

# Benchmark-Free Allocation Fund

Year Ending December 31, 2018

## OVERVIEW:

The GMO Benchmark-Free Allocation Fund seeks to generate positive total return by allocating to undervalued asset classes and sectors of the global market, free from the constraints of traditional benchmarks. The Fund invests in both conventional and unconventional asset classes by allocating to other GMO-managed portfolios or holding securities directly.

## Performance (%)

Net of Fees, Class III, Fair Value, USD	-5.35
Gross of Fees, Class III, Local Close, USD	-4.68
CPI Index <sup>1</sup>	+1.92
<b>Value Added</b>	<b>-6.60</b>

## TOP DOWN ALLOCATION: -7.4%



## SECURITY SELECTION: +0.8%



## Major Performance Drivers

### Equity

**Positioning:** Equities represented 36.7% of the portfolio at year-end, including 24.0% long-only EM, 7.6% developed ex-US equity, and 5.1% equity extension (a 130% long/30% short strategy comprised of developed ex-US and EM equity).

**Results:** The equity portfolio returned -15.4% for the year, well behind the MSCI ACWI return of -9.4%. This underperformance was predominantly down to our bias against the US, as the S&P 500 Index held up much better than other developed and emerging markets, particularly in the first three quarters. Our emerging market stock selection was decently ahead of the benchmark, with a portfolio return of -13.2% against an MSCI Emerging Market Index return of -14.5%. Stock selection in developed markets proved challenging and our portfolio returned -20.6%, more than 6% worse than the MSCI World ex-US Index. The ACWI ex-US Equity Extension strategy also underperformed from a stock selection perspective.

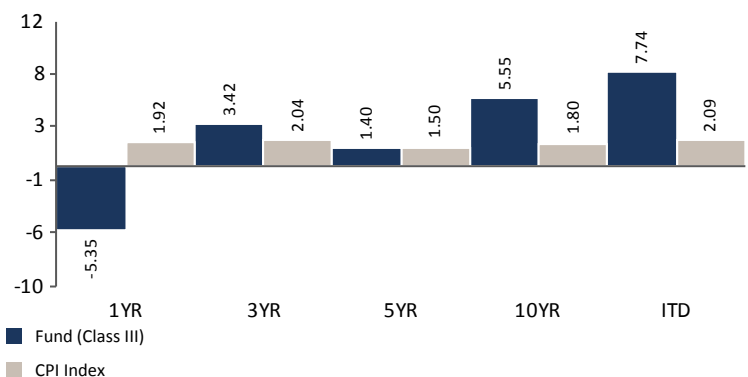
### Alternatives

**Positioning:** Alternatives represented 32.1% at year-end, including 7.5% Systematic Global Macro, 5.5% Quality/S&P500, 5.3% merger arbitrage, 4.6% EAFE Value/S&P500, 3.3% relative value interest rates & FX, 2.5% Special Opportunities, and 3.5% put selling.

**Results:** Alternatives returned 2.3% for the year, a very solid result in the context of the severe drawdowns in equity markets. Special Opportunities and put selling were hampered by their beta exposure and returned -8.6% and -7.1%, respectively. The EAFE Value (currency hedged) vs. S&P 500 trade was down 9.2%, suffering as the US equity market was the top performer and exacerbated by challenges in stock selection. Systematic Global Macro was down 1.2%, largely down to its equity positioning – a modest long position effected by being short the US market versus long emerging and other developed markets. Merger arbitrage was up a solid 3.2% and the Quality vs. S&P 500 trade returned an impressive 7.3% as Quality enjoyed an excellent 2018. Pride of place went to relative value interest rates & FX, up an outstanding 12.1%, driven mostly by long rates positions in Canada and New Zealand and a short position in the Australian dollar.

Performance data quoted represents past performance and is not indicative of future results. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that an investors shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance data may be lower or higher than the performance data provided herein. To obtain performance information to the most recent month-end, visit [www.gmo.com](http://www.gmo.com). Gross Expense Ratio of 1.03% is equal to the Funds Total Annual Operating Expenses set forth in the Funds most recent prospectus dated June 30, 2018.

## Annualized Return (%) as of December 31, 2018



Inception date: 07/23/2003

Chart returns include purchase premiums and redemption fees impact if applicable.

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## Fixed Income

*Positioning:* Fixed income represented 23.1% of the portfolio at year-end, including 10.9% TIPS, 5.0% asset-backed securities, 4.0% emerging country debt, and 3.2% high yield and a select number of distressed credits.

*Results:* Our fixed income strategies returned 0.1% for the year, in line with the 0.0% return from the Bloomberg Barclays US Aggregate Index. Asset-backed securities were up a solid 4.3% and high yield/distressed was up 3.1%, well ahead of the high yield benchmark return of -2.3%, which struggled a little in the risk-off environment. The TIPS exposure was down 1.4% as real 10-year yields in the US drifted from 0.46% at the start of the year to 0.98% at the end of the year (having been as high as 1.17% in November). The emerging country debt portfolio returned -5.2%, a little worse than the EMBI Global Index return of -4.6%.

## Cash/Cash Plus

*Positioning:* Cash/cash plus represented 8.1% of the portfolio at year-end. We believe cash is an important “dry powder” asset in an investment environment offering limited opportunities.

*Results:* The allocation to cash/cash plus had a minimal impact on the portfolio, returning 2.0% for the year in line with 3-month US T-Bills.

**An investor should consider the fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing. This and other important information can be found in the fund's prospectus. To obtain a prospectus please visit [www.gmo.com](http://www.gmo.com). Read the prospectus carefully before investing.**

Risks associated with investing in the Fund may include Market Risk - Equities, Management and Operational Risk, Non-U.S. Investment Risk, Liquidity Risk, and Derivatives Risk. For a more complete discussion of these risks and others, please consult the Fund's prospectus. Distributor: Funds Distributor LLC. GMO and Funds Distributor LLC are not affiliated.

<sup>1</sup> The CPI (Consumer Price Index) for All Urban Consumers US All Items is published monthly by the U.S. government as an indicator of changes in price levels (or inflation) paid by urban consumers for a representative basket of goods and services. CPI Index index returns are updated on the 15th of the month and may or may not be current.