

Pulse

Global Market Strategy, NIM Solutions

February 2024

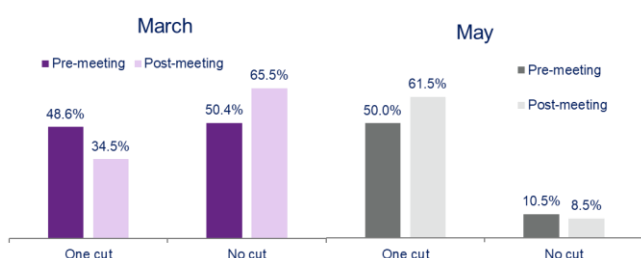
FOMC Meeting Review: The Fed pushes out first rate cut

As broadly expected, the Fed left its policy settings unchanged at last week's FOMC meeting, with both the Fed funds target range [5.25%-5.50%] and the pace of QT maintained. However, after Powell's dovish tone in December, the rates market had been expecting him to give a clearer signal on the timing of rate cuts. Instead, he opted for a more balanced stance and pushed against a first interest rate cut taking place in March.

Chair Powell stressed that while the Fed's view is that inflation is headed towards the target, FOMC members prefer to continue taking a cautious and data-dependent approach to have "greater confidence" in that inflation will not flare back up or stabilize above the target. After all, activity continues to grow at an above trend pace and the labour market remains tight and supporting strong wages growth. The latest job report published at the beginning of February revealed that the US economy has probably not yet embarked on its soft landing. These latest developments justify the Fed keeping all the options open to avoid moving too prematurely into a rate-cutting cycle.

While such communications are rather hawkish vis a vis what rate markets were expecting, overall markets have reacted quite modestly. Expectations for the first interest rate cut have somewhat been pushed out from March to May but not to the extent one would have thought after the Powell's statement (see Figure 1). On a similar way, while initially the US dollar appreciated broadly, gains have already been paired back. All in all, such market action showcases scepticisms on Fed's plans to delay rate cuts.

Fig. 1: Fed funds rate futures-based probabilities for FOMC's March & May meetings
(Source: CME Group & NIM Solutions)



Our take

Powell's hawkish message does not come as a surprise. We had already indicated our view that the dovish tone he had maintained at the December meeting had been premature and therefore it was likely to see him taking it back. Based on this last FOMC meeting, we maintain our view for the first rate cut we expect between June and July. By then, the labour market, and in turn wage growth, should have softened sufficiently for FOMC members to reach a sufficient "level of confidence" that services inflation will not pick up again and, hence, that inflation is sustainably heading towards the target. In addition, easing monetary policy conditions between now and the end of the first quarter should increase the likelihood of a soft landing for the US economy in 2024. In terms of next steps, the Fed will be looking for further confirmation in upcoming inflation data that prices are clearly moderating towards their 2% target. We also expect it to begin discussions on the pace of balance sheet reduction, or QT, at the March meeting, with no actual change until the May one.

Asset Allocation Implications

Since we continue to see the rates market getting too far ahead of itself in anticipating early rate cuts, shorter-dated Treasury yields will likely drift higher as expectations for early Fed cuts are cut back, which could cause some equity market volatility in the short-term.

But our longer-run outlook for equities remains constructive if the disinflationary trend stays in place. From a positioning perspective, it makes sense to keep duration in line and hold some dry powder in cash to deploy if bond yields rise further from here on reduced easing hopes.

The analyses, opinions, and certain of the investment themes and processes referenced herein represent the views of the portfolio manager(s) as of the date indicated. These, as well as the portfolio holdings and characteristics shown, are subject to change. There can be no assurance that developments will transpire as may be forecasted in this material.



This material has been provided for information purposes only to investment service providers or other Professional Clients, Qualified or Institutional Investors and, when required by local regulation, only at their written request. This material must not be used with Retail Investors.

To obtain a summary of investor rights in the official language of your jurisdiction, please consult the legal documentation section of the website (im.natixis.com/intl/intl-fund-documents).

In the E.U.: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers International or one of its branch offices listed below. Natixis Investment Managers International is a portfolio management company authorized by the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (French Financial Markets Authority - AMF) under no. GP 90-009, and a public limited company (société anonyme) registered in the Paris Trade and Companies Register under no. 329 450 738. Registered office: 43 avenue Pierre Mendès France, 75013 Paris. Germany: Natixis Investment Managers International, Zweigniederlassung Deutschland (Registration number: HRB 129507): Senckenberganlage 21, 60325 Frankfurt am Main. Italy: Natixis Investment Managers International Succursale Italiana, Registered office: Via San Clemente 1, 20122 Milan, Italy. Netherlands: Natixis Investment Managers International, Nederlands (Registration number 000050438298). Registered office: Stadsplateau 7, 3521AZ Utrecht, the Netherlands. Spain: Natixis Investment Managers International S.A., Sucursal en España, Serrano nº90, 6th Floor, 28006 Madrid, Spain. Sweden: Natixis Investment Managers International, Nordics Filial (Registration number 516412-8372- Swedish Companies Registration Office). Registered office: Covendrum Stockholm City AB, Kungsgatan 9, 111 43 Stockholm, Box 2376, 103 18 Stockholm, Sweden. Or, Provided by Natixis Investment Managers S.A. or one of its branch offices listed below. Natixis Investment Managers S.A. is a Luxembourg management company that is authorized by the Commission de Surveillance du Secteur Financier and is incorporated under Luxembourg laws and registered under n. B 115843. Registered office of Natixis Investment Managers S.A.: 2, rue Jean Monnet, L-2180 Luxembourg, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Belgium: Natixis Investment Managers S.A., Belgian Branch, Gare Maritime, Rue Picard 7, Bte 100, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium.

In Switzerland: Provided for information purposes only by Natixis Investment Managers, Switzerland Sàrl, Rue du Vieux Collège 10, 1204 Geneva, Switzerland or its representative office in Zurich, Schweizergasse 6, 8001 Zürich.

In the British Isles: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers UK Limited which is authorised and regulated by the UK Financial Conduct Authority (FCA firm reference no. 190258) - registered office: Natixis Investment Managers UK Limited, Level 4, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London, EC4R 2YA. When permitted, the distribution of this material is intended to be made to persons as described as follows: in the United Kingdom: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at investment professionals and professional investors only; in Ireland: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at professional investors only; in Guernsey: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at only financial services providers which hold a license from the Guernsey Financial Services Commission; in Jersey: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at professional investors only; in the Isle of Man: this material is intended to be communicated to and/or directed at only financial services providers which hold a license from the Isle of Man Financial Services Authority or insurers authorised under section 8 of the Insurance Act 2008.

In the DIFC: Provided in and from the DIFC financial district by Natixis Investment Managers Middle East (DIFC Branch) which is regulated by the DFSA. Related financial products or services are only available to persons who have sufficient financial experience and understanding to participate in financial markets within the DIFC, and qualify as Professional Clients or Market Counterparties as defined by the DFSA. No other Person should act upon this material. Registered office: Unit L10-02, Level 10 ,ICD Brookfield Place, DIFC, PO Box 506752, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

In Taiwan: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Securities Investment Consulting (Taipei) Co., Ltd., a Securities Investment Consulting Enterprise regulated by the Financial Supervisory Commission of the R.O.C. Registered address: 34F., No. 68, Sec. 5, Zhongxiao East Road, Xinyi Dist., Taipei City 11065, Taiwan (R.O.C.), license number 2020 FSC SICE No. 025, Tel. +886 2 8789 2788.

In Singapore: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Singapore Limited (NIM Singapore) having office at 5 Shenton Way, #22-05/06, UIC Building, Singapore 068808 (Company Registration No. 199801044D) to distributors and qualified investors for information purpose only. NIM Singapore is regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore under a Capital Markets Services Licence to conduct fund management activities and is an exempt financial adviser. Mirova Division (Business Name Registration No.: 53431077W) and Ostrum Division (Business Name Registration No.: 53463468X) are part of NIM Singapore and are not separate legal entities. This advertisement or publication has not been reviewed by the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

In Hong Kong: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Hong Kong Limited to professional investors for information purpose only.

In Australia: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Australia Pty Limited (ABN 60 088 786 289) (AFSL No. 246830) and is intended for the general information of financial advisers and wholesale clients only.

In New Zealand: This document is intended for the general information of New Zealand wholesale investors only and does not constitute financial advice. This is not a regulated offer for the purposes of the Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013 (FMCA) and is only available to New Zealand investors who have certified that they meet the requirements in the FMCA for wholesale investors. Natixis Investment Managers Australia Pty Limited is not a registered financial service provider in New Zealand.

In Colombia: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers International Oficina de Representación (Colombia) to professional clients for informational purposes only as permitted under Decree 2555 of 2010. Any products, services or investments referred to herein are rendered exclusively outside of Colombia. This material does not constitute a public offering in Colombia and is addressed to less than 100 specifically identified investors.

In Latin America: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers International.

In Chile: Esta oferta privada se inicia el día de la fecha de la presente comunicación. La presente oferta se acoge a la Norma de Carácter General N° 336 de la Superintendencia de Valores y Seguros de Chile. La presente oferta versa sobre valores no inscritos en el Registro de Valores o en el Registro de Valores Extranjeros que lleva la Superintendencia de Valores y Seguros, por lo que los valores sobre los cuales ésta versa, no están sujetos a su fiscalización. Que por tratarse de valores no inscritos, no existe la obligación por parte del emisor de entregar en Chile información pública respecto de estos valores. Estos valores no podrán ser objeto de oferta pública mientras no sean inscritos en el Registro de Valores correspondiente.

In Mexico: Provided by Natixis IM Mexico, S. de R.L. de C.V., which is not a regulated financial entity, securities intermediary, or an investment manager in terms of the Mexican Securities Market Law (Ley del Mercado de Valores) and is not registered with the Comisión Nacional Bancaria y de Valores (CNBV) or any other Mexican authority. Any products, services or investments referred to herein that require authorization or license are rendered exclusively outside of Mexico. While shares of certain ETFs may be listed in the Sistema Internacional de Cotizaciones (SIC), such listing does not represent a public offering of securities in Mexico, and therefore the accuracy of this information has not been confirmed by the CNBV. Natixis Investment Managers is an entity organized under the laws of France and is not authorized by or registered with the CNBV or any other Mexican authority. Any reference contained herein to "Investment Managers" is made to Natixis Investment Managers and/or any of its investment management subsidiaries, which are also not authorized by or registered with the CNBV or any other Mexican authority.

In Uruguay: Provided by Natixis Investment Managers Uruguay S.A., a duly registered investment advisor, authorised and supervised by the Central Bank of Uruguay. Office: San Lucar 1491, Montevideo, Uruguay, CP 11500. The sale or offer of any units of a fund qualifies as a private placement pursuant to section 2 of Uruguayan law 18,627.

In Brazil: Provided to a specific identified investment professional for information purposes only by Natixis Investment Managers International. This communication cannot be distributed other than to the identified addressee. Further, this communication should not be construed as a public offer of any securities or any related financial instruments. Natixis Investment Managers International is a portfolio management company authorized by the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (French Financial Markets Authority - AMF) under no. GP 90-009, and a public limited company (société anonyme) registered in the Paris Trade and Companies Register under no. 329 450 738. Registered office: 43 avenue Pierre Mendès France, 75013 Paris.

The above referenced entities are business development units of Natixis Investment Managers, the holding company of a diverse line-up of specialised investment management and distribution entities worldwide. The investment management subsidiaries of Natixis Investment Managers conduct any regulated activities only in and from the jurisdictions in which they are licensed or authorised. Their services and the products they manage are not available to all investors in all jurisdictions. It is the responsibility of each investment service provider to ensure that the offering or sale of fund shares or third party investment services to its clients complies with the relevant national law.

The provision of this material and/or reference to specific securities, sectors, or markets within this material does not constitute investment advice, or a recommendation or an offer to buy or to sell any security, or an offer of any regulated financial activity. Investors should consider the investment objectives, risks and expenses of any investment carefully before investing. The analyses, opinions, and certain of the investment themes and processes referenced herein represent the views of the portfolio manager(s) as of the date indicated. These, as well as the portfolio holdings and characteristics shown, are subject to change. There can be no assurance that developments will transpire as may be forecasted in this material. The analyses and opinions expressed by external third parties are independent and does not necessarily reflect those of Natixis Investment Managers. Although Natixis Investment Managers believes the information provided in this material to be reliable, including that from third party sources, it does not guarantee the accuracy, adequacy, or completeness of such information. May not be redistributed, published, or reproduced, in whole or in part.

Amounts shown are expressed in USD unless otherwise indicated.

Natixis Investment Managers may decide to terminate its marketing arrangements for this fund in accordance with the relevant legislation.