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EANS-News: Semperit AG Holding / Profitable growth in difficult market conditions in 2015

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annual result

- Earnings after tax up 22.6% to EUR 46.4 million
- Dividend proposal: EUR 1.20 dividend per share (after EUR 1.10 excl. special dividend)
- Mostly stable business development expected in 2016 in a persistently challenging environment

The publicly listed Semperit Group showed a positive revenue and earnings development in 2015 in spite of an increasingly difficult market environment. Revenue rose 6.6% year-on-year to EUR 914.7 million. Earnings after tax increased by 22.6% to EUR 46.4 million following EUR 37.8 million. Revenue per share rose by 22.1% to EUR 2.26 (after EUR 1.85).

This growth in revenue and earnings can be attributed to both the Industrial and the Medical Sectors with strong distribution performances and sales growth. In addition, capacity expansion, the increased global presence and the successful integration of the German profile manufacturer Leeser acquired in 2015 showed positive effects. Volume growth more than compensated for negative price effects related to decreased raw material prices.

"In 2015 we achieved important milestones in implementing our growth strategy. In the Industrial Sector we clearly outperformed the market and gained market share. This is even more encouraging since we were again confronted with a difficult market environment. In the Medical Sector we increased profitability by introducing optimisation measures," Semperit CEO Thomas Fahnenmann sums up. "We have strengthened our global presence and have grown profitably by entering into new markets and customer groups. In addition, we have set the course for further growth by acquiring the profile manufacturer Leeser and expanding the capacity in our facilities," Fahnenmann adds.

Semperit invested a total of EUR 71.8 million in 2015 (2014: EUR 67.4 million) to expand and modernise its production plants. Even after the optimisation of the capital structure and the related payment of the special dividend in May 2015, Semperit boasted a sound capital basis as reflected by its equity ratio of 38.7% at the reporting date of December 31, 2015 (2014: 53.7%). Cash and cash equivalents amounted to EUR 126.4 million at the end of 2015 compared to EUR 115.6 million at the end of 2014. "In 2015 we continued to optimise our financial structure by borrowing capital at highly attractive conditions. We have a solid balance sheet structure and generate stable cash flows from our operating business. We are optimally financed in the long term and well prepared for our further growth course. Therefore we are able to finance our ongoing investment programme out of our own resources and at the same time pay an attractive dividend to our shareholders," states Semperit CFO Johannes Schmidt-Schultes. The Management Board will therefore propose a dividend of EUR 1.20 per share for 2015 to the Annual General Meeting, which is an increase of EUR 0.10 (2014: basic dividend of EUR 1.10 + special dividend of EUR 4.90/share). The pay-out ratio is at 53.2% after 59.6% excluding the special dividend for 2014.

Industrial Sector: Strong performance despite declining total market
The Industrial Sector (the Semperflex, Sempertrans and Semperform segments) showed a very positive development contrary to the market trend.

The Semperflex segment generated sales increases and high profitability thanks to excellent production and sales performances in a declining market. The new production capacities in Europe's largest hose factory in Odry, Czech Republic, were well utilised.

In the Sempertrans segment, the global sales initiative led to significant increases in revenue and earnings in a generally stagnating market. The new capacities put into operation at the end of third quarter in the conveyor belt factory in Bełchatów, Poland, were also well utilised.

The Semperform segment showed a double-digit increase in revenue and earnings despite a difficult market environment in important target markets. This is primarily due to the successful acquisition and integration of the German profile manufacturer Leeser as well as the increase in market share in the global handrail business.

Revenue of the Industrial Sector rose 9.1% to EUR 521.0 million in 2015. EBITDA climbed 7.8% to EUR 94.9 million. The EBITDA margin amounted to 18.2% compared to 18.4% in 2014, while the EBIT margin improved to 15.1% after 13.9% in the previous year.

Medical Sector: Improved profitability in the course of the year

The Medical Sector (Sempermed segment) generated higher sales volumes in 2015 by increasing its sales activities. Process optimisations and efficiency enhancements led to a significant improvement of profitability in the course of 2015, which was offset by negative price effects due to lower raw material prices as well as upfront costs for the new factory in Malaysia.

Revenue of the Medical Sector rose 3.4% to EUR 393.7 million in 2015. EBITDA declined by 4.4% to EUR 32.1 million. The EBITDA margin amounted to 8.1% (after 8.8%), while the EBIT margin rose to 5.1% compared to 4.6% in 2014.

In summary, the Semperit Group generated EBITDA of EUR 100.6 million in 2015, down 1.3%. EBIT increased by 11.6% to EUR 71.2 million. The EBITDA margin of 11.0% (2014: 11.9%) and the EBIT margin of 7.8% (2014: 7.4%) remained at a solid level.

Outlook 2016

In 2016, Semperit expects no significant changes of the market conditions compared to 2015. The generally low demand in the Industrial Sector in 2015 is expected to continue in 2016 due to the economic situation. In particular in Eastern Europe and Russia, no economic upturn is to be expected. Neither does the industrial capital investment cycle in China show any signs of an upturn. However, the demand in the economically insensitive Medical Sector is expected to develop steadily with a market growth of 5% to 6%.

Nevertheless, Semperit has started the year 2016 with a certain amount of confidence and expects a largely stable development in 2016 compared to 2015. In the first months of 2016 Semperit has seen a continuing good order situation due to intensive marketing and sales activities in the Industrial Sector. The Medical Sector will profit from the step-by-step commissioning of new production capacities in Kamunting, Malaysia, in 2016 and beyond.

The Semperit Group will continue its growth strategy consistently in 2016 and aims at achieving average double-digit volume growth (quantities sold) and attractive earnings margins. The focus will be on the entering into new markets in the Industrial Sector and the expansion and optimisation of existing production capacities. In the Medical Sector the focus will be set on the expansion of the glove production in Malaysia in addition to further production optimisations, efficiency enhancements and marketing. Altogether, capital investments (CAPEX) of approximately EUR 70 million are planned for 2016.

The results for the financial year 2015 are available for download at www.semperitgroup.com/en/ir

The Annual Report 2015 and the Annual Financial Report 2015 will be available at www.semperitgroup.com/en/ir as of end of March 2016.

Photo download: <https://semperitgroup.picturepark.com/Go/wPXX3GzO>

About Semperit

The publicly listed company Semperit AG Holding is an internationally-oriented group that develops, produces, and sells in more than 100 countries highly specialised rubber products for the medical and industrial sectors: examination and surgical gloves, hydraulic and industrial hoses, conveyor belts, escalator handrails, construction profiles, cable car rings, and products for railway superstructures. The headquarters of this long-standing Austrian company, which was founded in 1824, are located in Vienna. The Semperit Group employs more than 7,000 people worldwide, including close to 4,100 in Asia and more than 800 in Austria (Vienna and production site in Wimpassing, Lower Austria). The Group has 22 manufacturing facilities worldwide and numerous sales offices in Europe, Asia, Australia and America. In 2015 the group generated sales of EUR 915 million and an EBITDA of EUR 101 million.

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