

Constellation Brands Boosts Profit Prediction

VICTOR, N.Y. (AP) — Wine and liquor seller Constellation Brands Inc. said Wednesday that its fiscal third-quarter net income rose 4 percent as volumes increased, and it boosted its profit prediction for the year.

The company, whose brands include Robert Mondavi, Clos du Bois and Manischewitz, earned \$109.5 million, or 58 cents per share, in the three months through Nov. 30. In the same months a year ago, profit came to \$104.8 million, or 52 cents per share.

The company's adjusted profit was 63 cents per share in the most recent quarter.

Revenue rose 9 percent, to \$766.9 million from \$700.7 million as sales volumes rose.

The results beat Wall Street predictions. Analysts, on average, expected earnings of 55 cents per share on \$746.2 million in revenue, according to a FactSet poll.

Constellation said its earnings from its 50 percent stake in the Crown Imports beer joint venture totaled \$39 million, down from \$43 million a year ago. The company added that it's in track to close its \$1.85 billion acquisition of the remaining 50 percent stake in the distributor by March.

Crown's beers include Corona Extra, Pacifico and Tsingtao Lager. Acquiring the entire venture helps Constellation Brands tap into the fast-growing Latino market.

The Victor, N.Y., company expects to post an adjusted profit of \$2.10 to \$2.20 per share for its fiscal year, which ends in February. It had previously predicted earnings of \$2 to \$2.10 per share, while analysts forecast \$2.07 per share.

Constellation shares rose 88 cents, or 2.4 percent, to \$36.94 in morning trading Wednesday.

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