

Sustainability Preferences

What is Sustainability?

In 1987, the United Nations defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is about the prudent use of resources, with a view to long-term priorities and consequences of the ways in which resources are used.

A sustainable business seeks to resolve or mitigate environmental, social and economic challenges through the strategic allocation and management of corporate resources. In recent years, a concerted effort by authorities and regulators have resulted in significant progress for how companies can measure their progress in becoming more sustainable business.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

The SDGs are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals agreed as an international framework of reference that addresses the most pressing challenges of sustainable development. The SDGs were agreed in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. The SDGs are useful guidance to understanding the interconnected challenges of sustainable development and the urgency behind each goal. Investors may use the SDGs as a framework of reference for areas of impact when it comes to addressing sustainability in their portfolios.



What are Sustainability Preferences?

Recent changes to the Market in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID II) now require investment advisors and investment managers to ask investors whether they would like to see aspects of sustainability reflected in their investment decisions. This is known as the collection of sustainability preferences and has become part of the regular suitability assessment process.

Clients have varied attitudes to many different aspects of their investment decision such as liquidity, return, safety and risk. Sustainability preferences is a further layer in this process that allows us to determine the investment decisions that are most suitable for the client in relation to their attitude to sustainability.

What is the Suitability Assessment?

The assessment of suitability is a core investor protection measure under MiFID II. Correctly assessing client suitability ensures clients are only invested in products and services that are suitable for their own needs and objectives.

The goal of suitability rules is to ensure clients best interests are at the forefront of investment decisions. The assessment of suitability is applicable to both advisory and discretionary clients.

Suitability rules require investment firms to gather relevant information from clients in relation to:

- a) investment objectives, including risk tolerance
- b) financial circumstances including ability to bear loss
- c) knowledge and experience
- d) investment time horizon
- e) personal circumstances
- f) sustainability preferences

Collection of this information enables the Firm to complete a suitability assessment and (in the case of advice) provide suitable personal recommendations to clients or (in the case of discretionary clients) to make suitable investment decisions on behalf of the client(s).

In relation to sustainability preferences, clients must be asked the following:

- Whether the client has sustainability preferences (yes/no)
- The minimum proportion which the client wishes to invest in environmentally sustainable investments and sustainable investments
- The Principal Adverse Impacts which the client wishes to be considered.

CFIL will request information to assess a client’s sustainability preferences to enable it to match the client with suitable products. Terms and concepts used when referring to environmental, social and governance aspects will be explained to clients. This will include an explanation of the differences between products with and without sustainability features in a clear manner, avoiding technical language.

This regulation came into force in August 2022. Questions relating to sustainability are required as part of the suitability assessment and must be asked to every new client of the firm and every existing client where a suitability review is taking place.

Sustainability preferences are grouped in three major themes:

1. Environmentally Sustainable Investments (or “Taxonomy-aligned”)

These are investments in economic activities that make a significant contribution to an environmental objective based on technical screening criteria. There are six environmental objectives:

- Climate change mitigation
- Climate change adaptation
- Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- The circular economy
- Pollution prevention and control
- Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

The EU Taxonomy Regulation (TR) sets out robust, science-based technical screening criteria that activities need to comply with to be considered as “green” while ensuring such activities don’t negatively impact people and the planet.

Large companies are required to disclose to what extent their activities are associated with economic activities that qualify as environmentally sustainable. Given the role of the TR in how investments are defined as environmentally sustainable, this product category is also described as Taxonomy-aligned investments. To learn more about this topic, read [more here.](#)



2. Sustainable Investment

This is a more all-encompassing description of both environmentally and socially sustainable investments. The Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR) is the regulatory regime governing the definition of sustainable investment (SI). For an investment to be classified as SI, it must (1) follow principles of good governance (e.g., having in place sound management structures, tax compliance, employee relations and so on), (2) its economic activity contributes to a social or environmental objective, whilst (3) ensuring such economic activity does not cause harm to people or the planet.

The SFDR also classifies investment products in terms of being Article 8 or 9 aligned, which describes the extent to which a product is committed to SI. Both types of products must follow principles of good governance, however, they have varying requirements when it comes to % alignment with sustainable investment, with Article 9 products required to have 100% of the investments aligned with SI criteria. Article 8, on the other hand, promote environmental and social characteristics and can set their own minimum % alignment with environmental and social characteristics.

When defining environmentally sustainable activities under the SFDR, there is overlapping with the definition provided by Taxonomy-aligned economic activities. Therefore, a Taxonomy-aligned activity can automatically be defined as sustainable investment.

Finally, an Article 6 designation refers to a product that does not have a sustainable investment as its objective nor promotes ecological or social characteristics.



3. Principle Adverse Impact (PAIs)

Principle Adverse Impact indicators are a collection of data points where investments can be screened to highlight their sustainability risks against one another. They cover environmental, social and governance metrics (ESG risks).

Investors interested in understanding the principal adverse impacts from their investment decisions can choose from a total of 64 PAI indicators and track their performance in their portfolios. PAI's can be either quantitative or qualitative elements.

Clients can also exclude from their investments specific economic activities on the basis of relevant PAIs. For example, specific economic activities that are linked to certain principal adverse impacts on sustainability factors, and are considered as significantly harmful, can be avoided from investment. Examples of PAIs include:

- Carbon emissions
- Fossil fuel sector activity
- Human rights violations
- Involvement in controversial weapons
- Activities negatively affecting biodiversity
- Rule of law
- Board gender diversity
- etc...



What is the Difference Between Products with and without Sustainability Features?

One of the key differences between products with sustainability features and without is that the former goes through examinations pertaining to the sustainability of a government / business in terms of ESG standards at the same time as the financial performance of such investment is taken into consideration. Products without sustainability features, on the other hand, only focus on the financial performance of such investments.

What Happens if I don't have Sustainability Preferences?

Once you inform us that you have no preferences for sustainability in your investment decisions, you will be considered *sustainability neutral*, meaning that you can be offered products with and without sustainability features.

What are the Challenges?

We acknowledge that investors looking for sustainable investment solutions face a variety of obstacles as well as possibilities. Company data to allow for a more efficient matching of products with client's sustainability preferences is still under development. This is mostly due to another relevant regulatory framework, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), having a different timeline for implementation to the other regulatory regimes assisting in the integration of sustainability preferences in investment decisions. The CSRD timeline is being done through a phased approach, meaning that only large corporates are currently in scope for disclosure of sustainability data, with more companies falling in scope every year from 2025 to 2029. The reason behind such an approach was to give companies enough time to prepare these more extensive reporting requirements. The CSRD is also creating rigor around sustainability disclosure with such information becoming part of companies audited annual financial accounts.

The mismatch between timelines in companies' public disclosure of sustainability data may lead to a shortage of suitable products, as fund managers may lack relevant data to address a sustainability issue. For example, an area many investors may care about is biodiversity loss. However, the extent of the impact of companies' activities on biodiversity may require more disclosure than it is currently available to be better understood. In turn, an advisor may be unable to recommend a financial product to match a client's sustainability preferences.

What is Understood by "Minimum Proportion"?

During the collection of sustainability preferences, we ask for what "minimum proportion" you would like allocated to sustainable or taxonomy-aligned investments. This minimum proportion is collected as a specific percentage range, which is then used as guidance for the portfolio manager/advisor on what proportion of a client's portfolio should ideally be exposed to sustainable or taxonomy-aligned investments.

What Happens when no Product is Available to meet my Sustainability Preferences?

Your financial advisor/portfolio manager will inform you that, after searching for a suitable product that would meet not only your sustainability preferences, but other aspects of suitability (e.g., risk tolerance, liquidity, etc.), no product can be recommended at this time. The client can then be afforded the opportunity to adapt their sustainability preferences, and the advisor/portfolio manager will keep a record of the client's decision and reason for that decision.

Following this decision, the advisor/portfolio manager can then recommend an alternate product that would meet the client's other suitability objectives and assessment criteria. Under suitability rules, clients will be subject to a periodic review. This means clients will be contacted every two or three years, depending on their risk profile. During this review, all client's suitability criteria as mentioned above will be reviewed, including sustainability preferences.

At any time, if a client's circumstances or objectives change, you are encouraged to contact your portfolio manager to inform them of same. This will trigger a suitability review to ensure all information related to you is kept accurate and up to date. This ensures that any products or services you are invested in will continue to remain suitable to your needs.