

Rubber Gloves

OVERWEIGHT

Maintained

Results round-up: On growth hormone

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- Half exceeded our estimates; maintain OVERWEIGHT.** The rubber glove sector did well during the quarters ending Dec-Feb, with core net profit for the six companies in our coverage rising on average 23% qoq and more than doubling yoy. Half of the companies topped our expectations. The results trend was consistent with our expectations of strong results due to pricing power stemming from robust demand. This enabled margins to improve despite rising latex costs and a depreciating US\$. We see no change to this picture of strong demand, which the manufacturers will be able to tap into, thanks to their continuing capacity expansion. We also expect the impact on margins to be minimal given the strong demand which will allow the companies to pass through the cost increases. We retain our OVERWEIGHT stance on the sector, with the potential re-rating catalysts being a continuing uptick in demand, capacity expansion and strong earnings growth. We retain our earnings forecasts and Outperform recommendations for all the glove stocks under our coverage. Adventa and Supermax remain our top picks.
- No underachievers.** Three companies, namely Adventa, Latexx and Supermax, met our expectations. The other three, i.e. Hartalega, Kossan and Top Glove exceeded our numbers by 2-9% on an annualised basis, thanks largely to higher-than-expected sales and margins. All six companies reported strong quarterly results on both qoq and yoy basis, helped by higher sales and strong demand for rubber gloves.
- Margins continued to improve.** Despite the rise in latex prices and weakening US\$, glove manufacturers' margins remained intact and in most cases, rose throughout end-09 to the beginning of 2010. The current global supply shortage allowed the Malaysian players to command higher prices for their products. On top of that, the companies use the previous month's average latex price and RM:US\$ rate when quoting customers for new orders. This underpins our belief that future margin contraction, if any, will be minimal and temporary as there is only 1-2 months' time lag before price adjustments take place.
- Still firm on expansion plans.** Glove manufacturers' expansion plans are intact as demand is still set to rise this year. Many of them are expanding capacity in a big way over the next few years. Top Glove's announcement of new expansion plans since January this year is a good sign as it shows that the current supply in the market cannot cater to the rising demand for rubber gloves.
- Repeat of 2008?** The stellar performance of rubber glove companies has stirred fears of a repeat of the 2008 collapse of their share prices which was caused by a massive sell-down by investors who assumed that record latex prices, high energy prices and a weakening US\$ would result in losses for glove makers for that year. We do not think this situation will recur as glove manufacturers proved their resilience against the global economic turmoil in 2008-09 and earnings continued to rise despite the weakening US\$ and high costs.

Sector comparisons

	Bloomberg ticker	Recom.	Price (Local)	Target price (Local)	Mkt cap (US\$ m)	Core P/E (x)		3-yr EPS CAGR (%)	P/BV (x)	ROE (%)	Div yield (%)
						CY2010	CY2011		CY2010	CY2010	CY2010
Adventa	ADV MK	O	3.40	5.44	151	10.9	8.2	31.5	1.9	19.7	2.8
Hartalega	HART MK	O	7.76	12.11	567	11.4	9.5	37.0	4.2	42.2	3.0
Kossan	KRI MK	O	7.41	10.43	357	8.8	7.0	16.7	2.3	31.2	2.0
Latexx	LTX MK	O	3.89	5.44	238	7.8	6.1	43.2	3.0	46.5	2.1
Supermax	SUCB MK	O	6.38	9.65	521	10.2	8.7	16.0	2.5	27.0	2.0
Top Glove	TOPG MK	O	12.92	17.90	1,197	13.4	11.9	26.6	3.5	29.4	3.0
Simple average						10.4	8.6	28.5	2.9	32.7	2.5

O = Outperform, N = Neutral, U = Underperform, TB = Trading Buy and TS = Trading Sell
 Source: Bloomberg, Company, CIMB Research

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Background

In this note, we review the results announced in Jan 10-Mar 10 for the Malaysian rubber glove companies under our coverage. As the companies have different financial year-ends, the results represent different quarters for different companies (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Financial year-ends

Company	FYE	Quarter under review	Date announced
Adventa	October	1Q	3-Mar
Hartalega	March	3Q	28-Jan
Kossan	December	4Q	25-Feb
Latexx	December	4Q	5-Feb
Supermax	December	4Q	19-Feb
Top Glove	August	2Q	17-Mar

Source: Companies, CIMB Research

Share price performance

Rubber glove stocks still outperformed the market. Rubber glove stocks are still favoured by investors for their superior growth prospects and defensiveness. Since our last write-up in January, the sector has gained 26% on average against a meagre gain of 1% for the KLCI (Figure 2). Although Kossan was the laggard among all the rubber glove stocks last year, the stock is catching up, rising 35% YTD, second only to Supermax which gained 35.7%. Kossan currently offers the cheapest valuations in the sector and is one of the stocks of choice for investors who missed the sector run last year.

Figure 2: Share price performance since 5 Jan

Company	Share price on 5-Jan (RM)	Share price on 23-Mar (RM)	Difference
Adventa	3.13	3.40	8.6%
Hartalega	6.21	7.76	25.0%
Kossan	5.49	7.41	35.0%
Latexx	3.18	3.89	22.3%
Supermax	4.70	6.38	35.7%
Top Glove	10.08	12.92	28.2%
Average			25.8%
FBM KLCI	1,288.24	1,304.85	1.3%

Source: Bloomberg, CIMB Research

Results analysis

50% met our forecasts... Out of the six rubber glove companies that we cover, three companies, namely Adventa, Latexx and Supermax, met our expectations (Figure 3). Adventa proved that FY10 is the beginning of a new financial year for the company as it recorded core net profit growth of almost 20% qoq and 25% yoy in 1Q10. Moreover, no forex losses were incurred during 1Q10, which is in line with the company's earlier indication that it would steer clear of long-term foreign hedging contracts from FY10 onwards. Record quarterly profits were chalked up by Latexx whose 4Q09 core net profit advanced 157% yoy and Supermax, which racked up 171% core net profit growth after a dismal 4Q08 when it had to make a RM16.7m write-off for its investment in APLI.

...and 50% outstripped our numbers. On an annualised basis, the other three companies, i.e. Hartalega, Kossan and Top Glove exceeded our numbers by 2-9%. Most of the deviation came from higher-than-expected sales and margins. Although Hartalega did not add any production lines during the quarter under review, an improvement in productivity from 29,000 pieces of nitrile gloves per hour to 31,500 pieces allowed the group to increase its sales. As for Kossan, despite two fire incidents and forex losses, the group managed to report higher core net profit, courtesy of a better product mix which widened the company's margins. Meanwhile, industry leader Top Glove turned in a 2Q10 core net profit that was almost double

2Q09's. We expect 2H10 to be stronger for the industry leader as the group is putting in new capacity that will allow it to sell more in 2H.

Figure 3: Companies' performance vs. our and consensus forecasts

Company	vs our forecast			vs consensus forecast		
	Above	In line	Below	Above	In line	Below
Adventa		√		√		
Hartalega	√				√	
Kossan	√				√	
Latexx		√			N/A	
Supermax		√		√		
Top Glove	√			√		

Source: Bloomberg, CIMB Research

Figure 4: Results comparison for individual companies – Core net profit growth yoy and qoq

Company	Quarter	Yoy change	Qoq change
Adventa	1QFY10	24.7%	19.5%
Hartalega	3QFY10	67.4%	12.4%
Kossan	4QFY09	157.9%	53.8%
Latexx	4QFY09	157.2%	21.0%
Supermax	4QFY09	171.4%	23.3%
Top Glove	2QFY10	95.9%	8.2%
Average		112.4%	23.0%

Source: Bloomberg, CIMB Research

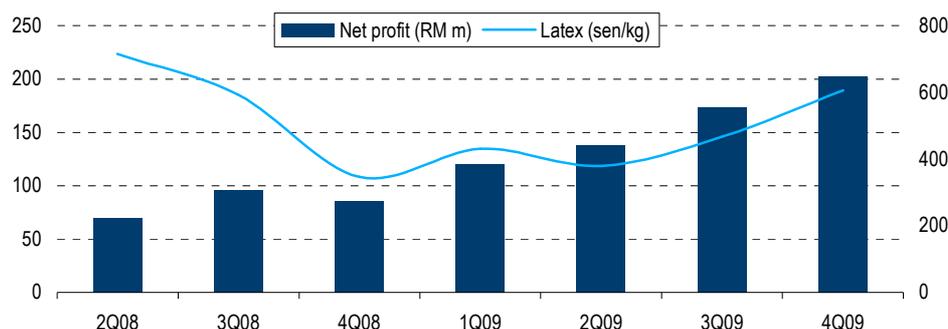
Trends in the recent results season

Rising latex prices... Latex price stayed on an upward trend during Oct 09-Feb 10, rising from RM4.65/kg to about RM7.35/kg. It reached to an all-time high of RM7.45/kg earlier this month, beating the RM7.20/kg high hit in Jul 08. Currently, latex concentrate is trading at about RM7.30/kg. We gather from industry players that this is due to the tight supply in the market as well as the ongoing rubber wintering season which should last until April this year.

..and weakening US\$ not a major concern. On top of that, the US\$ weakened against the ringgit to RM3.40:US\$1 compared to RM3.57:US\$1 in the same period last year. Even though rubber glove manufacturers export more than 90% of their production, the US\$ depreciation is not a major concern as the manufacturers can adjust their selling prices to reflect the higher latex costs and RM:US\$ exchange rates with just a 1-2 month lag.

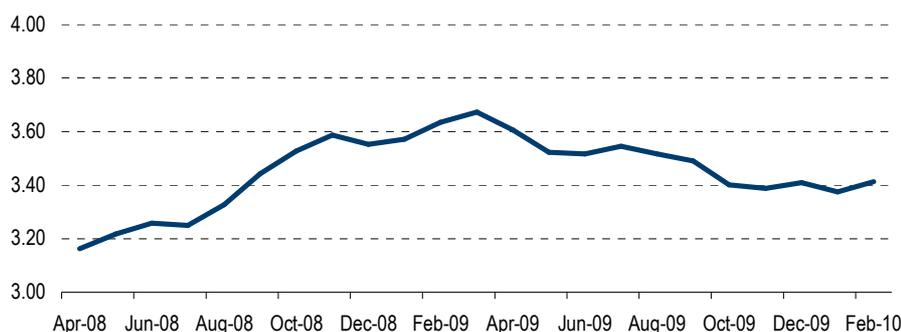
Margins and profits continue to improve. Despite the challenges, glove manufacturers' margins and profits continued to improve (Figure 7). The current global shortage of rubber gloves allows the Malaysian players to command higher prices for their products. On top of that, the previous month's average latex price and exchange rate are used in the glove manufacturers' costing when they quote customers for new orders. As a result, any future margin contraction will be minimal and temporary.

Figure 5: Total net profit vs. latex price trend



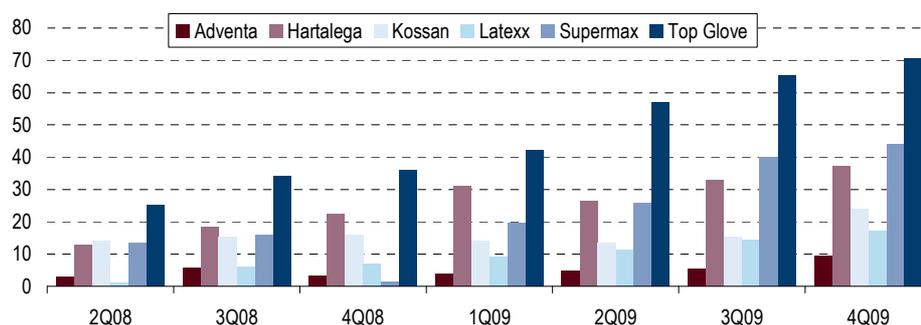
Source: Companies, Bloomberg CIMB Research

Figure 6: RM:US\$ exchange rate



Source: CEIC

Figure 7: Net profit trend for individual companies (2QCY08-4QCY09)



Source: Companies, CIMB Research

Still firm on expansion plans. Glove manufacturers' expansion plans are intact as demand is still set to rise this year. Many of them are expanding capacity in a big way over the next few years. Top Glove's announcement of new expansion plans since January this year is a good sign as it shows that the current supply in the market cannot cater to the rising demand for rubber gloves. The company is adding capacity of 6bn pieces p.a. at its Factories 7, 22 and 23, on top of the expansion plans announced last year.

Figure 8: Capacity expansion plans (bn pieces p.a.)

	2009	2010	Annual increase		2011	Annual increase		Growth in 2 years	
			Absolute	(%)		Absolute	(%)	Absolute	(%)
Adventa	3.5	5.2	1.7	49%	6.9	1.7	33%	3.4	97%
Hartalega	6.2	8.4	2.2	35%	9.9	1.5	18%	3.7	59%
Kossan Rubber	11.1	14.5	3.4	31%	18.0	3.5	24%	6.9	62%
Latexx Partners	6.0	9.0	3.0	50%	10.5	1.5	17%	4.5	75%
Supermax	14.5	17.6	3.1	21%	21.7	4.2	24%	7.3	50%
Top Glove	31.5	35.3	3.8	12%	41.3	6.1	17%	9.8	31%
Total	72.8	89.9	17.1	24%	108.3	18.4	20%	35.5	56.3%

Source: Companies, CIMB Research

Outlook

Growth via new capacity... We expect demand for rubber gloves to continue rising, with growth coming from existing traditional buyers for medical and healthcare usage as well as new users from emerging countries and other sectors such as nursing home, beauty and other general purposes. Across the board, glove manufacturers are well prepared for the additional demand as they are expanding their capacity in a big way.

...and technological improvements. On top of capacity expansion, rubber glove manufacturers are using technology to maintain their competitive edge. This includes producing better quality gloves and improving their glove manufacturing technology. For example, Latexx recently teamed up with a Dutch company, Budev BV, to produce protein-free gloves which are currently not available in the market.

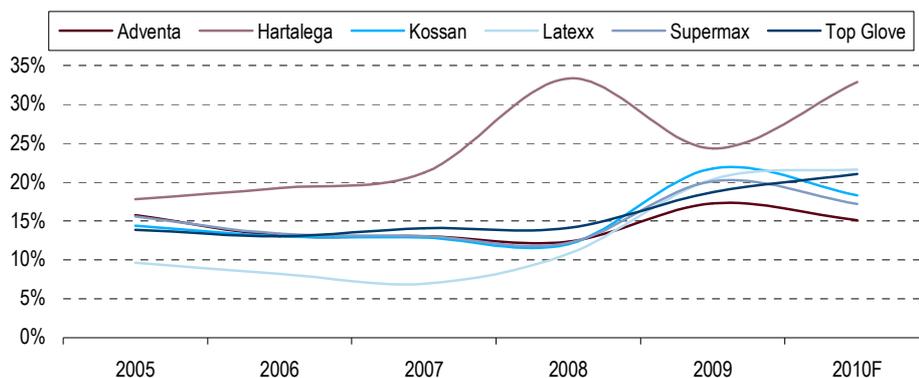
Contributions from this new technology are expected to come in as early as 4Q this year. We believe that there will be more technological advances this year as more and more companies focus on their research & development programmes. By moving ahead with technology and automation, the companies will be able to improve quality and overall efficiency, which will lower their costs and improve margins in the longer term.

Repeat of 2008? The stellar performance of rubber glove companies has stirred fears of a repeat of the 2008 collapse of their share prices which was caused by a massive sell-down by investors who assumed that record latex prices, high energy prices and a weakening US\$ would result in losses for glove makers for that year. We do not think this situation will recur as glove manufacturers proved their resilience against the global economic turmoil in 2008-09 and earnings continued to rise despite the weakening US\$ and high costs. Rubber gloves proved to be a necessity, especially for the medical sector as they provide a barrier of protection against diseases for medical practitioners. On average, the total net profit for rubber glove companies increased 19.5% in FY08 and 65.3% in FY09. For FY10, we expect the sector's earnings to jump 66.7%.

Gas prices unlikely to be revised in the short term. Another concern that most investors have is the negative impact on rubber glove manufacturers if the government raise electricity tariffs and natural gas prices this year. Currently, our power analyst is firm in her view that economic conditions are not conducive for a hike in electricity and gas rates given that gas and coal prices were relatively stable in 2H09 and the local economy is only starting to regain its footing. The next few months are unlikely to see any revisions in rates though revisions in 2H are a possibility. Even if energy costs are raised, the glove makers can pass on the cost increase to customers within two months, going by the experience in 2008 when energy prices were raised and in 2009 when electricity tariffs and natural gas rates were reduced.

Sustainable margins. The margins of rubber glove manufacturers improved throughout 2009 and for Top Glove, have held steady YTD. We think that margins will remain stable for the rest of this year due to the strong demand and the adjustment of glove prices for the preceding month's average exchange rate and latex prices. Also, as we highlighted previously, there is also the possibility of margin expansion from greater cooperation between the players, improvement in product specifications and the sale of more gloves on an OBM basis.

Figure 9: EBITDA margin trend, FY2005-FY2010F



Source: Companies, CIMB Research

Valuation and recommendation

Healthy outlook ahead; maintain OVERWEIGHT. Prospects for the rubber glove sector remains healthy as demand for rubber gloves is still set to rise, especially with the increasing awareness of hygiene and the emergence of new users from developing economies. The results announced during Jan-Mar this year proved that the rubber glove sector is a resilient sector. Earnings are still set to rise given the strong demand for rubber gloves and the ongoing capacity expansion. We maintain our OVERWEIGHT stance on the sector and retain our earnings forecasts for all the glove companies under our coverage in view of the favourable outlook and the sustainability of demand. We also maintain our Outperform ratings on all the six companies under our coverage. Adventa and Supermax remain our top picks.

Adventa and... We like Adventa for its niche in surgical glove and aggressive long-term plans to expand its other business segments and become a significant supplier of healthcare products in the region. The company expects its sales to increase progressively this year as the new capacity from the new high-output factory in Kluang and new lines from its Kota Bharu plant will allow it to handle more orders. On top of that, the utilisation rate for its Uruguay plant has rocketed from 20% to 60%. It expects this plant to start making positive earnings contributions in 3QFY10. We maintain our Outperform on Adventa as well as our target price of RM5.44, which we continue to peg to 13.2x P/E or a 20% discount to Top Glove's target P/E of 16.5x. Potential re-rating catalysts include improving quarterly earnings coming from the capacity expansion and strong global demand.

...Supermax remain as top picks. Supermax also stays as one of our top picks due to its strong position in OBM gloves and the stock's high liquidity. Its expansion plans are progressing as scheduled, taking its annual production capacity progressively from 14.5bn pieces currently to 21.7bn pieces by the end of 2011. We believe that Supermax's prospects will continue to improve and demand for the company's products will stay strong over the next few quarters. Our target price of RM9.65 is intact as we continue to value the stock at 13.2x P/E, a 20% discount to Top Glove's target P/E of 16.5x. We maintain our Outperform recommendation, which is predicated on continued growth of glove demand, ongoing capacity expansion and higher contribution from its distribution centres.

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RECOMMENDATION FRAMEWORK #1*

STOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

OUTPERFORM: The stock's total return is expected to exceed a relevant benchmark's total return by 5% or more over the next 12 months.

NEUTRAL: The stock's total return is expected to be within +/-5% of a relevant benchmark's total return.

UNDERPERFORM: The stock's total return is expected to be below a relevant benchmark's total return by 5% or more over the next 12 months.

TRADING BUY: The stock's total return is expected to exceed a relevant benchmark's total return by 5% or more over the next 3 months.

TRADING SELL: The stock's total return is expected to be below a relevant benchmark's total return by 5% or more over the next 3 months.

SECTOR RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERWEIGHT: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, is expected to outperform the relevant primary market index over the next 12 months.

NEUTRAL: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, is expected to perform in line with the relevant primary market index over the next 12 months.

UNDERWEIGHT: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, is expected to underperform the relevant primary market index over the next 12 months.

TRADING BUY: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, is expected to outperform the relevant primary market index over the next 3 months.

TRADING SELL: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, is expected to underperform the relevant primary market index over the next 3 months.

* This framework only applies to stocks listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange, Bursa Malaysia, Stock Exchange of Thailand and Jakarta Stock Exchange. Occasionally, it is permitted for the total expected returns to be temporarily outside the prescribed ranges due to extreme market volatility or other justifiable company or industry-specific reasons.

RECOMMENDATION FRAMEWORK #2 **

STOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

OUTPERFORM: Expected positive total returns of 15% or more over the next 12 months.

NEUTRAL: Expected total returns of between -15% and +15% over the next 12 months.

UNDERPERFORM: Expected negative total returns of 15% or more over the next 12 months.

TRADING BUY: Expected positive total returns of 15% or more over the next 3 months.

TRADING SELL: Expected negative total returns of 15% or more over the next 3 months.

SECTOR RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERWEIGHT: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, has a high number of stocks that are expected to have total returns of +15% or better over the next 12 months.

NEUTRAL: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, has either (i) an equal number of stocks that are expected to have total returns of +15% (or better) or -15% (or worse), or (ii) stocks that are predominantly expected to have total returns that will range from +15% to -15%; both over the next 12 months.

UNDERWEIGHT: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, has a high number of stocks that are expected to have total returns of -15% or worse over the next 12 months.

TRADING BUY: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, has a high number of stocks that are expected to have total returns of +15% or better over the next 3 months.

TRADING SELL: The industry, as defined by the analyst's coverage universe, has a high number of stocks that are expected to have total returns of -15% or worse over the next 3 months.

** This framework only applies to stocks listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and China listings on the Singapore Stock Exchange. Occasionally, it is permitted for the total expected returns to be temporarily outside the prescribed ranges due to extreme market volatility or other justifiable company or industry-specific reasons.