

The Johnson & Johnson logo appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Monday, July 12, 2021. (AP)



J&J hikes 2021 profit forecast, COVID-19 vaccine sales grow

Johnson & Johnson is raising its 2021 profit forecast again after growing sales of the cancer treatment Darzalex and other drugs pushed it past Wall Street's third-quarter earnings expectations.

The health care giant also said Tuesday that sales of its single-shot COVID-19 vaccine started to pick up in the quarter, nearly doubling what it brought in during the first

half of the year.

J&J now expects adjusted earnings to range between \$9.77 and \$9.82 per share this year. The company also tightened its expectation for operational sales, which exclude the impact of currency exchange rates, to \$92.8 billion to \$93.3 billion including vaccine sales.

Analysts forecast, on average, earnings of \$9.71 per

share on \$94.36 billion in sales, according to FactSet.

Global sales of the multiple myeloma treatment Darzalex jumped 44% in the quarter to \$1.58 billion, which helped revenue from the company's largest segment, pharmaceuticals, grow about 14% to nearly \$13 billion.

J&J also rang up \$502 million in sales from its COVID-19 vaccine in the third

quarter after pulling in \$264 million during the first half of 2021.

The New Brunswick, New Jersey, company's vaccine started slow earlier this year. Its rollout was hurt by issues like manufacturing problems at a Baltimore factory and concerns about rare side effects from the shot, including a blood clot disorder. (AP)

Market Movements

19-10-2021

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts				
SAUDI	-	Tadawul	+34.52	11,792.54	EGYPT	-	EGX 30	-81.12	11,195.05
JAPAN	-	Nikkei	+190.06	29,215.52	INDIA	-	Sensex	-49.54	61,716.05
UK	-	FTSE 100	+13.70	7,217.53	PAKISTAN	-	KSE 100	-192.08	44,629.45
EUROPE	-	Euro Stoxx 50	+15.43	4,166.83					
UAE	-	DFM	+1.09	2,818.26					
PHILIPPINES	-	PSEI	+46.50	7,266.31					
SINGAPORE	-	Straits Times STI	+25.19	3,199.01					

Business

GCC pegged to grow 2.5% in 2021, even bigger 4.2% growth for 2022

IMF sees economic growth with higher inflation for Mideast

DUBAI, Oct 19, (AP) — The Middle East is expected to see significant economic growth this year, but also soaring inflation and food prices, as coronavirus vaccines are unevenly rolled out across the region, the International Monetary Fund said Tuesday.

The lender's new report projects the region's economies will grow by around 4%, while inflation will reach 17% this year in oil-importing countries. It said the situation is particularly dire in countries already facing severe economic crises, such as Lebanon and Afghanistan. The IMF said globally, inflation is rising in part due to pandemic-related supply shortages.

Food prices have soared to their highest level since 2014, with an expected increase of nearly 28% in 2021. Oil prices have also risen, with Brent crude trading Tuesday at nearly \$85 a barrel - levels not seen since 2014. While a positive sign for exporters like Iraq, Libya and Gulf Arab states, this is a costly spike for importers.

"This has affected, because of the nature of the inflation, affected the low income and the vulnerable groups more than others. And this is why we're calling for a cautious approach and the right mix of policies to avoid this increase in prices this year," IMF director of the Middle East and Central Asia, Jihad Azour, said.

Across the Middle East, about 7 million more people are estimated to have entered extreme poverty over the course of 2020, compared to the fund's projections before the coronavirus pandemic. The IMF warned that uneven recovery from the global health crisis could lead to "a permanent widening of existing wealth, income, and social gaps and, ultimately ... less inclusive societies."

In one example of that uneven recovery, the Gulf Arab oil-exporting nations of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar will see inflation peak at just 2.8% this year compared to the Mideast's oil-importing nations, where average inflation will climb to 17% in 2021

before dipping to just under 10% in 2022, according to the IMF's forecast.

The lender also found that the average unemployment rate in the region increased from 9.4% before the pandemic to 10.7% in 2020. The IMF said this represents the second largest regional increase globally after Central and Latin America. The hardest-hit sectors were low-skilled workers - particularly those unable to do their jobs remotely - as well as women, young people and the millions who work in the informal sector and lack formal workplace protections such as health insurance, pensions and contracts.

Overall, the six Gulf Arab oil producing nations saw an average 4.8% contraction in their economies last year, but the IMF projects 2.5% growth for 2021 and an even bigger 4.2% growth for 2022. These nations, which have accelerated their vaccination drives, are forecast to have a total \$220 billion in public deficits and forthcoming debt service payments.

Oil importers, which include the Mideast's most populous nation of Egypt, did not see as sharp a contraction as regional oil producers last year. Rather, they are expected to see 3% growth in their economies this year and 4.3% growth in 2022.

Lebanon's economy contracted by a whopping 25% in 2020, but due to the instability and economic upheaval there, the fund was unable to even forecast or project economic growth or contraction figures for this year or next. Lebanon is in talks with the IMF to help rescue it out of its worst economic crisis in its modern history.

Since the country's political and economic crisis began in October 2019, Lebanon's currency has lost more than 90% of its value. Lebanon's total debt is about \$90 billion, with more than 70% of Lebanon's population of 6 million people, including 1 million Syrian refugees, in poverty, according to the United Nations.

"Lebanon needs assistance, financial assistance by the international community, bilateral and multilateral support to help Lebanon address all these issues," Azour said, adding that the IMF is coordinating with Lebanese authorities to have updated information on its baseline economic figures and understand what the country's reform priorities are.



ProShares CEO Michael Sapir, (second right), and company Global Investment Strategist Simeon Hyman, (right), lead the New York Stock Exchange opening bell celebration, Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2021. ProShares will launch the country's first exchange-traded fund linked to Bitcoin. (AP)

Demand remains strong

US home construction declines 1.6% in Sept

SILVER SPRING, Maryland, Oct 19, (AP) — US home construction fell 1.6% in September as builders continue to be tripped up by supply chain bottlenecks.

The Commerce Department reported Tuesday that the decline in September left home construction at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.56 million units, 7.4% above the rate one year ago. August's number was revised upward to 1.72 million from 1.62 million.

Applications for building permits, a barometer of future activity, declined 7.7% from August to 1.59 million, but is virtually

unchanged from September 2020.

Low interest rates and a desire for more space have lured buyers into the market, but rising costs for materials and a years-long shortage of supply have pushed prices up. Economists and builders say demand remains strong, even as the median price for a new home is about 20% higher than a year ago.

"Momentum in demand still appears to be positive," said economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics. "But supply is struggling to catch up given higher input costs and shortages that remain headwinds for builders."

First Bitcoin ETF debuts

Bitcoin goes mainstream, as Wall St looks to cash in

NEW YORK, Oct 19, (AP) — Love cryptocurrencies or hate the very idea of them, they're becoming more mainstream by the day.

Cryptocurrencies have surged so much that their total value has reached nearly \$2.5 trillion, rivaling the size of G7 economies like Canada's and Italy's, with more than 200 million users. At that size, it's simply too big for the financial establishment to ignore.

Firms that cater to the world's wealthiest families are increasingly putting some of their fortunes into crypto. Hedge funds are trading Bitcoin, which has big-name banks starting to offer them services around it. PayPal lets users buy crypto on its app, while Twitter helps people show appreciation for tweets by tipping their creators with Bitcoin.

And in the latest milestone for the industry, an easy-to-trade fund tied to Bitcoin began trading on Tuesday. Investors can buy the exchange-traded fund from ProShares through an old-school brokerage account, without having to learn what a hot or cold wallet is.

It's all part of a movement across big businesses that see a chance to profit on the fervor around the world of crypto, as a new ecosystem further builds up around it, whether they believe in it or not.

"The one thing you can say for certain is that the advent of the era of the Bitcoin ETF opens up the opportunity for Wall Street to make money on Bitcoin in a way that it hadn't been able to previously," said Ben Johnson, director of global ETF research at Morningstar. "The winners in all of this are the exchanges and the asset managers and the custodians. Whether investors win or not is a big, bold question mark."

Bitcoin has come a long way since someone or a group of someone under the name Satoshi Nakamoto wrote a paper in 2008 about how to harness computing power around the world to create a digital currency that can't be double-spent. The price has more than doubled this year alone to roughly \$62,000. It was at only \$635 five years ago.

Supporters of cryptocurrencies say they offer an ultra-important benefit for any investor: something whose price moves independently of the economy, rather than tracking it like so many other investments do. More high-minded fans say digital assets are simply the future of finance, allowing transactions to sidestep middlemen and fees with a currency that's not beholden to any government.

Critics, meanwhile, question whether crypto is just a fad, say it uses too much energy and point to all the stiff regulatory scrutiny shining on it. China last month declared Bitcoin transactions illegal, for example. The chair of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Gary Gensler, said in August that the world of crypto doesn't have enough investor protection and "it's more like the Wild West."

That hasn't been enough to halt the immense momentum for crypto, as it's gone from an online curiosity to a bigger part of the cultural and corporate landscape.

U.S. Bank earlier this month said it has begun offering a cryptocurrency custody service for big investment managers. That means it essentially holds their Bitcoin in safekeeping for them, and it expects to offer support for other coins soon.

Other name-brand banks have also announced intentions to offer custodial services for crypto.

"It's not just in the fringes and dark corners of the Web that it's happening," said Kashif Ahmed, president of American Private Wealth in Bedford, Massachusetts.

Ahmed doesn't recommend his clients invest in crypto. Before then, he said he'll need to be able to "go to my local supermarket and buy things for my family and offer crypto and not be laughed out of the store."

But others are more willing to try it.

In a survey by Citi Private Bank of family offices around the world that manage money for wealthy people, roughly 23% said they have made some investments in crypto. Another 25% said they are researching it.

The growing acceptance of crypto on Wall Street has created a new crop of darlings that help people buy it. Crypto trading platform Coinbase has a market value of roughly \$64 billion, for example, putting it on par with such established companies as Colgate-Palmolive, FedEx and Ford Motor.

At Robinhood Markets, meanwhile, the company that became famous for getting a new generation of investors into the stock market is increasingly becoming a place for crypto trading. This spring was the first time when new Robinhood customers were more likely to make their first trade in cryptocurrencies rather than in stocks.

In the end, what many on Wall Street see lasting may not be as much Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies as the technology that underlies them.

Called the blockchain, it allows for a public ledger that everyone can check and trust, and many expect it to lead to a wealth of innovations. It's akin to today's Netflix, Facebook and other services that sprung out of the infrastructure built during the boom and bust of the dot-com bubble.

"The applications built on this new software architecture appear to be growing more quickly than past technologies," Bank of America strategists Alkesh Shah and Andrew Moss wrote in a recent research report positing digital assets are only in their first inning of growth. "New companies are likely to emerge and poorly positioned companies will exit, creating significant upside potential for some and downside for others."

BlackRock backs new hub for 'climate data'

LONDON, Oct 19, (AP) — Wall Street giant BlackRock announced Tuesday that it is backing a new London-based research hub which will provide asset managers with information on how the companies they invest in are addressing risks from climate change.

BlackRock said it is joining the Transition Pathway Initiative, or TPI, a London-based group that is already supported by dozens of major institutional investors, from banks to public retirement funds.

"It is BlackRock's investment conviction that climate risk is investment risk," the company's global head of investment stewardship, Sandy Boss, said in a statement.

BlackRock's chief executive announced a shift toward more sustainable investments almost two years ago.

The TPI, which says it now has the backing of investors with a combined \$40 trillion of assets under management or advisement, said it will significantly expand from 400 the number of companies it reports on.

Its new Global Climate Transition Centre, based at the London School of Economics, "will provide free and publicly available in-depth data on how 10,000 companies are aligning with a net zero pathway" and also assess government bonds and corporate debt issuers, the TPI said.

NBK Mobile Banking App Allows Transferring Student Allowance Without the Need to Visit the Branch

Al-Shoabi: We are committed to provide an array of digital banking services that meet the needs of our customers from different ages and segments

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to provide the most advanced technologies and digital banking services, as part of its endeavors to meet all its customers' needs. To this end, the bank focuses on updating NBK Mobile Banking App continuously, by adding more services enabling customers to make all their transactions anytime, anywhere.

In this context, NBK recently added a number of outstanding services to the App, the latest of which is allowing transferring student allowance, without the need to visit the branch, using NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Online Banking.

In line with its strategy to digitize key banking transactions, NBK enabled customers to apply for a loan or credit card, open bank accounts and deposits, update their contact information electronically - all using NBK Mobile Banking App.

Also, to allow customers manage their accounts in a secure and convenient manner, NBK introduced NBK Push Notifications, enabling them to receive instant alerts 24/7, whether inside or outside Kuwait, once the service is activated



by selecting "Notification Subscription" in the App menu.

Furthermore, in line with its commitment to provide the most advanced digital payment solutions to its customers, NBK added many mobile payment services, mainly including Samsung Pay, which was introduced for the first in Kuwait, allowing customers to link their cards with Samsung smartphones. NBK Mobile Banking App

also provides various digital payment solutions for paying bills and monthly obligations, in addition to money transfers through the App, and NBK Quick Pay, whose limit was increased to KD 3,000 daily, and KD 10,000 monthly.

In addition to Bill Split where you can split the bill up to 20 people in easy and simple steps.

Commenting on the continuous updates introduced on NBK Mobile Banking

App, Hala Al Shoaibi, Head of Digital Service Quality Management, National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are committed to update NBK Mobile Banking App continuously, to help us provide a full-spectrum of digital banking services that meet the needs of our customers from all ages and segments, and allow them make their transactions quickly and easily, anytime, anywhere."

"We promise our customers more services and updates that contribute to enrich their banking experience, capitalizing on our huge technological infrastructure that supports our provision of top-notch digital services, especially through NBK Mobile Banking App, whose services we always strive to update," Al-Shoabi added.

Al-Shoabi stressed that NBK is keen to encourage customers to opt for and rely on digital channels for all their transactions and payments.

Through NBK Mobile Banking App, NBK aims to provide customers with a secure way to manage their money easily at any time, as it allows them to make different banking transactions including opening a new account, viewing transactions



Hala Shouaibi

made on account and credit cards, viewing NBK Miles Points and NBK Rewards Points balance, paying credit card dues and different e-bills, locating NBK Branches and NBK ATMs/CDMs all over Kuwait, as well as requesting account statement, checkbook and other services.

The App also includes a variety of advanced services including managing cards while traveling, increasing the monthly transfer limit, and updating contact details; making it the ideal travel companion.

NBK Mobile Banking App is available in both Arabic and English for iPhone®, iPad®, iPod Touch®, Huawei and Android® devices, as well as for Apple Watch and Android Wear smartwatches.

NBK has a huge technological infrastructure enabling us to provide top-notch digital services for a richer banking experience