

Market Commentary

First Quarter 2020



CI Global High Dividend Advantage Fund

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Class F returns (in %) as at March 31, 2020	Year-to-date	1 year	3 year	5 year	10 year	Since inception (2006-02-28)
CI Global High Dividend Advantage Fund	-21.4	-16.4	-3.2	0.2	6.8	4.1

Source: Epoch Investment Partners, Inc., as at March 31, 2020.

Market Overview

- The COVID-19 outbreak became a global pandemic. Stocks tumbled swiftly into a bear market, with some markets reporting their worst quarter in decades. The longest bull market in U.S. history ended abruptly with the fastest-arriving bear market ever.
- Investors began the quarter with guarded optimism about the global economy, which appeared to be recovering from a manufacturing slump. Equity markets then crumbled in February as it became evident the virus was not contained within China and that governments would voluntarily shut down their economies to slow its spread—an unprecedented event.
- Central banks provided liquidity while acknowledging that monetary policy had its limits and that fiscal policy needed to be more supportive. The Federal Reserve (Fed) cut short-term rates to zero and provided other forms of liquidity to keep credit markets functioning. The precipitous drop in stock prices continued unabated, however, until the Fed announced unlimited purchases of Treasury bonds while Congress appeared on track to pass a massive \$2 trillion spending bill.

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Performance Summary

- Over the first quarter of 2020, the CI Global High Dividend Advantage Fund (the Fund) was down 17.5% while its benchmark, the MSCI World Total Return Index, was down 13.3%.
- The strategy has not been immune to the indiscriminate market sell-off as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. While all sectors detracted from absolute performance, financials followed by energy were the largest detractors. Information technology detracted the least.

Contributors to Performance

- Stock selection in industrials, namely holdings in the aerospace and defense industry, plus an underweight to the sector contributed to performance.
- Despite being more volatile during the market correction, an overweight to utilities also strongly contributed.
- Among the largest individual positive contributors to absolute performance was Roche Holding AG. Roche is a global manufacturer of branded pharmaceuticals and diagnostic equipment. Shares outperformed due to strong results throughout 2019 that culminated in double-digit growth in sales, earnings and cash flow, as well as recently confirmed 2020 guidance given expectations for minimal COVID-19 impacts.

Detractors from Performance

- Historically, the strategy has offered strong downside protection when markets sell-off, but so far that has not been the case during the fastest-arriving bear market in history, as typically defensive sectors have not held up as strongly as in the past and dividend paying companies have been out of favour with investors.
- Information technology was one of the strongest sectors in the benchmark and one of the strategy's main detractors to relative returns.
- Stock selection in real estate was another main detractor, as the continued shutdowns fuelled concern for commercial real estate operators and landlords while tenants sought rent relief.
- Energy was the worst performing sector in the benchmark, and an overweight further hurt relative performance.

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- Among the largest individual detractors was Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, which is a leading global real estate company that operates flagship shopping centers in Europe, the U.K. and the U.S. Shares faced selling pressure in early 2020 as concerns built around the spreading COVID-19 pandemic. Downward pressure on the shares intensified in March as more regions adopted strict social distancing guidelines that severely curtailed retail traffic. The lack of visibility around the impact on rental income in the event that retail tenants petition landlords for rent relief made the near-term outlook for the dividend uncertain and we chose to exit.

Portfolio Activity

- A few positions were initiated during the period, including Novo Nordisk and CME Group Inc. Novo Nordisk is a Denmark-based pharmaceutical company specializing in diabetes care, which represents a large, growing and defensive therapeutic area with high unmet needs. Cash flow growth drivers include global diabetes market growth and continued rapid expansion of Novo's market-leading drugs. Lower capital expenditures should also contribute to higher free cash flow production as the company recently completed a large expansion of its global manufacturing capacity. Novo Nordisk returns cash to shareholders through a growing dividend, which is well covered by free cash flow, and regular share repurchases. CME Group operates exchanges for the trading of futures and options on commodities and financial instruments. The company maintains a strong franchise with earnings and cash flow growth driven by continued demand for futures and options as vehicles for hedging and speculation, continued introduction of innovative new contracts and geographic expansion. The company pays an attractive, growing dividend that is well-covered by earnings, and also pays a variable "5th dividend" each December based on excess cash flow.
- A few positions were closed during the period, including Simon Property Group, Inc. and Royal Dutch Shell PLC. Simon Property Group (SPG) owns, develops, and manages shopping malls, primarily in the U.S. but also in select international regions. Growth is driven by acquisitions and development of new properties, expansion and redevelopment of existing properties, rent increases on renewal of leases with existing tenants, and turnover of space to new tenants at higher rents. In light of the unprecedented measures taken around the world to limit social interaction to combat the spread of coronavirus, and the consequent impact on retailers forced to close immediately and indefinitely, we decided to exit Simon Property Group. Royal Dutch Shell is a global integrated energy company that explores, produces and markets crude oil and natural gas. Shares declined along with other integrated oil companies as the energy sector experienced double shocks from supply and demand dislocations, caused by OPEC+ and COVID-19 respectively. With a weakened balance sheet, measured by net debt

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leverage or gearing, we became concerned about Shell's ability to maintain its dividend in a prolonged down cycle. We exited the position to fund other more attractive opportunities.

Outlook

- Our outlook has changed dramatically since the beginning of the year and will likely continue to shift. We believe there are three requirements for markets to stabilize. First, a peak in the rate of new infections and increased confidence that second waves will prove relatively moderate. The second condition concerns policy. Specifically, a large, timely and effective fiscal package targeted to support households and small businesses, as well as the Fed updating its playbook from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) to stabilize financial markets. U.S. President Donald Trump recently signed the most aggressive fiscal stimulus package ever. However, there remains open questions regarding its implementation, especially as it relates to small businesses. The third condition is that the liquidity and depth of credit markets improves.
- Given this challenging market environment, we expect dividends to be less robust than they were during the GFC. It is important to note, however, that some companies will continue to generate material cash flows in the current environment while others might have entered this period with ample liquidity and/or have the balance sheet capacity to sustain the distributions during a temporary hit to demand. We are assessing risks in the Fund on a company-by-company basis and have made some changes as a result. We remain highly confident that we can continue to deliver attractive dividend income from a diversified portfolio of high-quality equities.

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P.; Morningstar Research Inc.; and Epoch Investment Partners, Inc.

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