



## **Risk Factors and Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Statements**

The information on this website and in our webcasts includes forward-looking statements about our plans and future performance, including those under Outlook. These statements use such words as “may,” “will,” “expect,” “believe” and “plan.” They reflect our expectations and speak only as of the date of this report. We do not undertake to update them. Our expectations (or the underlying assumptions) may change or not be realized, and you should not rely unduly on forward-looking statements.

Our business and execution of our strategic plan, the Plan to Win, are subject to risks. The most important of these is our ability to remain relevant to our customers and a brand they trust. Meeting customer expectations is complicated by the risks inherent in our operating environment. The informal eating out segment of the restaurant industry, although largely mature in our major markets, is also highly fragmented and competitive. We have the added challenge of the cultural, economic and regulatory differences that exist among the more than 100 countries where we operate. We also face risk in adapting our business model in particular markets. The decision to own restaurants or to operate under franchise or license agreements is driven by many factors whose interrelationship is complex and changing. Regulatory and similar initiatives around the world have also become more wide-ranging and prescriptive and affect how we operate and our results. In particular, increasing focus on nutritional content and on the production, processing and preparation of food “from field to front counter” presents challenges for our Brand.

These risks can have an impact both in the near- and long-term and are reflected in the following considerations and factors that we believe are most likely to affect our performance.

### **Our ability to remain a relevant and trusted brand and to increase sales depends largely on how well we execute the Plan to Win.**

*The Plan to Win addresses the key drivers of our business and results—people, products, place, price and promotion. The quality of our execution depends mainly on the following:*

- Our ability to anticipate and respond effectively to trends or other factors that affect the informal eating out market and our competitive position in the diverse markets we serve, such as spending patterns, demographic changes, trends in food preparation, consumer preferences and publicity about our products, all of which can drive popular perceptions of our business or affect the willingness of other companies to enter into site, supply or other arrangements or alliances with us;
- The success of our initiatives to support menu choice, physical activity and nutritional awareness and to address these and other matters of social responsibility in a way that communicates our values effectively and inspires trust and confidence;
- Our ability to respond effectively to adverse perceptions about the quick-service segment of the informal eating out market, our products and promotions (including the premiums we offer, such

as our Happy Meal toys) or the reliability of our supply chain and the safety of the ingredients we use, and our ability to manage the potential impact on McDonald's of food-borne illnesses or product safety issues;

- The success of our plans to improve existing products and to roll out new products and product line extensions, as well as the impact of our competitors' actions, including in response to our product improvements and introductions, and our ability to continue robust product development and manage the complexity of our restaurant operations;
- Our ability to achieve an overall product mix that differentiates the McDonald's experience and balances consumer value with margin expansion, including in markets where cost or pricing pressures may be significant;
- The impact of pricing, marketing and promotional plans on product sales and margins and on our ability to target these efforts effectively to maintain or expand market share and increase guest counts;
- The impact of events such as boycotts or protests, labor strikes and supply chain interruptions (including due to lack of supply or price increases) that can adversely affect us directly or adversely affect the vendors, franchisees and others that are also part of the McDonald's System and whose performance has a material impact on our results;
- Our ability to recruit and retain qualified local personnel to manage our operations and growth in certain developing markets;
- Our ability to drive restaurant improvements and to motivate our restaurant personnel to achieve sustained high service levels so as to improve consumer perceptions of our ability to meet expectations for quality food served in clean and friendly environments;
- Our ability to maintain alignment with our franchisees on capital-intensive and other operating and promotional initiatives;
- The risks to our Brand if a franchisee or licensee defaults in its obligations (particularly requirements to pay royalties, make capital investments and open new restaurants), experiences food safety or other operational problems or otherwise projects a brand image inconsistent with our values, all of which become more significant risks if an agreement places a large number of restaurants under the control of a single franchisee or licensee as is the case in Latin America;
- Whether our ongoing restaurant remodeling and rebuilding initiatives, which vary from year to year by market and type, are targeted at the elements of the restaurant experience that will best accomplish our goals to enhance the relevance of our Brand and achieve an efficient allocation of our capital resources; and
- Our ability to leverage promotional or operating successes in individual markets into other markets in a timely and cost-effective way.

**Our results and financial condition are affected by global and local market conditions, which can adversely affect our sales, margins and net income.**

*Our results of operations are substantially affected not only by global economic conditions, but also by local operating and economic conditions, which can vary substantially by market. Unfavorable*

*conditions can depress sales in a given market and may prompt promotional or other actions that adversely affect our margins, constrain our operating flexibility or result in charges, restaurant closings or sales of Company-operated restaurants. Certain macroeconomic events, such as the current uncertain economic conditions and increased unemployment levels, could have an even more wide-ranging and prolonged impact on the general business environment and consumer spending, which could also adversely affect us. Whether we can manage these risks effectively depends mainly on the following:*

- Our ability to manage volatile commodity prices and the anticipated negative impact of fluctuations in foreign exchange rates on our 2009 results, as well as any impact of changes in interest rates and governmental actions to manage national economic conditions such as the availability of credit, consumer spending, unemployment levels and inflation rates;
- The impact on our margins of labor costs given our labor-intensive business model, the trend toward higher wages in both mature and developing markets and the potential impact of union organizing efforts on day-to-day operations of our restaurants;
- Whether we are able to identify and develop restaurant sites, either directly or through licensees or other parties, consistent with our plans for net growth of Systemwide restaurants from year to year, and whether new sites are as profitable as expected;
- The challenges and uncertainties associated with operating in developing markets, such as China, Russia and India, which may entail a relatively higher risk of political instability, economic volatility, crime, corruption and social and ethnic unrest, all of which are exacerbated in many cases by a lack of an independent and experienced judiciary and uncertainties in how local law is applied and enforced, including in areas most relevant to commercial transactions and foreign investment; and
- The nature and timing of decisions about underperforming markets or assets, including decisions that result in impairment charges that reduce our earnings.

**Increasing regulatory complexity will continue to affect our operations and results in material ways.**

*Our legal and regulatory environment worldwide exposes us to complex compliance, litigation and similar risks that affect our operations and results in material ways. In many of our markets, including the United States and Europe, we are subject to increasing regulation, which has increased our cost of doing business. In developing markets, we face the risks associated with new and untested laws and judicial systems. Among the more important regulatory and litigation risks we face and must manage are the following:*

- The cost, compliance and other risks associated with the often conflicting regulations we face, especially in the United States where inconsistent standards imposed by local, state and federal authorities can adversely affect popular perceptions of our business and increase our exposure to litigation or governmental investigations or proceedings, and the impact of new, potential or changing regulation that affects or restricts elements of our business, particularly those relating to advertising to children, nutritional content and product labeling and safety;
- The impact of nutritional, health and other scientific inquiries and conclusions, which constantly evolve and often have contradictory implications, but nonetheless drive popular opinion, litigation and regulation in ways that could be material to our business;

- The risks and costs of McDonald's nutritional labeling and other disclosure practices, particularly given differences among applicable legal requirements and practices within the restaurant industry with respect to testing and disclosure, ordinary variations in food preparation among our own restaurants, and the need to rely on the accuracy and completeness of information obtained from third party suppliers;
- The risks and costs to us and on our supply chain of increased focus by U.S. and overseas governmental authorities on environmental matters, particularly in the area of climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gases, as well as related matters, such as water consumption;
- The impact of litigation trends, particularly in our major markets, including class actions, labor and employment claims and landlord/tenant disputes, the relative level of our defense costs, which vary from period to period depending on the number, nature and procedural status of pending proceedings; and the cost and other effects of settlements or judgments, which may require us to make disclosures or take other actions that may affect perceptions of our Brand and products;
- Adverse results of pending or future litigation, including litigation challenging the composition of our products or the appropriateness or accuracy of our advertising or other communications;
- The increasing costs and other effects of compliance with U.S. and overseas regulations affecting our workforce and labor practices, including regulations relating to wage and hour practices, job classifications, mandatory healthcare benefits, unlawful workplace discrimination and immigration;
- The impact of the current economic conditions on unemployment levels and consumer confidence, particularly if conditions do not recover in 2009, and the effect of initiatives to stimulate economic recovery and to stabilize or further regulate financial markets on the cost and availability of funding for the Company and its franchisees, inflation and foreign exchange rates;
- Disruptions in our operations or price volatility in a market that can result from governmental actions, such as price or import-export controls or government-mandated closure of our or our vendors' operations, and the cost and disruption of responding to governmental investigations or proceedings, whether or not they have merit;
- The risks associated with information security and the use of cashless payments, such as increased investment in technology, the costs of compliance with privacy, consumer protection and other laws, the impact on our margins as the use of cashless payments increases, the potential costs associated with alleged security breaches and the loss of consumer confidence that may result; and
- The impact of changes in financial reporting requirements, accounting principles or practices, related legal or regulatory interpretations or our critical accounting estimates, changes in tax accounting or tax laws (or interpretations thereof), and the impact of settlements or adjustments proposed by the IRS in connection with our tax audits, all of which will depend on their timing, nature and scope.

**Our results and financial condition are affected by our ownership mix and whether we can achieve a mix that optimizes margins and returns, while meeting our business needs and customer expectations.**

*In recent years, we have reduced the number of Company-operated restaurants and we are planning further reductions by refranchising Company-operated restaurants or entering into developmental license agreements. Whether and when we can achieve these plans, as well as their success, will be affected by the following:*

- Our ability to identify prospective franchisees and licensees with the experience and financial resources in the relevant markets to be effective operators of McDonald's restaurants and how quickly we can reach agreement with our counterparties;
- The nature and amount of contingent liabilities and other exposures we may retain in connection with developmental license agreements, such as the indemnification obligations we may incur as a result of the Latam transaction;
- The risk that our contractual and other rights and remedies to protect against defaults by our counterparties will be limited by local law, costly to exercise or otherwise subject to limitations or litigation that may impair our ability to prevent or mitigate any adverse impact on our Brand or on the financial performance we expect under our franchising and developmental license agreements; and
- Changes in the operating or legal environment and other circumstances that cause us to delay or revise our plans to alter our ownership mix, including potential constraints on access to capital by existing or prospective franchisees.

**The trading volatility and price of our common stock may be affected by many factors.**

*Many factors affect the volatility and price of our common stock in addition to our operating results and prospects. The most important of these, some of which are outside our control, are the following:*

- The current uncertain global economic conditions and market volatility;
- Governmental action or inaction in light of key indicators of economic activity or events that can significantly influence financial markets, particularly in the United States which is the principal trading market for our common stock, and media reports and commentary about economic or other matters, even when the matter in question does not directly relate to our business;
- Trading activity in our common stock or related instruments, which can reflect market commentary or expectations about our business (including commentary that may be unreliable or incomplete in some cases) or investor confidence generally; purchases by shareholders who may seek to affect our business strategies; sales of large blocks of our stock or portfolio rebalancing activities by significant shareholders; or trading activity that results from the ordinary course rebalancing of stock indices in which McDonald's may be included, such as the S&P 500 Index and the Dow Jones Industrial Average; and
- The impact of our stock repurchase program, dividend rate or changes in our debt levels that may affect our credit ratings, interest expense, ability to obtain funding on favorable terms or our flexibility, especially if lenders impose new operating or financial covenants, as well as the impact of other corporate actions, such as ongoing initiatives to rationalize our corporate structure.

**Our results can be adversely affected by disruptions or events, such as the impact of severe weather conditions and natural disasters.**

*Severe weather conditions, terrorist activities, health epidemics or pandemics or the prospect of these events can have an adverse impact on consumer spending and confidence levels or on other factors that affect our results and prospects, such as commodity costs. Our receipt of proceeds under any insurance we maintain with respect to certain of these risks may be delayed or the proceeds may be insufficient to offset our losses fully.*