



**Media release**

Basel, 25 February 2016

## **Pleasing 2015 result for the Bell Group**

**The Bell Group posted a pleasing result for 2015 and further expanded its market position. The annual profit rose by 8.0 % to CHF 94.8 million. The Board of Directors is requesting another increase in the dividend of CHF 5 to CHF 70 per share and will propose a share split in the ratio 1 to 10 to the General Meeting. With the acquisitions of the Huber and Eisberg Groups and a substantial investment programme in Switzerland, Bell has laid the groundwork for a positive future.**

The Bell Group's sales revenue increased by 8.5 % to CHF 2.82 billion. Sales volumes for the Group as a whole were 275,308 tonnes (+27.7 %). The gross profit exceeded CHF 1 billion for the first time. The most important drivers for this result were the full consolidation of Hilcona from 1 May 2015, the focus on products with added value and the restructuring of the product ranges. For these reasons and thanks to further operational progress made in other international activities, EBITDA increased substantially by 19.8 % to CHF 235 million. The annual profit increased by 8.0 % or CHF 7 million to CHF 94.8 million.

### **Positive development thanks to operational progress made by divisions**

Although shopping tourism increased even more in Switzerland, **Bell Switzerland** nevertheless managed to hold its own and increased its sales volumes for all product groups. In spite of the deflation in raw material prices, Bell improved its earnings with effective cost management processes and an increase in productivity.

**Bell Germany's** result improved considerably in the reporting year despite a slight contraction in sales. Product ranges with higher added value were promoted successfully and processes were optimised further.

The performance of the individual sectors of the **Bell International** division differed. The division as a whole improved its sales volumes year-on-year. While France and the Czech Republic failed to meet expectations, business in Poland and Hungary developed positively.

**Hilcona** can also look back on a successful financial year. Building on innovation, particularly in the field of vegetarian products, it further expanded its market position. Hilcona also made operational progress by improving its value chain and increasing its productivity.

**Added value for shareholders**

The price of the Bell share developed very positively and much better than the market in the reporting year. Because of the encouraging results and good prospects, Bell will propose an increase in the dividend of CHF 5 to CHF 70 to the General Meeting. In consideration of the current high share price, the Board of Directors is proposing a share split in the ratio 1 to 10 to further improve the marketability of the Bell share.

**Substantial investments in Switzerland**

Bell will invest several hundreds of million francs in the Basel and Oensingen sites in the coming years, laying the groundwork for improving its already powerful production facilities in Switzerland. At Neudorfstrasse in Basel, new charcuterie and seafood plants as well as an administration building will be built. In the medium term, the Elsässerstrasse site will be converted for other purposes or sold. In Oensingen, new facilities for pork processing and the preparation and consignment of fresh and frozen products will be built and the current plant will be expanded. The projects will run from 2016 to 2025 and should be ready for the decision process in the next two years.

**Exploiting potential with acquisitions**

Bell opened up new areas of growth with the acquisitions of the Huber Group and the Eisberg Group, both of which still have to be approved by the relevant competition authorities. With the takeover of the Huber Group, which specialises in the production of poultry, Bell is securing its access to an important raw material and entering the Austrian and German markets with a new product group. The acquisition of the Eisberg Group strengthens Hilcona's department for fresh convenience salads.

**Outlook: focused exploitation of existing potential**

Bell expects another challenging year with higher prices for raw materials and even fiercer competition. Strengthened by the results for the past year, Bell will consistently pursue its strategic focus. The spotlight falls on the smooth integration of the two acquisitions, the substantial investment programme in Switzerland and the expansion of product ranges with higher added value. Bell sees potential in all areas that can be consistently exploited further.