The Pakistan Credit Rating Agency Limited

Rating Report

Noon Sugar Mills Limited

Report Contents

Rating History

Dissemination Date	Long Term Rating	Short Term Rating	Outlook	Action	Rating Watch
05-Apr-2024	BBB+	A2	Stable	Maintain	-
05-Apr-2023	BBB+	A2	Stable	Maintain	-
05-Apr-2022	BBB+	A2	Stable	Maintain	-
30-Sep-2021	BBB+	A2	Stable	Maintain	-
30-Sep-2020	BBB+	A2	Stable	Upgrade	-
07-Nov-2019	BBB	A2	Stable	Maintain	-
08-May-2019	BBB	A2	Stable	Maintain	-
12-Nov-2018	BBB	A2	Stable	Initial	-

Rating Rationale and Key Rating Drivers

The Pakistani sugar sector, recognized as the second most substantial agro-based industry within the nation, encompasses 91 mills with a collective processing capacity of roughly 80–90 million metric tons. The season ended with a sugar output of ~6.6 million tons, a ~16% decrease from the previous year’s ~7.9 million tons due to severe floods that damaged the crop and shortened the harvesting period. Despite the lower crop, the country had sufficient sugar stocks to meet the annual demand, owing to the large carryover from the previous year. Anticipated water scarcity is projected to precipitate a significant ~13.7% contraction in the forthcoming sugarcane supply for MY24, ascribed to a decrement in cultivated area and yield.
The ratings reflect Noon Sugar Mills Limited's ('Noon Sugar' or 'the Company') diverse revenue stream, comprising the sales of sugar and ethanol segment. During MY’23, The Company generated sales from sugar segment ~55% (MY’22: 60%) from ethanol segment ~45% (MY’22: 40%). This diversification in revenue, provide the Company with a competitive advantage and mitigates industry-specific risks. During MY’23, the Company’s sugarcane crushing decreased by 28% (MY’23; 0.807mlnMT, MY’22: 1.12mlnMT) attributed to decline in sugarcane cultivation and a shortened season duration. The decline in sugar production (MY’23; 75.7MT, MY’22: 104.7MT) and upswing in overall production costs, stemming from a substantial 33% increase in the minimum sugarcane support price along with inflation and markups, led to dip in profits (MY'23: 419mln, MY'22: 464mln). On the other hand, the Company's margins have improved, predominantly driven by the ethanol segment, with 75% (MY’22: 59%) of the gross profit attributed to the ethanol segment. The Company gross margin stood at (MY’23: 20%, MY’22: 13%) and net profit margin at (MY’23: 4.5%, MY’22: 3.9%).The financial risk profile of the Company is deemed adequate, as it is characterized by effective working capital management, strong coverages, and an adequality leveraged capital structure. The company borrowing stood at (MY’23: 1,875mln, MY’22: 1,925mln) comprising 100% short-term borrowing, with an equity base at 2,086mln (MY’22: 1,733mln). A strong governance framework augurs well for the Company. Additionally, the Company is in the process of expanding its capacity, which bodes well for its future prospects.

The ratings are dependent on sustaining business margins, while maintaining stable financial risk profile. Any deterioration to revenue, margins, and/or cashflows will impact the ratings negatively. Meanwhile, improvement in capital structure will benefit the ratings.

Disclosure

Name of Rated Entity	Noon Sugar Mills Limited
Type of Relationship	Solicited
Purpose of the Rating	Entity Rating
Applicable Criteria	Methodology | Corporate Rating(Jul-23),Methodology | Correlation Between Long-term & Short-term Rating Scales(Jul-23),Methodology | Rating Modifiers(Apr-23)
Related Research	Sector Study | Sugar(Aug-23)
Rating Analysts	Muhammad Zain Ayaz | zain.ayaz@pacra.com | +92-42-35869504

Profile

Legal Structure Noon Sugar Mills Limited ('Noon Sugar Mills' or 'the Company') is a public listed company.

Background The Company was incorporated in 1964 and started its production operations in 1966, initially having a crushing capacity of 1,500 TCD. Additionally, it operates a distillery, which commenced operations in 1986, with a production capacity of 50,000 litres/day

Operations The Company has its head office located in Lahore, whereas, the mill is located in Bhalwal, Sargodha. The rated crushing capacity of the mill stands at 12,000 TCD and the distillery has an installed capacity of 130,000 liters. During MY23, the Company witnessed a significant decrease of ~27% in sugar production, which stood at 75000MT (MY22: 104,720 MT). Decline in sugar production is attributable to lower sugarcane availability. Meanwhile, recovery rates was observed, 9.37% in MY23 as compared to 9.36% during MY22. During MY23, the Company has produced 18,334 MT (MY22: 27,256) of Ethanol, depicting a decline in production of ~48%.

Ownership

Ownership Structure Majority of the shareholding lies with the Noon family, who holds a 64% stake in the Company. The family holds ~57% directly through Ms. Tahia Noon and Mr. Adnan Hayat Noon, whereas, ~5% is held indirectly through Noon Industries limited, an associated company. Remaining shareholding is split between financial institutions and the general public.

Stability Ownership structure of the Company is seen as stable as no major ownership changes are expected

Business Acumen The Company is a part of Noon Group which comprises a total of four companies. Other group companies are involved in trading services, with no significant asset base. The Group previously used to own and operate Noon Pakistan, most famous for its brand ‘nurpur’. that was sold off to Fauji Foundation Limited (FFL).

Financial Strength With the exception of Noon Sugar Mills, majority of the companies are involved in trading which provide indenting services relating to the textile industry. Noon Sugar Mills is seen as the main company in the Group since other companies do not generate sufficient revenues and have an insignificant asset base.

Governance

Board Structure The Company’s Board comprises of seven members; Chairman, two Executive Director (including CEO), two non-Executive Directors, and two Independent Directors.

Members’ Profile The Company’s Board represents a good skill mix which comprises members who have extensive experience in the sugar industry. It is further aided by the Independent Directors who specialize and provide insight on legal and financial matters. Mr. K Iqbal Talib, the Board's Chairman, has over 4 decades of experience in the sugar industry

Board Effectiveness The Corporation has established three distinct Board Committees, namely the Human Resources and Remuneration Committee, Technical Committee, and Audit Committee. Each committee is comprised of no fewer than three Board members.

Financial Transparency Shinewing Hameed Chaudhri & Company, Chartered Accountants, are the external auditors of the Company. They gave an unqualified opinion on financial statements of the Company ending in September, 2023. The firm is QCR rated by ICAP and is classified in Category 'B' in the panel of auditors by SBP.

Management

Organizational Structure Noon Sugar Mills has a well-defined organizational structure that has various layers of management. All department heads are reportable to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). However, the Head of Internal Audit and HR administratively report to the CEO and functionally report to the Audit Committee and HR & Remuneration Committee, respectively.

Management Team Lt. Col. (R) Abdul Khaliq Khan (CEO) served in the military for 25 years. He has been associated with the Group from last 21+ years. He holds Master’s Degree in International Relations. Other members of management are also well qualified with ample experience.

Effectiveness Management accounts and many other technical matters, are discussed among the management on a frequent basis

MIS The management has implemented ERP system, which integrates major disciplines like cane accounts, general accounts and HR for efficient management.

Control Environment The Company has developed its internal audit department which has basic internal controls required to ensure compliance and efficiency. However, the Company needs to further develop and strengthen its control mechanism.

Business Risk

Industry Dynamics Pakistan’s sugar industry is the country’s 2nd largest agro-based industry, comprising of 91 mills with an annual crushing capacity estimated at ~80–90mln MT. The industry is facing constraint due to government set support price for the sugarcane. During MY23, the support price for sugarcane in KPK and Punjab is fixed at 302/maund, and for Sindh, it is PKR 300/maund. The 2022–2023 season was adversely affected by severe floods that resulted in crop losses and reduced harvesting period. Sugarcane, a resilient crop, managed to survive the damage to some extent, but farmers had to start harvesting prematurely, leading to lower farm yields and recovery. The sugar industry faced a significant shortfall in production, which was not anticipated until mid-season. The reduced crop outlook triggered a competitive price war among the regions, which increased the cost of sugarcane and sugar production. This further escalated the cost of production and intensified the market price pressures on cane. The tight supply of cane required daily payments to growers, which necessitated adequate liquidity. Moreover, the steep rise in markup rates increased the finance cost of sugar production considerably.

Relative Position The Company had a market share of ~1.5% in terms of sugar production owing to the high number of players in the industry.

Revenues The Company has two reportable segments, which are, Sugar and Distillery. Major portion of sales emanate from sugar sales. During MY’23, The Company generated sales from sugar segment ~55% (MY’22: 60%) from ethanol segment ~45% (MY’22:40%). Additionally, a high portion of sugar sales are made locally, whereas, ethanol sales are export oriented and are made in Japanese and Swiss markets. During MY23, the Company posted net revenue worth ~PKR 9.28bln (MY22: ~PKR 11.96bln), reflecting decrease of 22.4%.

Margins During MY23, overall gross profit stood at ~PKR 1.897 bln, depicting an increase of YoY, translating into a gross margin of ~20.4% (MY22: ~13%). Incline in gross margin is primarily attributable to significant increase in the profits from distillery division. Similarly, the operating margin improved to ~14.2% (MY22: ~8.0%) due to trickle-down effect. Finance cost observed a hike to ~PKR 717mln (MY22: ~PKR 390mln) due to increased interest rates despite reduced borrowing. During MY'23 ethanol segment remained profitable, As a result, the net margin stood at ~4.5% (MY22: ~3.9%).

Sustainability Being an export sector with minimal imports tends to bode well for the Company as the economic situation has favored exports and constrained imports into Pakistan. However, the Company is exposed to volatility and ensuing challenges in the sugar sector.

Financial Risk

Working Capital Noon Sugar Mills faces an inherent stress in its working capital due to seasonality in crushing cycle. The company manages its working capital by taking advance payments from their customers, which it uses during the crushing season to purchase sugarcane stock. Any short fall is financed through short-term borrowings, which make up a major portion part of the company’s balance sheet. In MY23, net working capital days deteriorated to 44 days (MY22: 40 days) on the back of deteriorated inventory cycle (MY23: 74 days, MY22: 39 days) and receivable cycle (MY23: 10 days, MY22: 10 days). The short-term trade leverage stood at (MY23: ~ -17.1%, MY22: ~ -12.7%).

Coverages In MY23, the FCFO of the Company increased to ~PKR 1,300mln (MY22: ~PKR 1,092mln); courtesy of higher profitability. Meanwhile, finance cost observed a prominent increase to ~PKR 717mln (MY22: ~PKR 390mln). As a result, the interest coverage ratio decreased to 1.9x (MY22: 2.9x). Additionally, core and total coverage ratio dip to 1.8x (MY22: 2.4x) and 1.8x (MY22: 2.4x).

Capitalization Noon Sugar Mills has a adequately leveraged capital structure, represented by a leveraging ratio of ~47.3% as at MY23 (MY22: ~52.6%). Majority of debt is composed of short-term borrowings which are utilized for meeting working capital requirements, accounting for 100% of total debt. During MY23, the company's total borrowing amounted to ~PKR 1,872 million, which is a decrease of about 2.7% compared to the previous year (MY22: ~PKR 1,925mln).

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Financial Summary
PKR mln

Noon Sugar Mills	Dec-23	Sep-23	Sep-22	Sep-21
Sugar	3M	12M	12M	12M
A BALANCE SHEET				
1 Non-Current Assets	2,905	2,074	1,806	1,616
2 Investments	-	-	-	-
3 Related Party Exposure	-	-	-	-
4 Current Assets	5,275	4,101	2,779	2,810
a Inventories	*3,262*	*2,536*	*1,161*	*1,406*
b Trade Receivables	*227*	*177*	*313*	*338*
5 Total Assets	8,180	6,175	4,585	4,426
6 Current Liabilities	2,478	2,134	854	549
a Trade Payables	*2,152*	*1,645*	*364*	*222*
7 Borrowings	3,333	1,872	1,925	2,489
8 Related Party Exposure	-	-	-	-
9 Non-Current Liabilities	87	82	73	60
10 Net Assets	2,282	2,086	1,733	1,328
11 Shareholders' Equity	2,291	2,086	1,733	1,328
B INCOME STATEMENT				
1 Sales	2,798	9,280	11,966	9,190
a Cost of Good Sold	*(2,363)*	*(7,384)*	*(10,407)*	*(8,183)*
2 Gross Profit	435	1,897	1,559	1,006
a Operating Expenses	*(128)*	*(582)*	*(604)*	*(395)*
3 Operating Profit	307	1,314	956	612
a Non Operating Income or (Expense)	*15*	*(70)*	*91*	*32*
4 Profit or (Loss) before Interest and Tax	322	1,244	1,046	643
a Total Finance Cost	*(82)*	*(717)*	*(390)*	*(263)*
b Taxation	*(35)*	*(107)*	*(193)*	*(123)*
6 Net Income Or (Loss)	205	420	464	257
C CASH FLOW STATEMENT				
a Free Cash Flows from Operations (FCFO)	*276*	*1,300*	*1,092*	*658*
b Net Cash from Operating Activities before Working Capital Ch	*195*	*647*	*694*	*390*
c Changes in Working Capital	*(704)*	*(78)*	*161*	*59*
1 Net Cash provided by Operating Activities	(508)	569	855	449
2 Net Cash (Used in) or Available From Investing Activities	(874)	(452)	(346)	(229)
3 Net Cash (Used in) or Available From Financing Activities	1,459	(118)	(624)	(44)
4 Net Cash generated or (Used) during the period	77	(0)	(114)	176
D RATIO ANALYSIS				
1 Performance				
a Sales Growth (for the period)	20.6%	-22.4%	30.2%	49.7%
b Gross Profit Margin	15.5%	20.4%	13.0%	11.0%
c Net Profit Margin	7.3%	4.5%	3.9%	2.8%
d Cash Conversion Efficiency (FCFO adjusted for Working Capi	-15.3%	13.2%	10.5%	7.8%
*e Return on Equity [Net Profit Margin * Asset Turnover * (Tota*	37.6%	22.0%	30.3%	20.9%
2 Working Capital Management				
a Gross Working Capital (Average Days)	101	84	49	69
b Net Working Capital (Average Days)	39	44	40	61
c Current Ratio (Current Assets / Current Liabilities)	2.1	1.9	3.3	5.1
3 Coverages				
a EBITDA / Finance Cost	4.7	2.0	3.4	3.1
b FCFO / Finance Cost+CMLTB+Excess STB	1.3	1.8	2.4	1.6
c Debt Payback (Total Borrowings+Excess STB) / (FCFO-Finan	0.7	0.0	0.1	0.6
4 Capital Structure				
a Total Borrowings / (Total Borrowings+Shareholders' Equity)	59.3%	47.3%	52.6%	65.2%
b Interest or Markup Payable (Days)	82.5	36.8	15.5	54.9
c Entity Average Borrowing Rate	7.9%	18.5%	10.2%	6.9%

Credit Rating

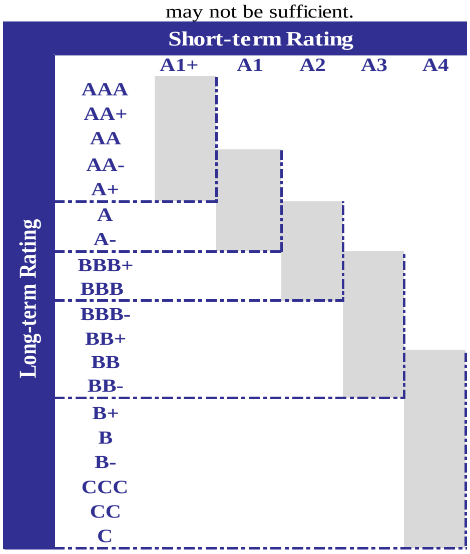
Credit rating reflects forward-looking opinion on credit worthiness of underlying entity or instrument; more specifically it covers relative ability to honor financial obligations. The primary factor being captured on the rating scale is relative likelihood of default.

Long-term Rating

Scale	Definition
AAA	**Highest credit quality.** Lowest expectation of credit risk. Indicate exceptionally strong capacity for timely payment of financial commitments
AA+ AA AA-	**Very high credit quality.** Very low expectation of credit risk. Indicate very strong capacity for timely payment of financial commitments. This capacity is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events.
A+ A A-	**High credit quality.** Low expectation of credit risk. The capacity for timely payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be vulnerable to changes in circumstances or in economic conditions.
BBB+ BBB BBB-	**Good credit quality.** Currently a low expectation of credit risk. The capacity for timely payment of financial commitments is considered adequate, but adverse changes in circumstances and in economic conditions are more likely to impair this capacity.
BB+ BB BB-	**Moderate risk.** Possibility of credit risk developing. There is a possibility of credit risk developing, particularly as a result of adverse economic or business changes over time; however, business or financial alternatives may be available to allow financial commitments to be met.
B+ B B-	**High credit risk.** A limited margin of safety remains against credit risk. Financial commitments are currently being met; however, capacity for continued payment is contingent upon a sustained, favorable business and economic environment.
CCC CC C	**Very high credit risk.** Substantial credit risk "CCC" Default is a real possibility. Capacity for meeting financial commitments is solely reliant upon sustained, favorable business or economic developments. "CC" Rating indicates that default of some kind appears probable. "C" Ratings signal imminent default.
D	Obligations are currently in default.

Short-term Rating

Scale	Definition
A1+	The highest capacity for timely repayment.
A1	A strong capacity for timely repayment.
A2	A satisfactory capacity for timely repayment. This may be susceptible to adverse changes in business, economic, or financial conditions.
A3	An adequate capacity for timely repayment. Such capacity is susceptible to adverse changes in business, economic, or financial
A4	The capacity for timely repayment is more susceptible to adverse changes in business, economic, or financial conditions. Liquidity may not be sufficient.



**The correlation shown is indicative and, in certain cases, may not hold.*

Outlook (Stable, Positive, Negative, Developing) Indicates the potential and direction of a rating over the intermediate term in response to trends in economic and/or fundamental business/financial conditions. It is not necessarily a precursor to a rating change. 'Stable' outlook means a rating is not likely to change. 'Positive' means it may be raised. 'Negative' means it may be lowered. Where the trends have conflicting elements, the outlook may be described as 'Developing'.

Rating Watch Alerts to the possibility of a rating change subsequent to, or, in anticipation of some material identifiable event with indeterminable rating implications. But it does not mean that a rating change is inevitable. A watch should be resolved within foreseeable future, but may continue if underlying circumstances are not settled. Rating watch may accompany rating outlook of the respective opinion.

Suspension It is not possible to update an opinion due to lack of requisite information. Opinion should be resumed in foreseeable future. However, if this does not happen within six (6) months, the rating should be considered withdrawn.

Withdrawn A rating is withdrawn on a) termination of rating mandate, b) the debt instrument is redeemed, c) the rating remains suspended for six months, d) the entity/issuer defaults., or/and e) PACRA finds it impractical to surveill the opinion due to lack of requisite information.

Harmonization A change in rating due to revision in applicable methodology or underlying scale.

Surveillance. Surveillance on a publicly disseminated rating opinion is carried out on an ongoing basis till it is formally suspended or withdrawn. A comprehensive surveillance of rating opinion is carried out at least once every six months. However, a rating opinion may be reviewed in the intervening period if it is necessitated by any material happening.

Note. This scale is applicable to the following methodology(s):

a) Broker Entity Rating
b) Corporate Rating
c) Debt Instrument Rating
d) Financial Institution Rating
e) Holding Company Rating
f) Independent Power Producer Rating
g) Microfinance Institution Rating
h) Non-Banking Finance Companies Rating

Regulatory and Supplementary Disclosure

(Credit Rating Companies Regulations,2016)

Rating Team Statements

(1) Rating is just an opinion about the creditworthiness of the entity and does not constitute recommendation to buy, hold or sell any security of the entity rated or to buy, hold or sell the security rated, as the case may be | Chapter III; 14-3-(x)

2) **Conflict of Interest**

i. The Rating Team or any of their family members have no interest in this rating | Chapter III; 12-2-(j)
ii. PACRA, the analysts involved in the rating process and members of its rating committee, and their family members, do not have any conflict of interest relating to the rating done by them | Chapter III; 12-2-(e) & (k)
iii. The analyst is not a substantial shareholder of the customer being rated by PACRA [Annexure F; d-(ii)] Explanation: for the purpose of above clause, the term "family members" shall include only those family members who are dependent on the analyst and members of the rating committee

Restrictions

(3) No director, officer or employee of PACRA communicates the information, acquired by him for use for rating purposes, to any other person except where required under law to do so. | Chapter III; 10-(5)
(4) PACRA does not disclose or discuss with outside parties or make improper use of the non-public information which has come to its knowledge during business relationship with the customer | Chapter III; 10-7-(d)
(5) PACRA does not make proposals or recommendations regarding the activities of rated entities that could impact a credit rating of entity subject to rating | Chapter III; 10-7-(k)

Conduct of Business

(6) PACRA fulfills its obligations in a fair, efficient, transparent and ethical manner and renders high standards of services in performing its functions and obligations; | Chapter III; 11-A-(a)
(7) PACRA uses due care in preparation of this Rating Report. Our information has been obtained from sources we consider to be reliable but its accuracy or completeness is not guaranteed. PACRA does not, in every instance, independently verifies or validates information received in the rating process or in preparing this Rating Report | Clause 11-(A)(p).
(8) PACRA prohibits its employees and analysts from soliciting money, gifts or favors from anyone with whom PACRA conducts business | Chapter III; 11-A-(q)
(9) PACRA ensures before commencement of the rating process that an analyst or employee has not had a recent employment or other significant business or personal relationship with the rated entity that may cause or may be perceived as causing a conflict of interest; | Chapter III; 11-A-(r)
(10) PACRA maintains principal of integrity in seeking rating business | Chapter III; 11-A-(u)
(11) PACRA promptly investigates, in the event of a misconduct or a breach of the policies, procedures and controls, and takes appropriate steps to rectify any weaknesses to prevent any recurrence along with suitable punitive action against the responsible employee(s) | Chapter III; 11-B-(m)

Independence & Conflict of interest

(12) PACRA receives compensation from the entity being rated or any third party for the rating services it offers. The receipt of this compensation has no influence on PACRA´s opinions or other analytical processes. In all instances, PACRA is committed to preserving the objectivity, integrity and independence of its ratings. Our relationship is governed by two distinct mandates i) rating mandate - signed with the entity being rated or issuer of the debt instrument, and fee mandate - signed with the payer, which can be different from the entity
(13) PACRA does not provide consultancy/advisory services or other services to any of its customers or to any of its customers' associated companies and associated undertakings that is being rated or has been rated by it during the preceding three years unless it has adequate mechanism in place ensuring that provision of such services does not lead to a conflict of interest situation with its rating activities; | Chapter III; 12-2-(d)
(14) PACRA discloses that no shareholder directly or indirectly holding 10% or more of the share capital of PACRA also holds directly or indirectly 10% or more of the share capital of the entity which is subject to rating or the entity which issued the instrument subject to rating by PACRA; | Reference Chapter III; 12-2-(f)
(15) PACRA ensures that the rating assigned to an entity or instrument is not be affected by the existence of a business relationship between PACRA and the entity or any other party, or the non-existence of such a relationship | Chapter III; 12-2-(i)
(16) PACRA ensures that the analysts or any of their family members shall not buy or sell or engage in any transaction in any security which falls in the analyst's area of primary analytical responsibility. This clause shall, however, not be applicable on investment in securities through collective investment schemes. | Chapter III; 12-2-(l)
(17) PACRA has established policies and procedure governing investments and trading in securities by its employees and for monitoring the same to prevent insider trading, market manipulation or any other market abuse | Chapter III; 11-B-(g)

Monitoring and review

(18) PACRA monitors all the outstanding ratings continuously and any potential change therein due to any event associated with the issuer, the security arrangement, the industry etc., is disseminated to the market, immediately and in effective manner, after appropriate consultation with the entity/issuer; | Chapter III | 17-(a)
(19) PACRA reviews all the outstanding ratings periodically, on annual basis; Provided that public dissemination of annual review and, in an instance of change in rating will be made; | Chapter III | 17-(b)
(20) PACRA initiates immediate review of the outstanding rating upon becoming aware of any information that may reasonably be expected to result in downgrading of the rating; | Chapter III | 17-(c)
(21) PACRA engages with the issuer and the debt securities trustee, to remain updated on all information pertaining to the rating of the entity/instrument;| Chapter III | 17-(d)

Probability of Default

(22) PACRA´s Rating Scale reflects the expectation of credit risk. The highest rating has the lowest relative likelihood of default (i.e., probability). PACRA´s transition studies capture the historical performance behavior of a specific rating notch. Transition behavior of the assigned rating can be obtained from PACRA´s Transition Study available at our website. (www.pacra.com). However, actual transition of rating may not follow the pattern observed in the past; | Chapter III | 14-3(f)(vii)

Proprietary Information