ US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	WK Kellogg Co	KLG	KLG US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
UNDERPERFORM				
	Brown-Forman Corporation	BFB	BF/B US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Campbell Soup Company	CPB	CPB US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	Canopy Growth	YWEED	WEED CN	Lisa K. Lewandowski
	Canopy Growth	CGC	CGC US	Lisa K. Lewandowski
	Cronos Group	YCRON	CRON CN	Lisa K. Lewandowski
	Cronos Group	CRON	CRON US	Lisa K. Lewandowski
	Dole plc	DOLE	DOLE US	Bryan D. Spillane
	Herbalife Nutrition Ltd	HLF	HLF US	Anna Lizzul
	Hormel Foods Corp.	HRL	HRL US	Peter T. Galbo, CFA
	Kimberly-Clark	KMB	KMB US	Anna Lizzul
RSTR				
	The Vita Coco Company, Inc.	COCO	COCO US	Bryan D. Spillane

iQmethodSM Measures Definitions**Business Performance**

Return On Capital Employed

Return On Equity
Operating Margin
Earnings Growth
Free Cash Flow

Quality of Earnings

Cash Realization Ratio
Asset Replacement Ratio
Tax Rate
Net Debt-To-Equity Ratio
Interest Cover

Valuation Toolkit

Price / Earnings Ratio
Price / Book Value
Dividend Yield
Free Cash Flow Yield
Enterprise Value / Sales

EV / EBITDA

Numerator

$\text{NOPAT} = (\text{EBIT} + \text{Interest Income}) \times (1 - \text{Tax Rate}) + \text{Goodwill Amortization}$

Net Income
Operating Profit
Expected 5 Year CAGR From Latest Actual
Cash Flow From Operations – Total Capex

Numerator

Cash Flow From Operations
Capex
Tax Charge
Net Debt = Total Debt – Cash & Equivalents
EBIT

Numerator

Current Share Price
Current Share Price
Annualised Declared Cash Dividend
Cash Flow From Operations – Total Capex
 $\text{EV} = \text{Current Share Price} \times \text{Current Shares} + \text{Minority Equity} + \text{Net Debt} + \text{Other LT Liabilities}$
Enterprise Value

Denominator

Total Assets – Current Liabilities + ST Debt + Accumulated Goodwill
Amortization
Shareholders' Equity
Sales
N/A
N/A

Denominator

Net Income
Depreciation
Pre-Tax Income
Total Equity
Interest Expense

Denominator

Diluted Earnings Per Share (Basis As Specified)
Shareholders' Equity / Current Basic Shares
Current Share Price
 $\text{Market Cap} = \text{Current Share Price} \times \text{Current Basic Shares}$
Sales

Basic EBIT + Depreciation + Amortization

iQmethodSM is the set of BofA Global Research standard measures that serve to maintain global consistency under three broad headings: Business Performance, Quality of Earnings, and valuations. The key features of iQmethod are: A consistently structured, detailed, and transparent methodology. Guidelines to maximize the effectiveness of the comparative valuation process, and to identify some common pitfalls.

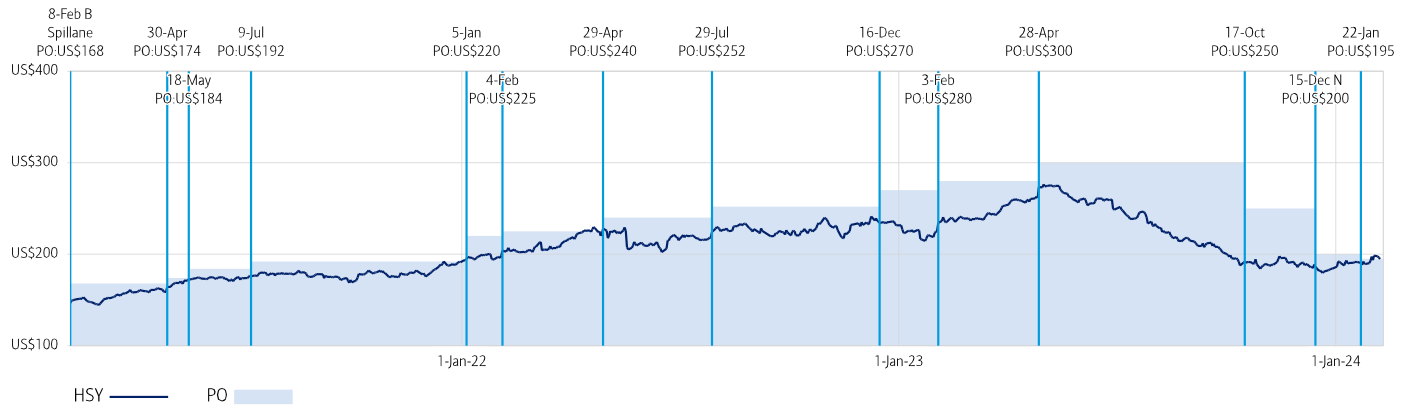
iQdatabase[®] is our real-time global research database that is sourced directly from our equity analysts' earnings models and includes forecasted as well as historical data for income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements for companies covered by BofA Global Research.

iQprofileSM, iQmethodSM are service marks of Bank of America Corporation. iQdatabase[®] is a registered service mark of Bank of America Corporation.

Disclosures

Important Disclosures

Hershey (HSY) Price Chart



B: Buy, N: Neutral, U: Underperform, PO: Price Objective, NA: No longer valid, NR: No Rating

The Investment Opinion System is contained at the end of the report under the heading "Fundamental Equity Opinion Key". Dark grey shading indicates the security is restricted with the opinion suspended. Medium grey shading indicates the security is under review with the opinion withdrawn. Light grey shading indicates the security is not covered. Chart is current as of a date no more than one trading day prior to the date of the report.

Equity Investment Rating Distribution: Food Group (as of 31 Dec 2023)

Coverage Universe	Count	Percent	Inv. Banking Relationships ^{R1}	Count	Percent
Buy	33	49.25%	Buy	16	48.48%
Hold	17	25.37%	Hold	10	58.82%
Sell	17	25.37%	Sell	8	47.06%

Equity Investment Rating Distribution: Global Group (as of 31 Dec 2023)

Coverage Universe	Count	Percent	Inv. Banking Relationships ^{R1}	Count	Percent
Buy	1895	53.62%	Buy	1083	57.15%
Hold	832	23.54%	Hold	454	54.57%
Sell	807	22.84%	Sell	383	47.46%

^{R1} Issuers that were investment banking clients of BofA Securities or one of its affiliates within the past 12 months. For purposes of this Investment Rating Distribution, the coverage universe includes only stocks. A stock rated Neutral is included as a Hold, and a stock rated Underperform is included as a Sell.

FUNDAMENTAL EQUITY OPINION KEY: Opinions include a Volatility Risk Rating, an Investment Rating and an Income Rating. **VOLATILITY RISK RATINGS**, indicators of potential price fluctuation, are: A - Low, B - Medium and C - High. **INVESTMENT RATINGS** reflect the analyst's assessment of both a stock's absolute total return potential as well as its attractiveness for investment relative to other stocks within its Coverage Cluster (defined below). Our investment ratings are: 1 - Buy stocks are expected to have a total return of at least 10% and are the most attractive stocks in the coverage cluster; 2 - Neutral stocks are expected to remain flat or increase in value and are less attractive than Buy rated stocks and 3 - Underperform stocks are the least attractive stocks in a coverage cluster. An investment rating of 6 (No Rating) indicates that a stock is no longer trading on the basis of fundamentals. Analysts assign investment ratings considering, among other things, the 0-12 month total return expectation for a stock and the firm's guidelines for ratings dispersions (shown in the table below). The current price objective for a stock should be referenced to better understand the total return expectation at any given time. The price objective reflects the analyst's view of the potential price appreciation (depreciation).

Investment rating	Total return expectation (within 12-month period of date of initial rating)	Ratings dispersion guidelines for coverage cluster ^{R2}
Buy	≥ 10%	≤ 70%
Neutral	≥ 0%	≤ 30%
Underperform	N/A	≥ 20%

^{R2} Ratings dispersions may vary from time to time where BofA Global Research believes it better reflects the investment prospects of stocks in a Coverage Cluster.

INCOME RATINGS, indicators of potential cash dividends, are: 7 - same/higher (dividend considered to be secure), 8 - same/lower (dividend not considered to be secure) and 9 - pays no cash dividend. **Coverage Cluster** is comprised of stocks covered by a single analyst or two or more analysts sharing a common industry, sector, region or other classification(s). A stock's coverage cluster is included in the most recent BofA Global Research report referencing the stock.

Price Charts for the securities referenced in this research report are available on the [Price Charts website](#), or call 1-800-MERRILL to have them mailed.

BofAS or one of its affiliates acts as a market maker for the equity securities recommended in the report: Hershey.

BofAS or an affiliate was a manager of a public offering of securities of this issuer within the last 12 months: Hershey Foods.

The issuer is or was, within the last 12 months, an investment banking client of BofAS and/or one or more of its affiliates: Hershey Foods.

BofAS or an affiliate has received compensation from the issuer for non-investment banking services or products within the past 12 months: Hershey Foods.

The issuer is or was, within the last 12 months, a non-securities business client of BofAS and/or one or more of its affiliates: Hershey Foods.

BofAS or an affiliate has received compensation for investment banking services from this issuer within the past 12 months: Hershey Foods.

BofAS or an affiliate expects to receive or intends to seek compensation for investment banking services from this issuer or an affiliate of the issuer within the next three months: Hershey Foods.

BofAS or one of its affiliates is willing to sell to, or buy from, clients the common equity of the issuer on a principal basis: Hershey.

The issuer is or was, within the last 12 months, a securities business client (non-investment banking) of BofAS and/or one or more of its affiliates: Hershey Foods. BofA Global Research personnel (including the analyst(s) responsible for this report) receive compensation based upon, among other factors, the overall profitability of Bank of America Corporation, including profits derived from investment banking. The analyst(s) responsible for this report may also receive compensation based upon, among other factors, the overall profitability of the Bank's sales and trading businesses relating to the class of securities or financial instruments for which such analyst is responsible.

Other Important Disclosures

From time to time research analysts conduct site visits of covered issuers. BofA Global Research policies prohibit research analysts from accepting payment or reimbursement for travel expenses from the issuer for such visits.

Prices are indicative and for information purposes only. Except as otherwise stated in the report, for any recommendation in relation to an equity security, the price referenced is the publicly traded price of the security as of close of business on the day prior to the date of the report or, if the report is published during intraday trading, the price referenced is indicative of the traded price as of the date and time of the report and in relation to a debt security (including equity preferred and CDS), prices are indicative as of the date and time of the report and are from various sources including BofA Securities trading desks.

The date and time of completion of the production of any recommendation in this report shall be the date and time of dissemination of this report as recorded in the report timestamp.

Recipients who are not institutional investors or market professionals should seek the advice of their independent financial advisor before considering information in this report in connection with any investment decision, or for a necessary explanation of its contents.

Officers of BofAS or one or more of its affiliates (other than research analysts) may have a financial interest in securities of the issuer(s) or in related investments.

Refer to [BofA Global Research policies relating to conflicts of interest](#).

'BofA Securities' includes BofA Securities, Inc. ('BofAS') and its affiliates. Investors should contact their BofA Securities representative or Merrill Global Wealth Management financial advisor if they have questions concerning this report or concerning the appropriateness of any investment idea described herein for such investor. 'BofA Securities' is a global brand for BofA Global Research.

Information relating to Non-US affiliates of BofA Securities and Distribution of Affiliate Research Reports:

BofAS and/or Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated ("MLPF&S") may in the future distribute, information of the following non-US affiliates in the US (short name: legal name, regulator): Merrill Lynch (South Africa): Merrill Lynch South Africa (Pty) Ltd., regulated by The Financial Service Board; MLI (UK): Merrill Lynch International, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA); BofASE (France): BofA Securities Europe SA is authorized by the Autorité de Contrôle Prudentiel et de Résolution (ACPR) and regulated by the ACPR and the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (AMF). BofA Securities Europe SA ("BofASE") with registered address at 51, rue La Boétie, 75008 Paris is registered under no 842 602 690 RCS Paris. In accordance with the provisions of French Code Monétaire et Financier (Monetary and Financial Code), BofASE is an établissement de crédit et d'investissement (credit and investment institution) that is authorised and supervised by the European Central Bank and the Autorité de Contrôle Prudentiel et de Résolution (ACPR) and regulated by the ACPR and the Autorité des Marchés Financiers. BofASE's share capital can be found at www.bofam.com/BofASEdisclaimer; BofA Europe (Milan): Bank of America Europe Designated Activity Company, Milan Branch, regulated by the Bank of Italy, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI); BofA Europe (Frankfurt): Bank of America Europe Designated Activity Company, Frankfurt Branch regulated by BaFin, the ECB and the CBI; BofA Europe (Madrid): Bank of America Europe Designated Activity Company, Sucursal en España, regulated by the Bank of Spain, the ECB and the CBI; Merrill Lynch (Australia): Merrill Lynch Equities (Australia) Limited, regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission; Merrill Lynch (Hong Kong): Merrill Lynch (Asia Pacific) Limited, regulated by the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission (HKSCF); Merrill Lynch (Singapore): Merrill Lynch (Singapore) Pte Ltd, regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS); Merrill Lynch (Canada): Merrill Lynch Canada Inc, regulated by the Canadian Investment Regulatory Organization; Merrill Lynch (Mexico): Merrill Lynch Mexico, SA de CV, Casa de Bolsa, regulated by the Comisión Nacional Bancaria y de Valores; Merrill Lynch (Argentina): Merrill Lynch Argentina SA, regulated by Comisión Nacional de Valores; BofAS Japan: BofA Securities Japan Co., Ltd., regulated by the Financial Services Agency; Merrill Lynch (Seoul): Merrill Lynch International, LLC Seoul Branch, regulated by the Financial Supervisory Service; Merrill Lynch (Taiwan): Merrill Lynch Securities (Taiwan) Ltd., regulated by the Securities and Futures Bureau; BofAS India: BofA Securities India Limited, regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI); Merrill Lynch (Israel): Merrill Lynch Israel Limited, regulated by Israel Securities Authority; Merrill Lynch (DIFC): Merrill Lynch International (DIFC Branch), regulated by the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA); Merrill Lynch (Brazil): Merrill Lynch S.A. Corretora de Títulos e Valores Mobiliários, regulated by Comissão de Valores Mobiliários; Merrill Lynch KSA Company: Merrill Lynch Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Company, regulated by the Capital Market Authority.

This information: has been approved for publication and is distributed in the United Kingdom (UK) to professional clients and eligible counterparties (as each is defined in the rules of the FCA and the PRA) by MLI (UK), which is authorized by the PRA and regulated by the FCA and the PRA - details about the extent of our regulation by the FCA and PRA are available from us on request; has been approved for publication and is distributed in the European Economic Area (EEA) by BofASE (France), which is authorized by the ACPR and regulated by the ACPR and the AMF; has been considered and distributed in Japan by BofAS Japan, a registered securities dealer under the Financial Instruments and Exchange Act in Japan, or its permitted affiliates; is issued and distributed in Hong Kong by Merrill Lynch (Hong Kong) which is regulated by HKSCF; is issued and distributed in Taiwan by Merrill Lynch (Taiwan); is issued and distributed in India by BofAS India; and is issued and distributed in Singapore to institutional investors and/or accredited investors (each as defined under the Financial Advisers Regulations) by Merrill Lynch (Singapore) (Company Registration No 198602883D). Merrill Lynch (Singapore) is regulated by MAS. Merrill Lynch Equities (Australia) Limited (ABN 65 006 276 795), AFS License 235132 (MLEA) distributes this information in Australia only to 'Wholesale' clients as defined by s.761G of the Corporations Act 2001. With the exception of Bank of America N.A., Australia Branch, neither MLEA nor any of its affiliates involved in preparing this information is an Authorised Deposit-Taking Institution under the Banking Act 1959 nor regulated by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. No approval is required for publication or distribution of this information in Brazil and its local distribution is by Merrill Lynch (Brazil) in accordance with applicable regulations. Merrill Lynch (DIFC) is authorized and regulated by the DFSA. Information prepared and issued by Merrill Lynch (DIFC) is done so in accordance with the requirements of the DFSA conduct of business rules. BofA Europe (Frankfurt) distributes this information in Germany and is regulated by BaFin, the ECB and the CBI. BofA Securities entities, including BofA Europe and BofASE (France), may outsource/delegate the marketing and/or provision of certain research services or aspects of research services to other branches or members of the BofA Securities group. You may be contacted by a different BofA Securities entity acting for and on behalf of your service provider where permitted by applicable law. This does not change your service provider.

Please refer to the [Electronic Communications Disclaimers](#) for further information.

This information has been prepared and issued by BofAS and/or one or more of its non-US affiliates. The author(s) of this information may not be licensed to carry on regulated activities in your jurisdiction and, if not licensed, do not hold themselves out as being able to do so. BofAS and/or MLPF&S is the distributor of this information in the US and accepts full responsibility for information distributed to BofAS and/or MLPF&S clients in the US by its non-US affiliates. Any US person receiving this information and wishing to effect any transaction in any security discussed herein should do so through BofAS and/or MLPF&S and not such foreign affiliates. Hong Kong recipients of this information should contact Merrill Lynch (Asia Pacific) Limited in respect of any matters relating to dealing in securities or provision of specific advice on securities or any other matters arising from, or in connection with, this information. Singapore recipients of this information should contact Merrill Lynch (Singapore) Pte Ltd in respect of any matters arising from, or in connection with, this information. For clients that are not accredited investors, expert investors or institutional investors Merrill Lynch (Singapore) Pte Ltd accepts full responsibility for the contents of this information distributed to such clients in Singapore.

General Investment Related Disclosures:

Taiwan Readers: Neither the information nor any opinion expressed herein constitutes an offer or a solicitation of an offer to transact in any securities or other financial instrument. No part of this report may be used or reproduced or quoted in any manner whatsoever in Taiwan by the press or any other person without the express written consent of BofA Securities.

This document provides general information only, and has been prepared for, and is intended for general distribution to, BofA Securities clients. Neither the information nor any opinion expressed constitutes an offer or an invitation to make an offer, to buy or sell any securities or other financial instrument or any derivative related to such securities or instruments (e.g., options, futures, warrants, and contracts for differences). This document is not intended to provide personal investment advice and it does not take into account the specific investment objectives, financial situation and the particular needs of, and is not directed to, any specific person(s). This document and its content do not constitute, and should not be considered to constitute, investment advice for purposes of ERISA, the US tax code, the Investment Advisers Act or otherwise. Investors should seek financial advice regarding the appropriateness of investing in financial instruments and implementing investment strategies discussed or recommended in this document and should understand that statements regarding future prospects may not be realized. Any decision to purchase or subscribe for securities in any offering must be based solely on existing public information on such security or the information in the prospectus or other offering document issued in connection with such offering, and not on this document.

Securities and other financial instruments referred to herein, or recommended, offered or sold by BofA Securities, are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and are not



deposits or other obligations of any insured depository institution (including, Bank of America, N.A.). Investments in general and, derivatives, in particular, involve numerous risks, including, among others, market risk, counterparty default risk and liquidity risk. No security, financial instrument or derivative is suitable for all investors. Digital assets are extremely speculative, volatile and are largely unregulated. In some cases, securities and other financial instruments may be difficult to value or sell and reliable information about the value or risks related to the security or financial instrument may be difficult to obtain. Investors should note that income from such securities and other financial instruments, if any, may fluctuate and that price or value of such securities and instruments may rise or fall and, in some cases, investors may lose their entire principal investment. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. Levels and basis for taxation may change.

This report may contain a short-term trading idea or recommendation, which highlights a specific near-term catalyst or event impacting the issuer or the market that is anticipated to have a short-term price impact on the equity securities of the issuer. Short-term trading ideas and recommendations are different from and do not affect a stock's fundamental equity rating, which reflects both a longer term total return expectation and attractiveness for investment relative to other stocks within its Coverage Cluster. Short-term trading ideas and recommendations may be more or less positive than a stock's fundamental equity rating.

BoFA Securities is aware that the implementation of the ideas expressed in this report may depend upon an investor's ability to "short" securities or other financial instruments and that such action may be limited by regulations prohibiting or restricting "shortselling" in many jurisdictions. Investors are urged to seek advice regarding the applicability of such regulations prior to executing any short idea contained in this report.

Foreign currency rates of exchange may adversely affect the value, price or income of any security or financial instrument mentioned herein. Investors in such securities and instruments, including ADRs, effectively assume currency risk.

BoFA or one of its affiliates is a regular issuer of traded financial instruments linked to securities that may have been recommended in this report. BoFA or one of its affiliates may, at any time, hold a trading position (long or short) in the securities and financial instruments discussed in this report.

BoFA Securities, through business units other than BoFA Global Research, may have issued and may in the future issue trading ideas or recommendations that are inconsistent with, and reach different conclusions from, the information presented herein. Such ideas or recommendations may reflect different time frames, assumptions, views and analytical methods of the persons who prepared them, and BoFA Securities is under no obligation to ensure that such other trading ideas or recommendations are brought to the attention of any recipient of this information.

In the event that the recipient received this information pursuant to a contract between the recipient and BoFA for the provision of research services for a separate fee, and in connection therewith BoFA may be deemed to be acting as an investment adviser, such status relates, if at all, solely to the person with whom BoFA has contracted directly and does not extend beyond the delivery of this report (unless otherwise agreed specifically in writing by BoFA). If such recipient uses the services of BoFA in connection with the sale or purchase of a security referred to herein, BoFA may act as principal for its own account or as agent for another person. BoFA is and continues to act solely as a broker-dealer in connection with the execution of any transactions, including transactions in any securities referred to herein.

BoFA ESGMeter Methodology:

ESGMeter is a proprietary metric based on quantitative analysis and fundamental analyst inputs that reflects our assessment of a company's Environmental, Social and Governance-related attributes. The ESGMeter is intended to indicate a company's likelihood of experiencing stronger financial stability (higher return on equity and lower earnings and price volatility) over the next three years relative to peer group. There are three ESGMeter levels - Low, Medium, and High - which indicate whether a company has attributes most likely to translate into superior financial stability (in the case of a High level) or weaker financial stability (in the case of a Low level) over the next three years relative to its peer group. A Medium level suggests that a company exhibits ESG characteristics that are likely associated with financial stability results in line with its peer group over the next three years. Full details of our methodology, financial stability definition and disclaimers are available at [BoFA ESGMeter methodology](#). ESGMeter is not indicative of a company's future stock price performance and is not an investment recommendation or rating. ESGMeter is independent of the BoFA Global Research fundamental equity analyst's investment rating, volatility risk rating, income rating or price objective for that company.

Copyright and General Information:

Copyright 2024 Bank of America Corporation. All rights reserved. iQdatabase® is a registered service mark of Bank of America Corporation. This information is prepared for the use of BoFA Securities clients and may not be redistributed, retransmitted or disclosed, in whole or in part, or in any form or manner, without the express written consent of BoFA Securities. BoFA Global Research information is distributed simultaneously to internal and client websites and other portals by BoFA Securities and is not publicly-available material. Any unauthorized use or disclosure is prohibited. Receipt and review of this information constitutes your agreement not to redistribute, retransmit, or disclose to others the contents, opinions, conclusion, or information contained herein (including any investment recommendations, estimates or price targets) without first obtaining express permission from an authorized officer of BoFA Securities.

Materials prepared by BoFA Global Research personnel are based on public information. Facts and views presented in this material have not been reviewed by, and may not reflect information known to, professionals in other business areas of BoFA Securities, including investment banking personnel. BoFA Securities has established information barriers between BoFA Global Research and certain business groups. As a result, BoFA Securities does not disclose certain client relationships with, or compensation received from, such issuers. To the extent this material discusses any legal proceeding or issues, it has not been prepared as nor is it intended to express any legal conclusion, opinion or advice. Investors should consult their own legal advisers as to issues of law relating to the subject matter of this material. BoFA Global Research personnel's knowledge of legal proceedings in which any BoFA Securities entity and/or its directors, officers and employees may be plaintiffs, defendants, co-defendants or co-plaintiffs with or involving issuers mentioned in this material is based on public information. Facts and views presented in this material that relate to any such proceedings have not been reviewed by, discussed with, and may not reflect information known to, professionals in other business areas of BoFA Securities in connection with the legal proceedings or matters relevant to such proceedings.

This information has been prepared independently of any issuer of securities mentioned herein and not in connection with any proposed offering of securities or as agent of any issuer of any securities. None of BoFA or any of its affiliates or their research analysts has any authority whatsoever to make any representation or warranty on behalf of the issuer(s). BoFA Global Research policy prohibits research personnel from disclosing a recommendation, investment rating, or investment thesis for review by an issuer prior to the publication of a research report containing such rating, recommendation or investment thesis.

Any information relating to the tax status of financial instruments discussed herein is not intended to provide tax advice or to be used by anyone to provide tax advice. Investors are urged to seek tax advice based on their particular circumstances from an independent tax professional.

The information herein (other than disclosure information relating to BoFA Securities and its affiliates) was obtained from various sources and we do not guarantee its accuracy. This information may contain links to third-party websites. BoFA Securities is not responsible for the content of any third-party website or any linked content contained in a third-party website. Content contained on such third-party websites is not part of this information and is not incorporated by reference. The inclusion of a link does not imply any endorsement by or any affiliation with BoFA Securities. Access to any third-party website is at your own risk, and you should always review the terms and privacy policies at third-party websites before submitting any personal information to them. BoFA Securities is not responsible for such terms and privacy policies and expressly disclaims any liability for them.

All opinions, projections and estimates constitute the judgment of the author as of the date of publication and are subject to change without notice. Prices also are subject to change without notice. BoFA Securities is under no obligation to update this information and BoFA Securities ability to publish information on the subject issuer(s) in the future is subject to applicable quiet periods. You should therefore assume that BoFA Securities will not update any fact, circumstance or opinion contained herein.

Subject to the quiet period applicable under laws of the various jurisdictions in which we distribute research reports and other legal and BoFA Securities policy-related restrictions on the publication of research reports, fundamental equity reports are produced on a regular basis as necessary to keep the investment recommendation current.

Certain outstanding reports or investment opinions relating to securities, financial instruments and/or issuers may no longer be current. Always refer to the most recent research report relating to an issuer prior to making an investment decision.

In some cases, an issuer may be classified as Restricted or may be Under Review or Extended Review. In each case, investors should consider any investment opinion relating to such issuer (or its security and/or financial instruments) to be suspended or withdrawn and should not rely on the analyses and investment opinion(s) pertaining to such issuer (or its securities and/or financial instruments) nor should the analyses or opinion(s) be considered a solicitation of any kind. Sales persons and financial advisors affiliated with BoFA or any of its affiliates may not solicit purchases of securities or financial instruments that are Restricted or Under Review and may only solicit securities under Extended Review in accordance with firm policies.

Neither BoFA Securities nor any officer or employee of BoFA Securities accepts any liability whatsoever for any direct, indirect or consequential damages or losses arising from any use of this information.