

Sonoco Products Co. (SON)

\$65.11 (As of 04/27/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$69.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 02/19/19)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

2-Buy

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:B

Value: B

Growth: B

Momentum: C

Summary

Sonoco's first-quarter 2021 earnings and revenues beat the Zacks Consensus Estimates and increased year over year. Given anticipated recovery in global business activity, the company now projects adjusted earnings per share between \$3.50 and \$3.60 for the current year, up from the prior range of \$3.40 to \$3.60. Sonoco will gain from growth in consumer-packaging businesses driven by solid demand from food packaging. Demand in the Industrial Paper Packaging served markets continues to show sequential improvement and demand in consumer and industrial businesses is expected to remain solid in the near term. Moreover, the company's focus on optimizing businesses through productivity improvement, standardization and cost control will aid results. However, higher recovered paper, freight and other operating costs might hurt its margins.

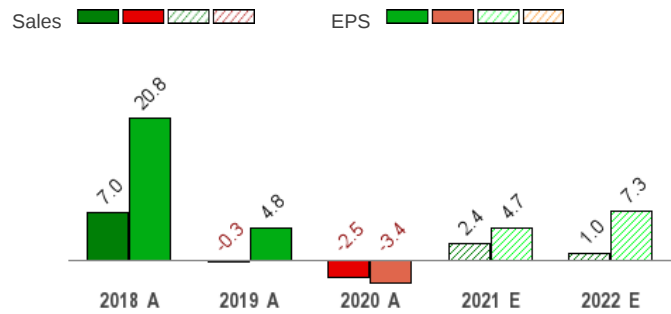
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$65.99 - \$42.41
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	351,227
Market Cap	\$6.5 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	9.9%
Beta	0.84
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$1.80 / 2.8%
Industry	Containers - Paper and Packaging
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 33% (167 out of 250)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	5.9%
Last Sales Surprise	2.5%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	1.0%
Expected Report Date	07/15/2021
Earnings ESP	0.7%
P/E TTM	19.3
P/E F1	18.2
PEG F1	3.9
P/S TTM	1.2

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	1,348 E	1,322 E	1,332 E	1,322 E	5,413 E
2021	1,353 A	1,315 E	1,344 E	1,355 E	5,361 E
2020	1,303 A	1,245 A	1,312 A	1,376 A	5,237 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$1.01 E	\$0.96 E	\$0.97 E	\$0.91 E	\$3.83 E
2021	\$0.90 A	\$0.87 E	\$0.93 E	\$0.90 E	\$3.57 E
2020	\$0.94 A	\$0.79 A	\$0.86 A	\$0.82 A	\$3.41 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and sales estimates, is as of 04/27/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 04/28/2021.

Overview

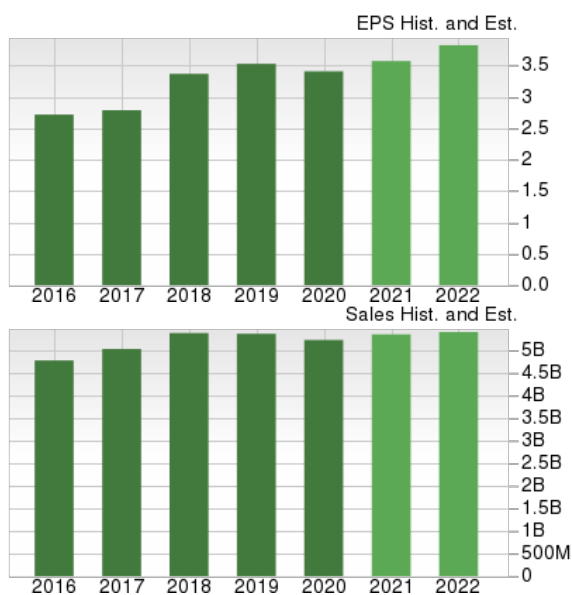
Incorporated in 1899, Hartsville, SC-based Sonoco Products is a leading provider of consumer packaging, industrial products, protective packaging and packaging supply chain services. The company manufactures paperboard, primarily from recycled materials, for both internal use and open market sale. The company reports financial results in four segments.

Sonoco changed its operating and reporting structure. The company reported its results in two segments: Consumer Packaging and Industrial Paper Packaging. Remaining businesses were presented in an All Other group. The Protective Solutions and Display and Packaging segments was eliminated and their businesses was shifted into the remaining two segments and All Other.

Consumer Packaging makes round and shaped rigid containers and trays extruded and injection-molded plastic products; printed flexible packaging; global brand artwork management; and metal and peelable membrane ends and closures.

Industrial Paper Packaging makes paperboard tubes, cones, and cores; fiber-based construction tubes; wooden, metal and composite wire and cable reels and spools; and recycled paperboard, linerboard, corrugating medium, recovered paper and material recycling services.

Due to its geographic footprint and the cost-competitive nature of its businesses, the company is constantly seeking the most cost-effective means and structure to serve its customers and to respond to fundamental changes in its markets. As such, restructuring costs have been<



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Sonoco is an essential provider of consumer, industrial and medical packaging. The company's global operations continue to operate and are serving customers' critical needs during the coronavirus pandemic despite global supply chain disruptions. Sonoco anticipates demand in most of its consumer and industrial businesses to remain solid in the near term. It projects second-quarter 2021 adjusted earnings per share to lie between 82 cents and 88 cents compared with the earnings of 79 cents reported in second-quarter 2020. For 2021, the company raised its adjusted earnings per share guidance to \$3.50-\$3.60 from the prior range of \$3.40 to \$3.60. In 2020, the company reported adjusted earnings per share of \$3.41. The upbeat guidance is based on the assumption that global business activity will continue to improve on government stimulus measures and reopening of business.

Sonoco is poised to gain from consumer packaging business, strong productivity and cost control. Further its strong balance sheet enables the company to invest in growth as well as acquisitions.

- Sonoco's consumer packaging businesses will keep performing well as sales from food packaging will continue to benefit from consumers' at-home eating habits. Approximately 80% of the Consumer Packaging segment's sales come from food packaging where the company is witnessing increased orders. Moreover, demand in the Industrial Paper Packaging served markets continues to show sequential improvement on reopening of the global industrial market from pandemic-induced slump in 2020. Its focus on optimizing businesses through productivity improvement, standardization and cost control will also aid results in the near term.
- ▲ Paperboard operations in North America are likely to be relatively steady on increased demand for tissue and towel market. Global demand for uncoated recycled paperboard remains strong and backlogs in North America are at the highest levels. Apart from this, Sonoco's tube, core and cone products are witnessing escalating demand. The Protective Solutions business is likely to witness improved demand in the upcoming quarter, particularly in the pharmaceutical and appliance served markets. The ThermoSafe temperature-assured packaging business is likely to gain from a strong flu vaccine season, and improved demand from its base pharmaceutical and food customers during the current quarter.
 - ▲ Sonoco's capital expenditure was \$39 million in first-quarter 2021 compared to \$31 million in the prior-year quarter. The company expects capital expenditure to move higher for the current year as it continues to make progress on Project Horizon. The investment will transform Hartsville corrugated medium machine to a state-of-the-art URB operation with annual production capacity of roughly 180,000 tons. The machine conversion is expected to be completed in early 2022. The new machine will be able to produce a wide range of URB paper grades and will enable to meet internal and trade customer needs. This will create larger opportunity for the company's North America URB system. Apart from this project, Sonoco is building a new thermoforming line at Waynesville, North Carolina plastic food tray plant to meet the increased demand for retail and institutional frozen meals. These projects are likely to drive margin growth.
 - ▲ Sonoco is focused on driving profitable growth, margin expansion and generating solid free cash flow. Sonoco's balance sheet strength and availability of substantial liquidity in the form of cash and revolving credit facilities will stoke growth. Its total debt stands at \$1.7 billion at the end of the first quarter, relatively flat from 2020-end. Sonoco's total debt to total capital was 47% as of Apr 4, 2021 compared with 47.1% at the end of 2020. The company had cash in hand of approximately \$588 million at the end of first-quarter 2021 compared with \$565 million at the end of 2020. For 2021, management continues to expect free cash flow in between \$270 million and \$300 million, while capital expenditure is expected at \$300 million. It paid cash dividends of \$45 million in the March-end quarter compared with \$43 million in the year-ago quarter. Moreover, Sonoco's board has approved new share repurchase of up to \$350 million, further demonstrating its financial strength. The company is also taking aggressive actions to reduce operating costs and selling, general and administrative expenses.
 - ▲ In the March-end quarter, Sonoco registered top line growth from TEQ and Can Packaging acquisitions in consumer segment. The company penetrated the growing healthcare market with the addition of Thermoformed Engineered Quality LLC, and Plastique Holdings, LTD, (together TEQ) in January 2020. In December 2020, the company sold its lower-margin Europe contract packaging business, to Prairie Industries Holdings. Net proceeds from the transaction are expected to be used to reduce short-term debt and improve its liquidity position. On Apr 4, Sonoco divested the lower margin Display and Packaging business in the United States to Hood Container Corporation for cash proceeds of \$80 million. These divestures support Sonoco's focus on expanding its core Consumer and Industrial packaging businesses across the globe. Net proceeds from the sale are likely to be utilized in further investments and returning capital to shareholders.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ Sonoco expects material cost inflation and the divestiture of display and packaging business in United States to unfavorably impact its bottom-line results in the second quarter. Even though the company expects stable global macroeconomic environment, this recovery might be short lived due to the resurgence of coronavirus cases, slowing the reopening of business activities.
- ▼ Sonoco's Industrial segment was hit hard by a negative price/cost relationship during the first quarter due to escalating Old Corrugated Containers (OCC) costs, material cost inflation as well as higher energy and freight costs. The company continues to expect higher OCC costs in the current year. Sonoco expects continued inflation in recycled fiber, resins, chemicals adhesives, freight, and other operational costs in the second quarter.
- ▼ Uncertainty regarding the impact of the outbreak is weighing on the sector's customers. Customers have thus taken a conservative stance to manage their businesses by aggressively destocking inventory and holding back on new product launches. This slowdown in customer orders remains a major headwind.
- ▼ Over the past few years, Consumer Packaging volumes have been affected as consumers' preference for packaged food is clearly being impacted by changing taste for more fresh and natural products. Sonoco's plastic business continues to struggle, particularly in the Perimeter of the Store and industrial operations. Further, impact of tariffs on steel, aluminum and other products will continue to hurt Sonoco's margins. The company is also facing inflationary cost pressure from higher freight, wages, and elevated cost for materials, particularly resins.

Uncertain impact of the pandemic on the company's operations and the slowdown in customer orders will weigh on Sonoco's top line. Higher material and other costs will dent margins.

Last Earnings Report

Sonoco Tops Q1 Earnings & Revenues, Hikes '21 Guidance

Sonoco reported adjusted earnings of 90 cents in first-quarter 2021, surpassing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 85 cents. This was driven by benefits from productivity gains and improved volume/mix. The figure also met the higher end of management's guidance of 80-90 cents. The bottom line, however, declined 4.2% year over year due to the negative impact of price/cost stemming from higher raw material costs, and freight and other non-material inflation.

On a reported basis, including one-time items, the company reported earnings per share of 71 cents compared with the year-ago quarter's 80 cents.

Sonoco's net sales were \$1.35 billion, which beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1.32 billion. The top line also recorded year-over-year growth of 3.8% on improvement in volume/mix, higher selling prices and benefits from the Can Packaging acquisition.

Operational Update

Cost of sales were \$1,075 million compared with the year-earlier quarter's \$1,036 million. Gross profit during the reported quarter totaled \$278 million, up 4.1% year over year. Gross margin came in at 20.5%, flat year on year.

Selling, general and administrative expenses amounted to \$145 million, flaring up 17% year over year. Adjusted operating income declined 2.9% year over year to \$139.6 million during the reported quarter. Operating margin came in at 10.3% compared with the year-ago quarter's 11%.

Segment Performance

The Consumer Packaging segment's net sales were up 7.7% year over year to \$583 million. Operating profit amounted to \$76 million, reflecting an increase of 18.7% from the \$64 million seen in the comparable period last year.

Net sales in the Industrial Paper Packaging segment totaled \$565 million, reflecting year-over year growth of 12.5%. Operating profit totaled \$50.2 million compared with the \$59.6 million reported in the year-ago period.

The All Other segment's net sales dropped 21.1% year over year to \$205 million. The segment reported an operating profit of \$14 million, 33.3% lower than the year-earlier quarter.

Financial Performance

Sonoco reported cash and cash equivalents of \$588 million at the end of first-quarter 2021 compared with \$565 million at the end of 2020. The company generated cash flow from operating activities of \$139 million during the March-end quarter, highlighting an improvement from the prior-year quarter's \$88 million. Free cash flow was \$99.4 million in the first-quarter 2021 compared with \$57.1 million in the comparable period last year.

As of Apr 4, 2021, total debt was \$1.70 billion, flat as of Dec 31, 2020. At the end of first-quarter 2021, Sonoco's total debt to total capital was 47% compared with 47.1% at the end of 2020.

Guidance

Sonoco projects second-quarter 2021 adjusted earnings per share (EPS) to lie between 82 cents and 88 cents compared with the earnings of 79 cents reported in second-quarter 2020. For 2021, the company raised its adjusted earnings per share guidance to \$3.50-\$3.60 from the prior range of \$3.50 to \$3.60. In 2020, the company reported adjusted EPS of \$3.41. The guidance is based on the assumption that global business activity will continue to improve on government stimulus measures and reopening of business.

The company estimates cash flow from operations to range between \$570 million and \$600 million in 2021 and free cash flow is expected in the range of \$270 million to \$300 million.

Sonoco anticipates higher costs for recycled fiber and resins in the second quarter. In fact, chemicals, adhesives, freight and other operational costs are likely to be higher until supply chains stabilize. Notably, the company has implemented several pricing actions in response to these price hikes.

Sonoco expects the Consumer Packaging segment to continue benefiting from consumers' at-home eating habits. Demand for industrial businesses is also likely to remain solid in the current year. Moreover, uncoated recycled paperboard demand is strong globally and backlogs in North America are at the highest levels. Apart from this, Sonoco's tube, core and cone products are witnessing escalating demand.

Quarter Ending **03/2021**

Report Date	Apr 22, 2021
Sales Surprise	2.52%
EPS Surprise	5.88%
Quarterly EPS	0.90
Annual EPS (TTM)	3.37

Recent News

Sonoco Hikes Prices for Paperboard Tubes & Cores

On **Apr 23, 2021**, Sonoco announced the price rise for all paperboard tubes and cores by 6% in the United States and Canada. The price hike will be effective relating to the shipments beginning on or after May 24, 2021. This move is in response to the escalating uncoated recycled paperboard (URB) costs.

Sonoco Hikes Prices for Uncoated Recycled Paperboard

On **Mar 24, 2021**, Sonoco implemented price hikes by \$50 per ton for all grades of uncoated recycled paperboard (URB) sold in the United States and Canada. The price rise was effective relating to the shipments starting Apr 26. Sonoco is executing price-rise actions in response to solid demand across its United States and Canada URB mill network, which is driving significantly longer backlogs as well as rapidly-increasing input costs, especially freight, papermaking chemicals and packaging supplies.

Valuation

Sonoco's shares are up 30.9% in the trailing six-month period and 28.7% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in Containers - Paper and Packaging industry and the Zacks Industrial Products sector are up 25.1% and 34.7% in the trailing six-month period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are up 41.8% and 64.1% respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 27.7% in the trailing six-month period and 45.3% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 17.97X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 17.20X for the Zacks sub-industry, 23.36X for the Zacks sector and 22.98X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 19.80X and as low as 10.55X, with a 5-year median of 16.70X.

Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$69 price target reflects 19.04X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for SON:

Valuation Multiples - SON					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	17.97	17.2	23.36	22.98
	5-Year High	19.8	18.98	23.54	23.83
	5-Year Low	10.55	7.2	12.65	15.3
	5-Year Median	16.7	16.04	18.08	18.01
P/S F12M	Current	1.23	2.96	3.67	4.82
	5-Year High	1.24	5.08	3.67	4.82
	5-Year Low	0.7	1.49	1.61	3.21
	5-Year Median	1.03	1.97	2.1	3.71
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	9.35	22.8	24.90	18.8
	5-Year High	10.55	28.59	27.99	18.8
	5-Year Low	6.24	13.28	11.1	9.62
	5-Year Median	8.77	16.25	15.41	13.37

As of 04/27/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 33% (167 out of 250)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
AptarGroup, Inc. (ATR)	Neutral	3
Berry Global Group, Inc. (BERY)	Neutral	3
Ball Corporation (BLL)	Neutral	4
Crown Holdings, Inc. (CCK)	Neutral	3
Greif, Inc. (GEF)	Neutral	2
Packaging Corporation of America (PKG)	Neutral	3
Sealed Air Corporation (SEE)	Neutral	3
Silgan Holdings Inc. (SLGN)	Neutral	3

The positions listed should not be deemed a recommendation to buy, hold or sell.

Industry Comparison Industry: Containers - Paper And Packaging				Industry Peers		
	SON	X Industry	S&P 500	ATR	CCK	SEE
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	2	-	-	3	3	3
VGM Score	B	-	-	C	A	A
Market Cap	6.55 B	6.55 B	30.14 B	10.01 B	14.81 B	7.40 B
# of Analysts	5	4.5	12	8	7	8
Dividend Yield	2.76%	1.88%	1.27%	1.00%	0.73%	1.33%
Value Score	B	-	-	C	A	A
Cash/Price	0.09	0.06	0.05	0.03	0.08	0.07
EV/EBITDA	12.31	11.58	17.03	19.41	12.60	10.86
PEG F1	3.91	1.95	2.36	5.38	3.21	2.01
P/B	3.42	3.60	4.18	5.30	5.27	43.44
P/CF	10.88	10.99	17.33	21.20	11.58	11.14
P/E F1	18.24	17.43	22.20	37.67	16.04	14.44
P/S TTM	1.24	1.35	3.42	3.42	1.25	1.51
Earnings Yield	5.48%	5.75%	4.44%	2.66%	6.24%	6.92%
Debt/Equity	0.65	1.33	0.66	0.57	2.80	21.63
Cash Flow (\$/share)	5.98	4.15	6.78	7.15	9.48	4.34
Growth Score	B	-	-	A	A	A
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	7.34%	10.15%	9.70%	5.03%	10.67%	5.59%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	4.81%	14.80%	17.01%	10.58%	15.64%	4.82%
Current Cash Flow Growth	0.76%	1.62%	0.72%	1.57%	6.15%	14.10%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	5.04%	9.59%	7.37%	6.85%	11.67%	-2.14%
Current Ratio	1.27	1.38	1.38	1.75	1.23	1.38
Debt/Capital	39.55%	57.02%	41.19%	36.31%	73.71%	95.58%
Net Margin	3.77%	6.12%	11.20%	7.31%	5.90%	10.26%
Return on Equity	18.20%	15.78%	15.33%	14.19%	35.78%	-3,624.73%
Sales/Assets	0.96	0.83	0.51	0.76	0.75	0.84
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	2.35%	5.61%	7.74%	8.13%	3.22%	5.40%
Momentum Score	C	-	-	F	A	C
Daily Price Change	-0.38%	0.02%	0.13%	0.48%	0.00%	0.04%
1-Week Price Change	0.83%	0.48%	0.47%	2.28%	0.48%	0.37%
4-Week Price Change	1.59%	1.59%	4.43%	5.98%	13.14%	3.71%
12-Week Price Change	10.88%	10.73%	13.70%	10.73%	18.56%	11.39%
52-Week Price Change	31.75%	47.29%	52.18%	36.39%	74.34%	62.79%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	351,227	214,047	1,759,028	197,581	982,175	989,890
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	1.19%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.87%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	1.02%	0.00%	0.17%	-0.25%	-0.09%	-1.04%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	2.11%	1.10%	1.95%	-2.92%	7.63%	2.73%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-1.42%	-0.87%	0.07%	-0.58%	4.16%	-1.47%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we maintain a balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	B
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	C
VGM Score	B

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

Disclosures

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ZIR uses the following rating system for the securities it covers. **Outperform-** ZIR expects that the subject company will outperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Neutral-** ZIR expects that the company will perform in line with the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months. **Underperform-** ZIR expects the company will underperform the broader U.S. equities markets over the next six to twelve months.

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This material represents an assessment of the market and economic environment at a specific point in time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events, or a guarantee of future results. Forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties. Any statements that refer to expectations, projections or characterizations of future events or circumstances, including any underlying assumptions, are forward-looking statements. Actual results, performance, or achievements may differ materially from those expressed or implied.

Returns quoted represent past performance which is no guarantee of future results. Investment returns and principal value will fluctuate so that when shares are redeemed, they may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be higher or lower than the performance shown.

Investing involves risk; principal loss is possible. There is no guarantee that companies that can issue dividends will declare, continue to pay or increase dividends.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

52-Week High-Low: The range of the highest and lowest prices at which a stock has traded during the past year. This range is determined based on the stock's daily closing price which may differ from the intra-day high or low. Many investors use it as a technical indicator to determine a stock's current value and future price movement. The idea here is that if price breaks out from the 52-week range, in either direction, the momentum may continue in the same direction.

20-Day Average Volume (Shares): The average number of shares of a company traded in a day over the last 20 days. It is a direct indication of a security's overall liquidity. The higher the average daily trading volume, the easier it is to enter or exit the stock at a desired price with more buyers and sellers being available.

Daily Price Change: This is the percentage difference between a trading day's closing price and the prior trading day's closing price. This item is updated at 9 p.m. EST each day.

1-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 5 trading days. This change reflects the collective buying and selling sentiment over the 1-week period.

A strong weekly price increase for the stock, especially when accompanied by increased volume, is an indication of it gaining momentum.

4-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 20 trading days or past 4 weeks. This is a medium-term price change metric and an indication of the stock gaining momentum.

12-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change of a stock's closing price over the last 60 trading days or past 12 weeks. Similar to 4-week price change, this is a medium-term price change metric. It shows whether a stock has been enjoying strong investor demand, or if it has been in consolidation, or distress over this period.

52-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 260 trading days or past 52 weeks. This long-term price change metric is a good reference point for investors. Some investors seek stocks with the best percentage price change over the last 52 weeks, expecting the momentum to continue.

Market Cap: The number of outstanding common shares of a company times its latest price per share. This figure represents a company's size, which indicates various characteristics, including price stability and risk, in which investors could be interested.

Year-To-Date Price Change: Change in a stock's daily closing price in the period of time beginning the first day of the current calendar year through to the previous trading day.

of Analysts: Number of EPS estimates used in calculating the current-quarter consensus. These estimates come from the brokerage analysts tracking this stock. However, the number of such analysts tracking this stock may not match the number of estimates, as all brokerage analysts may not come up with an estimate or provide it to us.

Beta: A measure of risk commonly used to compare the volatility of a stock to the overall market. The S&P 500 Index is the base for calculating beta and carries a value of 1. A stock with beta below 1 is less risky than the market as a whole. And a stock with beta above 1 is riskier.

Dividend: The portion of earnings a company is expected to distribute to its common shareholders in the next 12 months for each share they own. Dividends are usually paid quarterly. Dividend payments reflect positively on a company and help maintain investors' trust. Investors typically find dividend-paying stocks appealing because the dividend adds to any market price appreciation to result in higher return on investment (ROI). Moreover, a steady or increasing dividend payment provides investors a cushion in a down market.

Dividend Yield: The ratio of a company's annual dividend to its share price. The annual dividend used in the ratio is calculated based on the most recent dividend paid by the company. Dividend yield is an estimate of the dividend-only return from a stock in the next 12 months. Since dividend itself doesn't change frequently, dividend yield usually changes with a stock's price movement. As a result, often an unusually high dividend yield is a result of weak stock price.

S&P 500 Index: The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Index is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. It is a market-capitalization-weighted index of stocks of the 500 largest U.S. companies. Each stock's weight in the index is proportionate to its market value.

Industry: One of the 250+ groups that Zacks classifies all stocks into based on the nature of business. These groups are termed as expanded (aka "X") industries and map to their respective (economic) sectors; Zacks has 16 sectors.

Zacks Industry Rank: The Zacks Industry Rank is determined by calculating the average Zacks Rank for all stocks in the industry and then assigning an ordinal rank to it. For example, an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 1.6 is better than an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 2.3. So, the industry with the better average Zacks Rank would get a better Zacks Industry Rank. If an industry has the best average Zacks Rank, it would be considered the top industry (1 out of 250+), which would place it at the top 1% of Zacks-ranked industries. Studies have shown that roughly half of a stock's price movement can be attributed to the industry group it belongs to. In fact, the top 50% of Zacks-ranked industries outperforms the bottom 50% by a factor of more than 2 to 1.

Last EPS Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported earnings per share from the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Companies with a positive earnings surprise are more likely to surprise again in the future (or miss again if they recently missed).

Last Sales Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported sales from the Zacks Consensus Estimate.

Expected Report Date: This is an estimated date of a company's next earnings release. The information originated or gathered by Zacks Investment Research from its information providers or publicly available sources is the basis of this estimate.

Earnings ESP: The Zacks Earnings ESP compares the Most Accurate Estimate to the Zacks Consensus Estimate for the yet-to-be reported quarter. The Most Accurate Estimate is the most recent version of the Zacks Consensus EPS Estimate. The idea here is that analysts revising their estimates closer to an earnings release have the latest information, which could potentially be more accurate than what they and others contributing to the consensus had predicted earlier. Thus, a positive or negative Earnings ESP reading theoretically indicates the likely deviation of the actual earnings from the consensus estimate. However, the model's predictive power is significant for positive ESP readings only. A positive Earnings ESP is a strong predictor of an earnings beat, particularly when combined with a Zacks Rank #1 (Strong Buy), #2 (Buy) or #3 (Hold). Our research shows that stocks with this combination produce a positive surprise nearly 70% of the time.

Periods:

TTM: Trailing 12 months. Using TTM figures is an effective way of analyzing the most-recent financial data in an annualized format that helps neutralize the effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variation.

F1: Current fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the ongoing full fiscal year.

F2: Next fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the next full fiscal year.

F12M: Forward 12 months. Using F12M figures is an effective way of analyzing the near-term (the following four unreported quarters) estimates in an annualized manner. Instead of typically representing estimates for the full fiscal year, which may not represent the nitty-gritty of each quarter, F12M figures suggest an all-inclusive annualized estimate for the following four quarters. The annualization helps neutralize the potential effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variations.

P/E Ratio: The price-to-earnings ratio measures a company's current market price per share relative to its earnings per share (EPS). Usually, the trailing-12-month (TTM) EPS, current-fiscal-year (F1) EPS estimate, or forward-12-month (F12M) EPS estimate is used as the denominator. In essence, this ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of EPS. In other words, this ratio gives a sense of what the relative value of the company is at the already reported level of earnings or at a future level of earnings.

It is one of the most widely-used multiples for determining the value of a company and helps comparing its valuation with that of a competitor, the industry group or a benchmark.

PEG Ratio: The price/earnings to growth ratio is a stock's P/E ratio using current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by its expected EPS growth rate over the coming 3 to 5 years. This ratio essentially determines a stock's value by factoring in the company's expected earnings growth and is thus believed to provide a more complete picture than just the P/E ratio, particularly for faster-growing companies.

P/S Ratio: The price-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by trailing 12 months (TTM) sales or revenues per share. This ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of TTM sales per share. The P/S ratio is at times the only valuation metric when the company has yet to become profitable.

Cash/Price Ratio: The cash-to-price ratio or Cash Yield is calculated as cash and marketable securities per share divided by the company's current share price. Like the earnings yield, which shows the anticipated yield (or return) on a stock from earnings for each dollar invested, the cash yield does the same, with cash being the source of return instead of earnings. For example, a cash/price ratio of 0.08 suggests a return of 8% or 8 cents for every \$1 investment.

EV/EBITDA Ratio: The EV/EBITDA ratio, also known as Enterprise Multiple, is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization). Usually, trailing-12-month (TTM) or forward-12-month (F12M) EBITDA is used as the denominator.

EV/Sales Ratio: The enterprise value-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by annual sales. It is an expansion of the P/S valuation, which uses market value instead of enterprise value. The EV/Sales ratio is perceived as more accurate than P/S, in part, because the market capitalization does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/CF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-cash flow ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by the trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow. It's a measure of how long it would take to buy the entire business if you were able to use all the company's operating cash flow.

The EV/CF ratio is perceived as more accurate than the P/CF ratio, in part, because the market price does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/FCF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-free cash flow metric compares a company's enterprise value to its trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow (FCF). This metric is very similar to the EV/CF ratio, but is considered a more exact measure owing to the fact that it uses free cash flow, which subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding growth activities and payments to shareholders.

P/EBITDA Ratio: The P/EBITDA ratio is calculated as a company's per share market value divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). This metric is very similar to the EV/EBITDA ratio, but is considered a little less exact measure as it uses market price, which does not take a company's debt into account. However, since EBITDA is often considered a proxy for cash income, the metric is used as a measure of what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of the company's cash profitability in the trailing 12 months (TTM) or forward 12 months (F12M).

P/B Ratio: The price-to-book ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by its book value (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks) per share. In short, the book value is how much a company is worth. In other words, it reflects the total value of a company's assets that its common shareholders would receive if it were to be liquidated. So, the P/B ratio indicates whether you're paying higher or lower than what would remain if the company went bankrupt immediately. Investors typically use this metric to determine how a company's stock price stacks up to its intrinsic value.

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as the per share market value of a company divided by the value of its tangible assets (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks – intangible assets) per share. Tangible book value is the same thing as book value except it excludes the value of intangible assets to get a step closer to the baseline value of the company.

P/CF Ratio: The price-to-cash flow ratio measures a company's per share market price relative to its trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow per share. This metric is used to determine whether a company is undervalued or overvalued relative to another stock, industry or sector. And like the P/E ratio, a lower number is typically considered better from the value perspective.

One of the reasons why P/CF ratio is often preferred over P/E ratio is the fact that operating cash flow adds back non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization to net income. This feature helps valuing stocks that have positive cash flow but are not profitable because of large noncash charges.

P/FCF Ratio: The price-to-free cash flow ratio is an extension of P/CF ratio, which uses trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow per share instead of operating cash flow per share. This metric is considered a more exact measure than P/CF ratio, as free cash flow subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding activities that generate additional revenues.

Earnings Yield: The earnings yield is calculated as current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by the company's current share price. The ratio, which is the inverse of the P/E ratio, measures the anticipated yield (or return) from earnings for each dollar invested in a stock today.

For example, earnings yield for a stock, which is trading at \$35 and expected to earn \$3 per share in the current fiscal year (F1), would be 0.0857 ($3/35 = 0.0857$) or 8.57%. In other words, for \$1 invested in the stock today, the yield from earnings is anticipated to be 8.57 cents.

Investors most commonly compare the earnings yield of a stock to that of a broad market index (such as the S&P 500) and prevailing interest rates, such as the current 10-year Treasury yield. Since bonds and stocks compete for investors' dollars, stock investors typically demand a higher yield for the extra risk they assume compared to investors of U.S. Treasury-backed securities that offer virtually risk-free returns. This additional return is referred to as the risk premium.

Debt/Equity Ratio: The debt-to-equity ratio is calculated as a company's total liabilities divided by its shareholder equity. This metric is used to gauge a company's financial leverage. In other words, it is a measure of the degree to which a company is financing its operations through debt versus its own funds. The higher the ratio, the higher the risk for shareholders.

However, this ratio is difficult to compare across industry groups where ideal amounts of debt vary. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-equity ratio should be compared with other companies in the same industry.

Cash Flow (\$/share): Cash flow per share is calculated as operating cash flow (after-tax earnings + depreciation + other non-cash charges) divided by common shares outstanding. It is used by many investors as a measure of a company's financial strength. Since cash flow per share takes into consideration a company's ability to generate cash by adding back non-cash expenses, it is regarded by some as a more accurate measure of a company's financial situation than earnings per share, which could be artificially deflated.

Current Ratio: The current ratio or liquidity ratio is a company's current assets divided by its current liabilities. It measures a company's ability to pay short-term obligations. A current ratio that is in line with the industry average or slightly higher is generally considered acceptable. A current ratio that is lower than the industry average would indicate a higher risk of distress or default. A higher number is usually better. However, a very high current ratio compared to the industry average could be an indication of inefficient use of assets by management.

Debt/Capital Ratio: Debt-to-capital ratio is a company's total debt (interest-bearing debt + both short- and long-term liabilities) divided its total capital (interest-bearing debt + shareholders' equity). It is a measure of a company's financial leverage. All else being equal, the higher the debt-to-capital ratio, the riskier the stock.

However, this ratio can vary widely from industry to industry, the ideal amount of required debt being different. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-capital ratio should be compared with the same for its industry.

Net Margin: Net margin is calculated as net income divided by sales. It shows how much of each dollar in sales generated by a company translates into profit. For example, if a company's net margin is 15%, its net income is 15 cents for every \$1 of sales it makes.

A change in margin can reflect either a change in business conditions, or a company's cost controls, or both. If a company's expenses are growing faster than sales, its net margin will decline. However, different net margin rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare net margin rates of companies in the same industry group.

Return on Equity: Return on equity (ROE) is calculated as trailing-12-month net income divided by trailing-12-month average shareholder equity (including reinvested earnings). This metric is considered a measure of how effectively management is using a company's assets to generate profits. For example, if a company's ROE is 10%, it creates 10 cents profits for every \$1 shareholder equity, which is basically the company's assets minus debt. A company's ROE deemed good or bad depends on what's normal for its peers or industry group.

Sales/Assets Ratio: The sales-to-assets ratio or asset utilization ratio or asset turnover ratio is calculated as a company's annual sales divided by average assets (average of assets at the beginning of the year and at the year's end). This metric helps investors understand how effectively a company is using its assets to generate sales. For example, a sales-to-assets ratio of 2.5 indicates that the company generated \$2.50 in sales for every \$1 of assets on its books.

The higher the sales-to-assets ratio, the better the company is performing. However, similar to many other ratios, the asset turnover ratio tends to be higher for companies in certain industries/sectors than in others. So, a company's sales-to-assets ratio should be compared with the same for its industry/sector.

Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years): This is the average annual (trailing-12-month) EPS growth rate over the last 3-5 years. This metric helps investors see how a company's EPS has grown from a long-term perspective.

Note: There are many factors that can influence short-term numbers — a recession will reduce this number, while a recovery will inflate it. The longterm perspective helps smooth out short-term events.

Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0): This is the estimated EPS growth rate for the current financial year. It is calculated as the consensus estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported EPS for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Current Cash Flow Growth: It measures the latest year-over-year change in operating cash flow. Cash flow growth tells an investor how quickly a company is generating inflows of cash from operations. A positive change in the cash flow is desired and shows that more 'cash' is coming in than going out.

Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years): This is the annualized change in cash flow over the last 3-5 years. The change in a longer period helps put the current reading into proper perspective. By looking at the rate, rather than the actual dollar value, the comparison across the industry and peers becomes easier.

Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0): This metric looks at the estimated sales growth for the current year. It is calculated as sales estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported sales for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Like EPS growth, a higher rate is better for sales growth. A look at a company's projected sales growth instantly tells you what the outlook is for their products and services. However, different sales growth rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare sales growth rates of companies in the same industry group.

EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past week. The change in a company's consensus EPS estimate (or earnings estimate revision) has proven to be strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares. It is an integral part of the Zacks Rank.

If a stock's consensus EPS estimate is \$1.10 now versus \$1.00 a week ago, that will be reflected as a 10% upward revision. If, on the other hand, it went from \$1.00 to 90 cents, that would be a 10% downward revision.

EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past four weeks.

A stock's earnings estimate revision in a 1-week period is important. But it's more meaningful to look at the longer-term revision. And, of course, the 4-week change helps put the 1-week change into proper perspective.

EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past 12 weeks.

This metric essentially shows how the consensus EPS estimate has changed over a period longer than 1 week or 4 weeks.

EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal quarter over the past four weeks.

While the revision in consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year is strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares, the estimate revision for the current fiscal quarter is an important metric as well, especially over the short term, and particularly as a stock approaches its earnings date. If a stock's Q1 EPS estimate decreases ahead of its earnings release, it's usually a negative sign, whereas an increase is a positive sign.