Position Close Update: SunOpta Inc. (STKL)

SunOpta Inc. (STKL) – Closing Short Position – down 76% vs. S&P up 7%

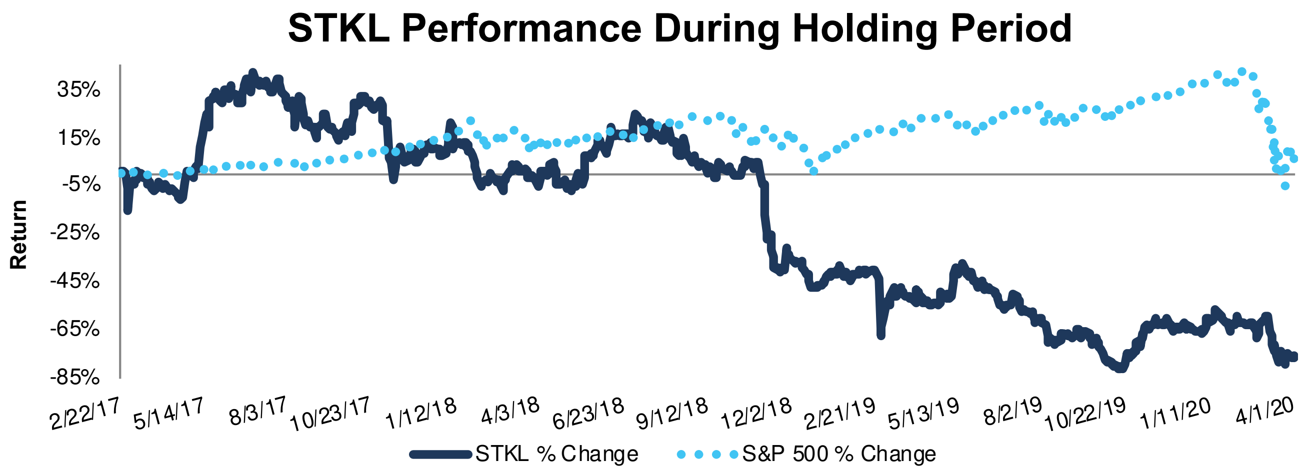
We put SunOpta Inc. (STKL $2/share) in the Danger Zone on February 22, 2017. At the time, STKL received an Unattractive rating. Our short thesis noted the firm's deteriorating economic earnings and return on invested capital (ROIC), lagging profitability in a highly competitive market, and overvalued stock price.

This Danger Zone report, along with all of our research, utilizes our "novel dataset"[1] of footnotes disclosures to get the truth about earnings, as shown in the Harvard Business School and MIT Sloan paper, "Core Earnings: New Data and Evidence."

During the three-year holding period, STKL outperformed as a short position, falling 76% compared to a 7% gain for the S&P 500.

STKL's fundamentals have deteriorated further since our original report. Its return on invested capital (ROIC) fell from 2% at the time of our report to 0% in 2019 and economic earnings declined from -$35 million to -$53 million over the same time. However, STKL is down 32% year-to-date and this drop in valuation provides a great time to take the gains and close this short position.

Figure 1: STKL vs. S&P 500 – Price Return – Successful Short Call



Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings
Note: Gain/Decline performance analysis excludes transaction costs and dividends.

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Disclosure: David Trainer, Kyle Guske II, and Matt Shuler receive no compensation to write about any specific stock, style, or theme.

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[1] In Core Earnings: New Data & Evidence, professors at Harvard Business School (HBS) & MIT Sloan empirically show that data is superior to IBES "Street Earnings", owned by Blackstone (BX) and Thomson Reuters (TRI), and "Income Before Special Items" from Compustat, owned by S&P Global (SPGI).

Footnotes adjustments matter. We are the ONLY source.

We provide ratings, models, reports & screeners on U.S. 3,000 stocks, 700 ETFs and 7,000 mutual funds.

HBS & MIT Sloan research reveals that:

- **Markets are inefficiently assessing earnings because no one reads the footnotes.**
- **Corporate managers hide gains/losses in footnotes to manage earnings.**
- **Our technology brings the material footnotes data to market for the first time ever.**

Combining human expertise with NLP/ML/AI technologies (featured by Harvard Business School), we shine a light in the dark corners (e.g. footnotes) of hundreds of thousands of financial filings to unearth critical details.

The HBS & MIT Sloan paper, Core Earnings: New Data and Evidence, shows how our superior data drives uniquely comprehensive and independent debt and equity research.

This paper compares our analytics on a mega cap company to other major providers. The Appendix details exactly how we stack up.

Learn more.

Quotes from HBS & MIT Sloan professors on our research:

Get better research:

"…the NC dataset provides a novel opportunity to study the properties of non-operating items disclosed in 10-Ks, and to examine the extent to which the market impounds their implications." – page 20

Pick better stocks:

"Trading strategies that exploit cross-sectional differences in firms' transitory earnings produce abnormal returns of 7-to-10% per year." – Abstract

Avoid losses from using other firms' data:

"…many of the income-statement-relevant quantitative disclosures collected by NC do not appear to be easily identifiable in Compustat…" – page 14

Build better models:

"Core Earnings [calculated using New Constructs' novel dataset] provides predictive power for various measures of one-year-ahead performance…that is incremental to their current-period counterparts." – page 4

Exploit market inefficiencies:

"These results … suggest that the adjustments made by analysts and Compustat to better capture core earnings are incomplete. Moreover, the non-core items identified by NC produce a measure of core earnings that is incremental to alternative measures of operating performance in predicting an array of future income measures." – page 26

Fulfill fiduciary duties:

"An appropriate measure of accounting performance for purposes of forecasting future performance requires detailed analysis of all quantitative performance disclosures detailed in the annual report, including those reported only in the footnotes and in the MD&A." – page 33-34

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