M&G Investments

M&G Global Balanced Feeder Fund

Global Multi-Asset ZAR-denominated

Q1 2023

Market overview

So far in 2023, global financial markets have experienced wild swings – particularly in the normally less volatile fixed income markets – dictated by the guessing game over the path of US interest rates, inflation and growth. January's sentiment was relatively bullish, dominated by expectations of a weaker US economy going into 2023, which would have increased the likelihood of softer inflation, lower-than-expected interest rates and a relatively imminent pause to the US Federal Reserve's rate hiking cycle.

This was all up-ended in February by surprisingly strong economic data, including more widely embedded inflation than previously thought. With the Fed signalling its intention to continue hiking, this sent market uncertainty higher and global asset prices lower, an environment that continued well into March.

Then the emergence of banking sector turmoil sparked by the sudden failure of specialist Silicon Valley Bank and the engineered buyout of Swiss banking giant Credit Suisse by UBS shocked markets even further, with swift central bank and government interventions preventing contagion to other sectors. Gold benefited and risk-off sentiment prevailed as global financial stocks sold off.

Looking back, investment managers have rarely seen such sharp changes in market views in such a short period of time. US Treasury bonds, for example, experienced high volatility of around 10%, with the 10-year UST yield falling by 50bps from around 4.0% to 3.5% between February and March – an exceptionally big move in that market.

Central banks had an even tougher policy balancing act, having to choose between their duties of fighting inflation, safeguarding national banking systems and supporting growth and employment. Ironically, this led back to more positive expectations of lower interest rates and sooner-than-expected rate pauses.

The US Fed hiked its repo rate by 25bps at both its February at March meetings, moves that were expected by the market. February's core CPI, at 5.5% y/y, showed inflation was more deeply entrenched than thought. This data, combined with hawkish language from the US Fed, led investors to expect higher interest rates for longer and sparked global equity and bond sell-offs. Upward revisions to US growth forecasts, and for other key economies, reinforced the broadly more positive outlook by the end of the quarter.

In the UK, the Bank of England (BoE) raised its key interest rate by a total of 50bps in Q1 to 4.25%, in line with forecasts, reaching its highest level in 14 years. February CPI came in unexpectedly high at 10.4% y/y, and financial markets are still pricing in another 25-50bps of increases by August 2023. With January GDP growth reported at 0.3% m/m, the economy has so far avoided the recession that had been forecast, growing more quickly than expected and having picked up pace from the 0% recorded in the last quarter of 2022.

Meanwhile, Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt's three-year Spring Budget introduced higher taxes and spending, sparking labour protests on Budget day in mid-March. However, it also contained improved economic growth projections, including no recession for 2023. The UK economy is the only one of the G-7 not to have recovered to its pre-pandemic size.

The ECB continued its relatively aggressive pace of rate hikes in Q1 as it found itself faced with still high, albeit falling, levels of inflation. It hiked by 50bps in March as CPI surprised to the upside at 8.5% y/y in February versus 8.2% expected, with core CPI (excluding food and energy) at 5.6% y/y versus 5.3% expected. The bank also signalled its readiness to supply the banking system with extra liquidity should it be required. Financial markets now expect further hikes will be less aggressive going forward, having cut back their forecasts by a full 1.0%.

In February the European Commission revised upward its 2023 GDP growth forecast for the region to 0.8% from 03% previously, on the back of falling energy prices, government policy support and resilient household spending. Meanwhile, large and widespread public protests and strikes arose across France in March as a result of French President Emmanuel Macron's public pension reform, which sees the retirement age rise from 62 to 64.

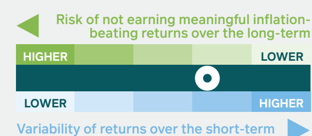
Japan continued its recovery from the pandemic during Q1, as outgoing BOJ Governor Kuroda left interest rates unchanged at a supportive -0.1% after having implemented an effective 25bp interest rate hike in December by lifting the country's fixed 10-year bond yield trading range. The market expects new Governor Eueda, who takes over in April, to also adjust the yield range wider without changing the base interest rate. Meanwhile, February CPI fell to 3.3% y/y from a 40-year high of 4.3% in March. Price increases have been driven by strong consumer demand, higher commodity prices and a weaker yen. Japanese GDP grew 1.1% in 2022, with a 1.3% expansion expected in 2023 on the back of stronger consumer demand, the government's October 2022 fiscal support package, rising tourism numbers and supply chain improvements.

China also continued its recovery from its strict Covid-19 lockdown in Q1 2023, having posted GDP growth of only 2.0% in 2022. The government set a conservative 5% growth target for 2023, with the IMF forecasting 5.2%, which would account for around 30% of global growth for the year. Pent-up consumer demand is driving the current expansion, along with consumer services, while the property sector remains weak.

The PBOC left interest rates steady in Q1 to support the recovery, while also implementing a surprise cut to bank reserve requirements to support liquidity and steady any nervousness associated with global banks. The ongoing monetary policy divergence between China and the US has kept pressure on the yuan and caused some capital to leave the country.

Annualised performance	A class	Benchmark	B class
1 year	10.7%	12.3%	11.1%
2 years	7.7%	7.5%	8.0%
3 years	9.8%	9.4%	10.0%
Since inception	8.3%	10.8%	-

Risk profile



Fund facts

Investment manager of the underlying fund

M&G Investment Management Limited (UK)

Fund managers of the underlying fund

Craig Simpson

ASISA category

Global - Multi Asset - High Equity

Benchmark

65% MSCI All Country World Index TR (Net), 5% FTSE EPRA/NAREIT Global REIT Index, 25% Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index, 5% US 1m Treasury Bill

Inception date

28 June 2018

Fund size

R1 522 984 337

Sources: M&G Investments, Morningstar & Deutsche Securities

M&G Investments

While the growth outlook improved in several key economies, making equities more attractive, risk aversion still made itself apparent over the quarter. Global equity returns outperformed bonds, while developed equity markets outperformed emerging equity markets. For the three months ended 31 March 2023, the MSCI All Country World Index returned 7.3%, the MSCI World Index (developed markets) delivered 7.7%, and the MSCI Emerging Markets Index produced 4.0% (all in US$). Bonds also posted meaningful gains: the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index delivered 3.0% (in US$).

Finally, despite some late-March gains on the back of the SARB's larger-than-expected rate hike, the rand moved weaker against the major global currencies, losing 4.8% against the broadly weaker US$, 7.3% against UK sterling and 6.5% versus the euro over the quarter.

Performance

For Q1 2023, the fund produced a return of 8.3% (net of fees), compared to the 10.7% recorded by its benchmark. For the 12 months to 31 March, the fund delivered 10.7% versus the benchmark's -12.3% return.

The main contributors to the fund's absolute returns over the quarter included equities, which on the whole performed well. Fixed income made a smaller contribution, although global bonds, emerging market bonds and US Treasuries all added value. The primary detractors from absolute performance were the fund's exposure to US financials, as well as an underweight position in the broader US stock market.

Strategy and positioning

While maintaining our broad asset allocation predispositions, we made some changes over the course of the quarter. Within the equity exposure we introduced a more meaningful relative value trade favouring diversified non-US markets against the US equity market. This reflected the sizeable valuation differential between these markets and a sense of the market's increasing degree of comfort around the ownership of US equity. The aggregate equity level was unchanged. We also introduced a currency carry trade, initiating exposure to higher-yielding emerging market currencies while trimming exposure to lower yielding developed market currencies.

By the end of the period, concerns around the health of the global financial system given the earlier banking sector turmoil, had eased. Instead, investors seemed to believe that the problems were both contained and sufficient to soften the hawkishness of central banks. This fits with the 'Goldilocks' mentality of recent months - the idea that central bank policy can be eased, due to falling inflation and/or modest economic bad news, but that growth won't be too bad. Changing perceptions of whether or not economies can thread this needle could continue to drive volatility.

In these extremely volatile, narrative-driven times we remain alert to opportunities that are created by 'episodic', or sentiment-driven, changes in asset prices. We remain cautious and have adopted a neutral positioning. However, we are ready to act quickly if and when market turbulence presents attractive opportunities. □

Contact us

info@mandg.co.za

mandg.co.za

0860 105 775

Invest now

Application forms

An electronic copy of this document is available at www.mandg.co.za

Disclaimer

MandG Investments Unit Trusts (South Africa) (RF) Ltd (Registration number: 1999/0524/06) is an approved CISCA management company (#29). Assets are managed by MandG Investment Managers (Pty) Ltd, which is an approved discretionary Financial Services Provider (#45199). The Trustee's/Custodian details are: Standard Bank of South Africa limited – Trustees Services & investor Services. 20th Floor, Main Tower, Standard Bank Centre, Heerengracht, Cape Town.

Collective Investment Schemes (unit trusts) are generally medium-to long-term investments. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future investment performance. Unit trust prices are calculated on a net asset value basis. This means the price is the total net market value of all assets of the unit trust fund divided by the total number of units of the fund. Any market movements – for example in share prices, bond prices, money market prices or currency fluctuations - relevant to the underlying assets of the fund may cause the value of the underlying assets to go up or down. As a result, the price of your units may go up or down. Unit trusts are traded at the ruling forward price of the day, meaning that transactions are processed during the day before you or the Manager know what the price at the end of the day will be. The price and therefore the number of units involved in the transaction are only known on the following day. The unit trust fund may borrow up to 10% of the fund value, and it may also lend any scrip (proof of ownership of an investment instrument) that it holds to earn additional income. A M&G unit trust fund may consist of different fund classes that are subject to different fees and charges. Where applicable, the Manager will pay your financial adviser an agreed standard ongoing adviser fee, which is included in the overall costs of the fund. A unit trust summary with all fees and maximum initial and ongoing adviser fees is available on our website. One can also obtain additional information on M&G products on the M&G website. The Fund may hold foreign securities including foreign CIS funds. As a result, the fund may face material risks. The volatility of the fund may be higher and the liquidity of the underlying securities may be restricted due to relative market sizes and market conditions. The fund's ability to settle securities and to repatriate investment income, capital or the proceeds of sales of securities may be adversely affected for multiple reasons including market conditions, macro-economic and political circumstances. Further, the return on the security may be affected (positively or negatively) by the difference in tax regimes between the domestic and foreign tax jurisdictions. The availability of market information and information on any underlying sub-funds may be delayed. The Manager may, at its discretion, close your chosen unit trust fund to new investors and additional investments by existing investors to make sure that it is managed in accordance with its mandate. It may also stop your existing debit order investment. The Manager makes no guarantees as to the capital invested in the fund or the returns of the fund. Excessive withdrawals from the fund may place the fund under liquidity pressure and, in certain circumstances; a process of ring fencing withdrawal instructions may be followed. Fund prices are published daily on the M&G website. These are also available upon request. The performance is calculated for the portfolio. Individual investor performance may differ as a result of initial fees, the actual investment date, the date of reinvestment and dividend withholding tax. Purchase and repurchase requests must be received by the Manager by 13h30 (11h30 for the Money Market Fund) SA time each business day. All online purchase and repurchase transactions must be received by the Manager by 10h30 (for all Funds) SA time each business day.

Sources: M&G Investments, Morningstar & Deutsche Securities