



General Mills (GIS)

Updated March 24th, 2023 by Aristofanis Papadatos

Key Metrics

Current Price:	\$84	5 Year CAGR Estimate:	3.5%	Market Cap:	\$49.3 B
Fair Value Price:	\$72	5 Year Growth Estimate:	4.0%	Ex-Dividend Date:	4/6/23
% Fair Value:	116%	5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:	-3.0%	Dividend Payment Date:	5/1/23
Dividend Yield:	2.6%	5 Year Price Target	\$88	Years Of Dividend Growth:	3
Dividend Risk Score:	B	Retirement Suitability Score:	C	Rating:	Hold

Overview & Current Events

General Mills is a packaged food giant, with more than 100 brands and operations in more than 100 countries. It has a market capitalization of \$49.3 billion. General Mills has not cut its dividend for 122 consecutive years. The stock underperformed the market by a wide margin in 2015-2019 due to stagnation of sales amid increased health consciousness of consumers, but it has returned to growth mode in the last four years, mostly thanks to the acquisition of Blue Buffalo and the pandemic, which has greatly increased food consumption at home.

In late March, General Mills reported (3/23/23) financial results for the third quarter of fiscal 2023. Net sales and organic sales grew 13% and 16%, respectively, over the prior year's quarter thanks to strong price hikes in all segments. Volumes remained flat despite the strong price hikes. Gross margin expanded from 31.4% to 33.8%, as higher prices more than offset high cost inflation, and earnings-per-share grew 17%, from \$0.83 to \$0.97, and beat the analysts' consensus by \$0.04. General Mills posted excellent results despite high cost inflation, thus proving the strength of its brands.

General Mills is facing tough comparisons, as the pandemic has subsided. It generates 85% of its sales from at-home food demand. It is also facing high cost inflation, which is likely to persist for a considerable period. Nevertheless, thanks to strong price hikes, it raised its guidance for organic revenue growth for a third quarter in a row, from 8%-9% to 10%-11% and growth of earnings-per-share from 4%-6% to 8%-9%, in fiscal 2023. We have thus raised our annual forecast from \$4.15 to \$4.25.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028
EPS	\$2.69	\$2.83	\$2.86	\$2.92	\$3.08	\$3.11	\$3.22	\$3.61	\$3.79	\$3.94	\$4.25	\$5.17
DPS	\$1.32	\$1.55	\$1.67	\$1.78	\$1.92	\$1.96	\$1.96	\$1.96	\$2.02	\$2.04	\$2.16	\$2.50
Shares¹	640.8	612.3	598.7	596.8	576.9	593.0	605.0	616.1	619.4	604.9	600.0	580.0

General Mills has grown its earnings-per-share at a 4.3% average annual rate in the last decade. In recent years, this decelerated, but the company has accelerated again since the onset of the pandemic. We expect approximately 4.0% annual earnings-per-share growth until 2028, mostly thanks to Blue Buffalo. Earnings-per-share will also benefit from the resumption of share repurchases now that the balance sheet has strengthened. Buybacks had paused due to the high debt load caused by the acquisition of Blue Buffalo. Moreover, despite concerns that the tailwind from strong at-home food demand amid the pandemic will fade after the end of the health crisis, management has repeatedly stated that it expects the pandemic to have a permanent boosting effect on at-home food demand.

Valuation Analysis

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Now	2028
Avg. P/E	15.7	17.8	18.6	20.0	20.5	17.0	14.1	15.0	16.0	16.3	19.8	17.0
Avg. Yld.	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	3.0%	3.7%	4.3%	3.6%	3.3%	3.2%	2.6%	2.8%

¹ In millions.

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General Mills is trading at a price-to-earnings ratio of 19.8, which is higher than its 10-year average price-to-earnings ratio of 17.0. If the stock trades at its average valuation level in five years, it will incur a -3.0% annualized valuation drag.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028
Payout	49.1%	54.8%	58.4%	61.0%	62.3%	63.0%	60.9%	54.3%	53.3%	51.8%	50.8%	48.4%

The strong brands of General Mills provide some competitive advantage but the fierce competition in its business, which caused the company to stagnate for five years (before the pandemic), indicates that this moat is narrow.

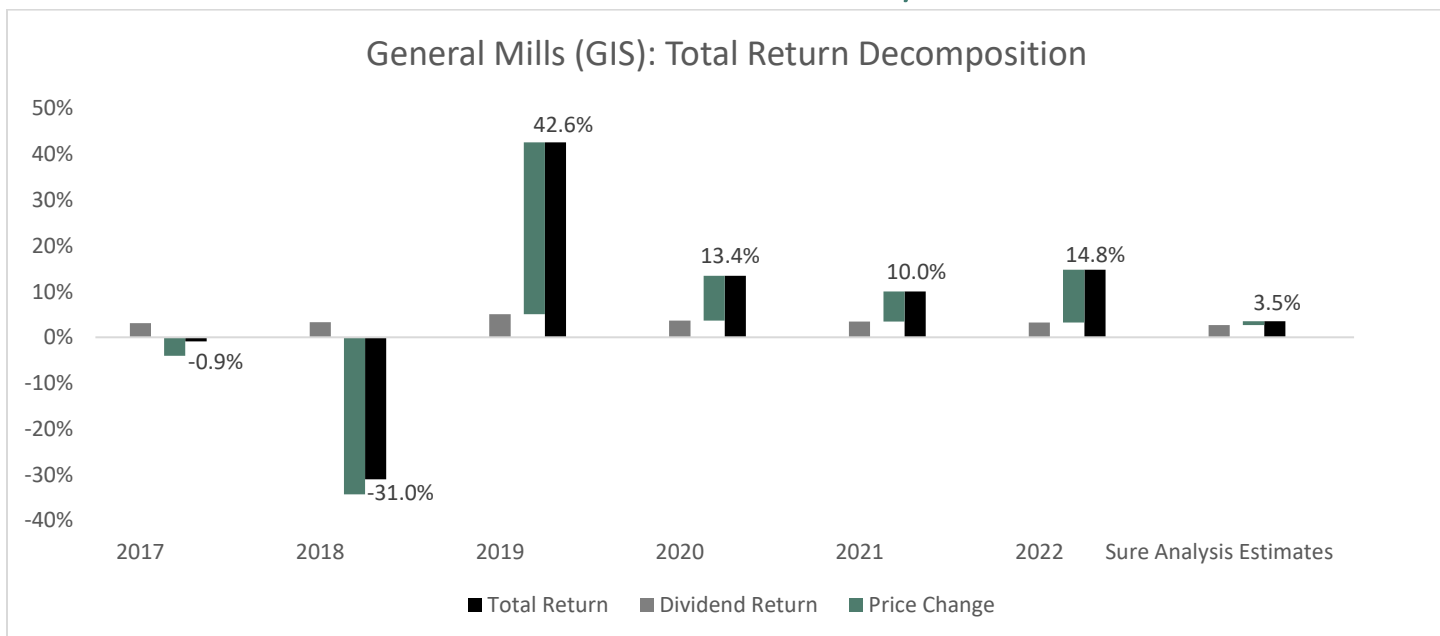
Due to the acquisition of Blue Buffalo, the debt load of General Mills increased materially. In fiscal 2019, interest expense jumped 40% due to this acquisition, from \$374 million to \$522 million. However, the company has reduced its debt at a fast pace since then and thus its annual interest expense has returned close to pre-acquisition level, at \$380 million. In fiscal 2022, interest expense decreased -10%, from \$420 million to \$380 million, and boosted pre-tax income by 1.3%.

Moreover, the stock has proven resilient during recessions and market selloffs because people tend to eat at home more during difficult economic periods. In the Great Recession, while most companies saw their earnings collapse, General Mills grew its earnings-per-share by more than 10% per year from 2007 to 2010. In the fierce coronavirus crisis, General Mills proved its resilience once again, as it posted record earnings in fiscal 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

General Mills proved its safe-haven nature in the coronavirus crisis. On the other hand, it is one of the few companies that are adversely affected now that the pandemic has subsided, though it will again offer a safe haven in the event of a potential recession, which has become more likely lately. With that said, the stock has rallied to an all-time high, at a nearly 10-year high valuation level. We expect General Mills to offer a 3.5% average annual return over the next five years thanks to 4.0% earnings-per-share growth and its 2.6% dividend, partly offset by a -3.0% annualized contraction of its earnings multiple. The stock maintains its hold rating.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue	17,774	17,910	17,630	16,563	15,620	15,740	16,865	17,627	18,127	18,993
Gross Profit	6,424	6,370	5,949	5,830	5,568	5,436	5,757	6,130	6,448	6,402
Gross Margin	36.1%	35.6%	33.7%	35.2%	35.6%	34.5%	34.1%	34.8%	35.6%	33.7%
SG&A Exp.	3,552	3,474	3,328	3,119	2,889	2,850	2,936	3,152	3,080	3,147
D&A Exp.	588	585	588	608	604	619	620	595	601	570
Operating Profit	2,872	2,896	2,621	2,711	2,679	2,586	2,821	2,978	3,369	3,255
Op. Margin	16.2%	16.2%	14.9%	16.4%	17.2%	16.4%	16.7%	16.9%	18.6%	17.1%
Net Profit	1,855	1,824	1,221	1,697	1,658	2,131	1,753	2,181	2,340	2,707
Net Margin	10.4%	10.2%	6.9%	10.2%	10.6%	13.5%	10.4%	12.4%	12.9%	14.3%
Free Cash Flow	2,312	1,878	1,830	2,035	1,731	2,218	2,269	3,215	2,452	2,747
Income Tax	741	883	587	755	655	57	368	481	629	586

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Assets	22,658	23,146	21,832	21,712	21,813	30,624	30,111	30,807	31,842	31,090
Cash & Equivalents	741	867	334	764	766	399	450	1,678	1,505	569
Acc. Receivable	1,446	1,484	1,387	1,361	1,430	1,684	1,680	1,615	1,639	1,692
Inventories	1,546	1,559	1,541	1,414	1,484	1,642	1,559	1,426	1,821	1,867
Goodwill & Int.	13,637	13,665	13,552	13,280	13,278	21,510	21,163	21,019	21,213	21,378
Total Liabilities	15,530	16,140	16,439	16,405	17,127	24,132	22,744	22,457	22,069	20,302
Accounts Payable	1,423	1,611	1,684	2,047	2,120	2,746	2,854	3,248	3,654	3,982
Long-Term Debt	7,969	8,786	9,192	8,431	9,482	15,819	14,490	13,540	12,612	11,620
Total Equity	6,672	6,535	4,997	4,930	4,328	6,141	7,055	8,059	9,470	10,542
LTD/E Ratio	1.19	1.34	1.84	1.71	2.19	2.58	2.05	1.68	1.33	1.10

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Return on Assets	8.5%	8.0%	5.4%	7.8%	7.6%	8.1%	5.8%	7.2%	7.5%	8.6%
Return on Equity	28.3%	27.6%	21.2%	34.2%	35.8%	40.7%	26.6%	28.9%	26.7%	27.1%
ROIC	12.6%	11.8%	8.0%	12.0%	11.9%	11.7%	7.9%	10.0%	10.6%	11.9%
Shares Out.	640.8	612.3	598.7	596.8	576.9	593.0	605.0	616.1	619.4	612.6
Revenue/Share	26.70	27.74	28.49	27.07	26.12	26.87	27.86	28.74	29.28	31.00
FCF/Share	3.47	2.91	2.96	3.33	2.89	3.79	3.75	5.24	3.96	4.48

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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