

Desjardins launches three responsible investment funds, including two Canadian firsts

In 2016, responsible investments at Desjardins were worth more than \$2 billion

Lévis (Qc), June 14, 2016 – Desjardins Group, a leader in socially responsible investing, has added three new investment funds to its SocieTerra line of products. The funds include the Desjardins SocieTerra Environmental Bond Fund, the Desjardins SocieTerra Cleantech Fund and the Desjardins SocieTerra American Equity Fund, the former two being the first of their kind in Canada.

“Just five years ago, it would have been tough to create the three socially responsible investment funds that Desjardins is launching today,” said Éric Landry, Vice-President of Investment Solutions with Desjardins Wealth Management. “Today, the public has higher expectations when it comes to environmental and social issues and governance. And we’re proud to offer innovative investment solutions that meet the growing demand for ever more sophisticated products.”

Two new funds are breaking ground in Canada

The **Desjardins SocieTerra Environmental Bond Fund** is the first fund in Canada to invest in environmental bonds issued by governments and corporations from around the world. Investing in this type of debt security is a way to finance sustainable development initiatives or projects that offset climate change. And on top of making environmental criteria a part of security selection, Mirova, a fund manager that specializes in responsible investing, also looks at the social practices and governance of the companies it invests in to ensure the portfolio’s risk is managed effectively.

The **Desjardins SocieTerra Cleantech Fund** is the first mutual fund in Canada to offer individual investors the ability to finance innovative technologies and solutions in the areas of energy efficiency and the environment. Impax, the fund manager, invests in companies from around the world whose income is drawn primarily from clean technology activities, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, water treatment, pollution control, waste management, environmental services and sustainable agriculture.

As for the new **Desjardins SocieTerra American Equity Fund**, it uses environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria to select securities from high-quality U.S. companies. The portfolio manager, ClearBridge, uses what is called a “Best in class” strategy to select securities, choosing companies whose social, environmental and governance performance is better than that of other companies in the same sector. ClearBridge also maintains an ongoing dialogue with various companies and sector associations on behalf of the Fund and its shareholders.

These three new funds are available to investors across the Desjardins caisse network in Ontario and Quebec, as well as elsewhere in Canada through the [DFSI, DFSIN](#) and [State Farm](#) networks. They will be integrated into the four [SocieTerra Portfolios](#), improving geographic and sectoral diversification as well as responsible investment strategies.

Demand for responsible investment products: A steady and significant rise

Responsible investing has been part of what Desjardins does for more than 25 years, dating back to the 1990 launch of the first Quebec-based responsible investment fund: The Desjardins Environment Fund. Over time, both the company and the public have turned their attention to environmental, social and governance causes, as seen in [a recent survey](#) by Desjardins Wealth Management about socially responsible investing. According to the survey, while only 46% of Quebecers have heard of responsible investing (RI), when told about this option, 66% said they'd be willing to allocate a portion of their investments to it.

About Desjardins Group

[Desjardins Group](#) is the leading cooperative financial group in Canada and the sixth largest cooperative financial group in the world, with assets of \$255.1 billion. It has been rated one of the Best Employers in Canada by Aon Hewitt. To meet the diverse needs of its members and clients, Desjardins offers a full range of products and services to individuals and businesses through its extensive distribution network, online platforms and subsidiaries across Canada. Considered North America's strongest bank according to Bloomberg News, Desjardins has one of the highest capital ratios and credit ratings in the industry.

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