

Asia Pacific Equity Research 22 May 2008

Evergreen Fibreboard

Green light for Evergreen

- We initiate with OW; 75% upside to our M\$2.50 Dec-08 PT: Evergreen, a globally competitive MDF manufacturer, is expected to benefit from the estimated 7-8% rise in world demand, driven mainly by the furniture industry in China, construction activity in the Middle East, and a growing awareness of MDF being 'greener' alternative to natural hardwood.
- Good management track record in managing costs/currency movements: Evergreen's net profit margins have been stable at 16-17% for the past four quarters despite the 4-8% rise in raw material costs and 6-19% appreciation in the ringgit and baht.
- Negatives priced in; we expect the de-rating to reverse: We forecast an acceleration in EPS growth to 24% in FY09 and 18% in FY10 from: (1) an improvement in pricing power when Russia raises its log export duty to 80% in Jan-09 from 25% currently (Malaysia has a ready supply of rubberwood, whereas Russia comprises 69% of China's imports); (2) an estimated 40% increase in production capacity; and (3) cost control initiatives, i.e., inhouse biomass and glue plants.
- Valuation, PT, risks: An FY08E P/E of 5.7x (-1 std dev of threeyear range) is attractive for a stock with a 5.3% net dividend yield and 21% ROE. Our Dec-08 PT of M\$2.50 is based on 10x FY08E P/E, a 30% discount to the eight-year average market P/E of 14.2x. A key risk to our PT: further deterioration of the global economy.

Biodinborg. 200 million footoorsi 2000				
M\$ in millions, year-end December	FY07	FY08E	FY09E	FY10E
Sales	732	788	973	1,185
Operating profit	144	152	187	218
EBITDA	172	186	256	287
Net profit	119	121	150	177
EPS (sen)	24.7	25.2	31.3	36.9
Gearing (%)	16%	27%	7%	-13%
ROE (%)	25	21	22	23
ROCE (%)	25	19	21	25
P/E (x)	5.8	5.7	4.6	3.9
EV/EBITDA (x)	3.7	3.4	2.5	2.2
P/B (x)	1.3	1.1	0.9	0.8
P/CF (x)	5.0	4.5	3.3	2.9
Dividend yield (%)	4.9	5.3	6.6	7.7
Dividend payout ratio (%)	28	30	30	30
	1Q07	2Q07	3Q07	4Q07
Sales	167	193	202	170
EPS	5.9	6.7	6.6	5.5

Bloomberg: EVF MK: Reuters: EVGN.KL

Initiation Overweight

M\$1.43

22 May 2008 Price Target: M\$2.50

Malaysia **Forest Products**

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Seedlings

Three-year price performance



Source: Bloomberg

	1M	3M	12M
Absolute (%)	-2.7	10.9	-31.6
Relative (%)	-2.6	18.8	-26.8

Company data

52-wk range (M\$)	1.16-2.16
Mkt cap. (M\$MM)	686
Mkt cap. (US\$ MM)	214
Shares O/S (MM)	480
Free float (%)	58
Avg. daily volume	0.5
Liquidity (M\$MM)	0.8
Exchange rate	M\$3.21/US\$1
Index	1277.57
Year-end	Dec
Source: Bloomberg.	

Source: Company reports, JPMorgan estimates.

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Company description

Listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia in March 2005, Evergreen manufactures MDF (91% of top line) and is the second largest Malaysian producer with 1.1MM m3 capacity located in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Manufacturing of particle board and knock-down furniture contribute to the remaining 9% revenue.

In order to stabilize costs, the company also has adhesive capacity of 280K MT, which supplies 100% of its glue requirements and a biomass plant in Thailand.

Evergreen's Malaysia operations, founded by the Kuo family in 1977, as DTi was principally involved in the lamination of veneer over MDF. Today, the Kuo family is the single largest shareholder in the company with 42% stake.

Table 1: Sensitivity of FY08E EPS to avg MDF prices

			Base		
	-10%	-5%	case	+5%	+10%
MDF	312	330	347	364	382
EPS	14.7	20.1	25.2	30.4	35.8
% chg	-42%	-20%		21%	42%

Source: JPMorgan estimates. MDF prices are in US\$/m3 while EPS are in sen.

Table 2: Corporate governance metrics

Company dividend policy	Dividend track record
20-50% DPR, in	40% DPR FY06
line with profitability	30% DPR FY07
# Days to publish	# Days to consolidated
quarterly report	annual report
60	180
% Independent	Inter-company
directors	transactions
3/7	None
History of share placement	Insider ownership (%)
None	Kuo family owns 42.3%

Source: Company annual report, Company management.

Positive price drivers

7-8% p.a. rise in demand for MDF

This was driven by the growing furniture industry in China, booming construction activity in the Middle East, and the increasing awareness that medium density fiberboard (MDF, derived from trees in forest plantations) is a 'greener' alternative to natural hardwood. It is also used as an alternative to particleboard, plywood, and solid wood in certain applications due to its homogenous structure and because it can be easily shaped.

Delivering earnings despite cost pressure and appreciating Asian currencies

We expect an acceleration in Evergreen's earnings growth to 24% in FY09 and 18% in FY10 after flat growth in FY08 driven by the following factors:

- We expect margins to remain stable due to cost control initiatives: The commissioning of its Malaysian glue and Thai biomass plants (both in April 2008) will contribute an estimated additional M\$25 million p.a. to the bottom line. 50% of the company's earnings have also been hedged at an exchange rate closer to M\$3.26/US\$ for a period of one year.
- Improved pricing power in 2009E when Russia increases export duty for logs to 80% from 25%: This will decrease the competitiveness of Chinese manufacturers as 69% of China's log imports are from Russia.
- **40% increase in production capacity in 2009E after an 8% increase in 2008E:** The 40% increase will comprise the 260,000 m³ increase from adding a third line in its Thailand plant (which will be ready by 4Q08) and the full impact from its Indonesian plant of 110,000 m³ (which began operations in late 2Q08). Management targets to grow capacity by 10-20% p.a., via organic growth as well as acquisitions.

Attractive valuations; trading at FY08E P/E of 5.7x, dividend yield of 5.3% The company currently commands a net profit margin of 16% (8-10% above other manufacturers), and an ROE of 21% (above the average market ROE of 16%).

Negative price drivers and risks to thesis

A key risk to our thesis is extremely weak global economic conditions coupled with continued rise of commodity prices: This could dampen consumer

discretionary spending and could result in the company being unable to pass on cost increases. Evergreen exports approximately 85% of its production yearly. JPMorgan is, however, only expecting a softer US economy in 2008 versus our earlier view of a recession. JPMorgan changed its US GDP forecast to 0% to low growth in 2008, as opposed to negative growth expected earlier. A 5% appreciation in the ringgit would lead to a 9% decline in our earnings estimates for FY08.

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Figure 1: Evergreen's customer base: Geographical breakdown



Source: Company.





Source: Datastream.

Figure 3: Evergreen's share price moves in tandem with plywood price trends



Source: Datastream, Japan Lumber Report, ITTO.

Valuation and rating analysis

Evergreen's stock is trading at a FY08E P/E of 5.7x vs the average market FY08E P/E of 14.2x over the past eight years. We believe that the 60% discount to market is unwarranted given the company's: (1) strong management team with a good track record of maintaining margins despite cost pressures; (2) strong balance sheet position with a net gearing level of 27%; and (3) attractive dividend yield of 5.3% and above-market ROE of 21%.

Since its listing in 2005, the stock has de-rated from a high of 9.6x. We believe that the de-rating was largely caused by: (1) negative sentiment surrounding the particleboard makers (especially the ones listed in Malaysia) given the oversupply situation in the particleboard industry leading to weak margins; and (2) weak plywood prices especially in the past 12 months.





Source: Bloomberg, Company, JPMorgan estimates.

Table 3: Malaysian globetrotters—Valuations Table 4: Global MDF manufacturers—Valuations

	CY	P/E	Net yield ROE					P/E		
	08E	09E	FY08E	FY08E			08E	09E	%	
Evergreen	5.7	4.6	5.3	21.0	Evergreen	Msia	5.7	4.6	91	
Unisem	4.8	3.1	7.1	16.5	Vanachai	Thailand	6.6	6.1	35	
WCT Eng	9.1	6.1	2.1	23.1	Norbord	Canada	-14.4	153.5	~13	
Coastal	9.4	6.0	1.8	33.0	Pfleiderer	Poland	7.0	6.1	*	
IJM	10.6	9.9	6.8	14.1	Grajewo					
Top Glove	11.4	9.3	2.1	17.3	Source: Bloombe	ara IRES IPMa	rgan estim	ates * Pfleid	lerer's main	
WŤK	12.6	10.4	1.8	8.6	Source: Bloomberg, IBES, JPMorgan estimates. * Pfleiderer's ma focus is in particleboard. Meanwhile, Norbord's main focus is on					
Dialog	17.0	12.4	2.6	24.4	_oriented strand b					

Source: Bloomberg, JPMorgan estimates. Valuations are as of 22 Valuations are as of 22 May 2008. May 2008.

MDF is neither particleboard nor plywood

(1) MDF is a superior product to particleboard given its moldability and superior strength—this improves the company's ability to price up. Oversupply is also not so much a problem in MDF as it is in particleboard. MDF makers also have access to consistent wood supply giving them a competitive edge. (2) Evergreen, unlike most Malaysian plywood manufacturers, is less susceptible to country/region-specific economic slowdowns as it exports to 45 countries with the largest export country making up not more than 10-15% of its total sales for various industries (whereas 25% of world tropical timber plywood is consumed by Japan). MDF prices have

Source: Bloomberg, JPMorgan es



Table 5: EVF—JPMorgan's price, volume assumptions

FY	07	08E	09E	10E
MDF price**	315	347	375	393
Volume*	0.61	0.66	0.77	0.90
Utilization	87%	87%	71%	83%
rate, %				
FX rate	3.44	3.15	3.15	3.15

Source: JPMorgan estimates. **Note that MDF prices are quoted in US/m3. * Volume in MM m3. FX rate is M\$/US\$.





Source: Company.

Figure 6: Evergreen—NP margins improved despite rise in raw material prices

indexed



Source: Company, ITTO.

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JPMorgan 🛟

been moving steadily upwards since 2005 despite a sharp decline of 40% in plywood prices between Oct-06 and Dec-07.

We peg a fair 10x FY08E P/E to the stock based on a 30% discount to the average market P/E of 14x. At our Dec-08 PT of M\$2.50, the stock would likely trade at a 30-40% premium to global MDF manufacturers (Table 4), which we believe is justified given the company's superior product composition where MDF comprises 91% of its total production. Vanachai and Pfleiderer are mainly focused on particleboard while a large proportion of Norbord's production is in oriented strand boards (which are mainly used for construction and not furniture).

Global MDF supply-demand

Demand

MDF demand is estimated to grow at 7-8% p.a. (according to BIS Shrapnel Global Business Research & Forecasting), from the 50.5MM m³ level consumed currently. Of the 50.5MM m³, 22.7MM m³ is consumed in China (which comprises 82% of Asia Pacific's demand) while demand from the Middle East is growing.

Supply

The largest producer of MDF is China (despite it also being the largest consumer), producing some 43% of global demand. The US and Germany are the second- and third-largest manufacturers globally, respectively. In terms of exports, Germany is the largest exporter followed by Canada and Malaysia. The latter currently has a production capacity which comprises 2% of the world's MDF consumption.

Cost structure

Rubberwood is the largest cost component comprising 30-35%. The company has access to 1.3MM ha of rubber plantations in Malaysia. In order to stabilize its costs, the company sources approximately 30% of its rubberwood from "land-clearing" concessions given by government agencies such as FELDA where rubber plantations are cleared for replanting. Evergreen will bear the cost of clearing the land and in return is entitled to logs harvested. Adhesive is another major cost component (25-28%). Evergreen has glue plants in all its three manufacturing locations and where production is sufficient for its own consumption.

Long payback period of about seven years due to high start-up costs

It costs between M\$120 million and M\$150 million to set up a medium-size MDF plant with an annual output of 130,000m³. This implies a payback period of around seven years.

Evergreen's earnings: Room for upward revision

Our flat earnings growth forecast for FY08E assumes short-term weakness in MDF prices due to the possible economic slowdown globally. However, we see upside potential as the probability of MDF prices catching up with particleboard prices is high. Historically, MDF prices have been at a US\$60-80/m³ premium to particleboard prices. In the past year, particleboard prices (+12%) have outperformed MDF prices (+7%).

We also believe that the company's pricing power will improve, especially moving into 2009, for the following reasons: (1) Reduced competitiveness of Chinese

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manufacturers when the Russian government's move to increase its export duty for logs to 80% in Jan-09 from 25% currently exacerbates the Chinese government's move to reduce GST rebate in 2005 (GST paid increased to 11% from 5%). 69% of Chinese manufacturers' log imports are from Russia. (2) Stunted growth among manufacturers in Europe/North America after the recent inflationary pressures has accentuated their less competitive cost structure—plants in tropical countries use less energy while the use of rubberwood reduces glue costs by 15%.

SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Evergreen is an owner-operated company; Mr Kuo Jen Chiu, part of the founding family, is involved in the day-to-day operations of the company.
- Ready supply of rubberwood in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, give Evergreen a sustainable competitive advantage over MDF manufacturers in China (which uses pine trees imported from Russia, for which the government will increase the export tax).
- The use of rubberwood is also a preferred raw material given its light color which makes it easier to be painted on and permits the application of laminates. The use of rubberwood requires 15% less glue in the manufacturing process given its higher starch content.
- Low gearing level of 27%, which allows the company to absorb any negative cash flow, if needed, in the short term.
- 50% of US dollar exposure has been hedged at M\$3.26/US\$ for one year.

Opportunities

- Rising demand for MDF coupled with slower supply growth given China's declining competitiveness.
- Volatile raw material prices may lead to further consolidation in the industry. Evergreen is looking to grow its capacity by 10-20% p.a. via both organic growth as well as acquisitions.
- Reaping cost savings from the commissioning of biomass plants in Thailand and Indonesia as well as its JVs with adhesive manufacturers in all its 3 adhesive manufacturing spaces.

Weaknesses

- Volatile raw material costs, especially rubberwood and resin. Rubberwood constitutes 30-35% of its total cost while resin comprises 25-28% of total cost.
- High initial capex and long lead time for capacity expansion of two years lengthens management's time to react to increases in demand. As a result, management is also more reliant on acquisitions for growth.
- Relatively low share trading liquidity may deter foreign institutional investors.

Threats

- With further technological advancement, rubberwood MDF may face competition from MDF derived from other wood forms/species.
- Malaysian manufacturers may also face competition from countries within the region venturing into rubber plantations such as Vietnam.



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with the highest Q-Scores have been shown (on average) to significantly outperform those stocks with the lowest Q-Scores in this universe.

Evergreen Fibreboard: Summary of financials

M\$ in millions, year-end December

Profit and Loss statement					Cash flow statement				
MYR in millions, year-end Dec	FY07	FY08E	FY09E	FY10E	MYR in millions, year-end Dec	FY07	FY08E	FY09E	FY10E
Revenues	732	788	973	1,185	EBIT	144	152	187	218
% change Y/Y	38.5	7.8	23.4	21.8	Depreciation & amortisation	28	34	69	69
EBIT	148	155	191	222	Change in working capital	-18	-9	-22	-25
% change Y/Y	109.9	5.0	23.0	16.5	Taxes	-9	-15	-18	-22
EBIT Margin (%)	20.2	19.7	19.6	18.8	Cash flow from operations	145	163	216	240
Net Interest	-7	-9	-8	-6					
Earnings before tax	140	146	183	217	Capex	-185	-200	-50	-30
% change Y/Y	107.3	4.0	25.4	18.2	Disposal/ (purchase)	3	4	4	4
Tax	-9	-15	-18	-22	Net Interest	-7	-9	-8	-6
as % of EBT	6.7	10.0	10.0	10.0	Free cash flow	-44	-43	162	209
Net Income (Reported)	119	121	150	177	Equity rejead (repaid)	0	0	0	0
% change Y/Y Core Net Profit	98 119	2 121	24 150	18 177	Equity raised/ (repaid)	0 84	0 -38	-46	0 -30
% change Y/Y	98	2	24	18	Debt raised/ (repaid) Other	-30	-30	-40	-30
Shares Outstanding	480	480	480	480	Dividends paid	-30	-36	-45	-53
EPS (reported)	0.25	0.25	0.31	480 0.37	Beginning cash	-34 147	-30 142	-45	-55 95
% change Y/Y	98	0.23	24	18	Ending cash	147	24	24 95	221
Core EPS	0.25	0.25	0.31	0.37	DPS	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.11
% change Y/Y	98	2	24	18	DIS	0.07	0.00	0.07	0.11
Balance sheet					Ratio Analysis				
MYR in millions, year-end Dec	FY07	FY08E	FY09E	FY10E	Year-end Dec	FY07	FY08E	FY09E	FY10E
Cash and cash equivalents	142	24	95	221	Gross margin	35.0	34.9	35.0	35.2
Accounts receivable	125	134	165	201	EBIT margin	20.2	19.7	19.6	18.8
Inventories	82	87	107	130	Operating margin	19.7	19.2	19.2	18.4
Others	0	0	0	0	Net profit margin	16.2	15.4	15.5	14.9
Current assets	348	245	368	553					
					Sales per share growth	38.5	7.8	23.4	21.8
LT investments	0	0	0	0	Sales growth	38.5	7.8	23.4	21.8
Net fixed assets	528	693	674	635	Net profit growth	98.4	2.2	24.2	17.7
Total assets	908	971	1,074	1,220	EPS growth	98.4	2.2	24.2	17.7
Liabilities					Interest coverage (x)	20	17	25	38
ST loans	88	95	80	80	Net debt to total capital	11	20	5	-10
Payables	120	126	156	190	Net debt to equity	16	27	7	-13
Others	4	4	4	4	Sales/assets	81	81	91	97
Total current liabilities	211	225	239	273	Assets/equity	170	157	149	144
Long term debt	140	94	64	34	ROE	24.7	21.1	22.5	22.6
Other liabilities	17	17	17	17	ROCE	25.1	19.2	21.0	24.7
Total liabilities	375	354	352	373					
Shareholders' equity	533	617	723	847					
BVPS	1.110	1.286	1.506	1.764					

Source: Company ddata, JPMorgan estimates.