ETF & Mutual Fund Rankings: Materials Sector

The Materials sector ranks second out of the ten sectors as detailed in our 2Q16 Sector Ratings for ETFs and Mutual Funds report. Last quarter, the Materials sector ranked fourth. It gets our Neutral rating, which is based on aggregation of ratings of 10 ETFs and 11 mutual funds in the Materials sector as of April 18, 2016. See a recap of our 1Q16 Sector Ratings here.

Figure 1 ranks from best to worst the seven Materials ETFs that meet our liquidity standards and Figure 2 shows the five best and worst rated Materials mutual funds. Not all Materials sector ETFs and mutual funds are created the same. The number of holdings varies widely (from 24 to 121). This variation creates drastically different investment implications and, therefore, ratings.

Investors seeking exposure to the Materials sector should buy one of the Attractive-or-better rated ETFs or mutual funds from Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: ETFs with the Best & Worst Ratings – Top 5

	Allocation of ETF Holdings			
Ticker	**Attractive-or-better Stocks**	**Neutral Stocks**	**Dangerous-or-worse Stocks**	**Predictive Rating**
Best ETFs (only 2)				
VAW	16%	55%	29%	**Attractive**
XLB	19%	53%	23%	**Neutral**
Worst ETFs				
IYM	15%	57%	25%	**Neutral**
PYZ	10%	51%	38%	**Neutral**
SLX	4%	32%	37%	**Neutral**
PSCM	1%	28%	64%	**Dangerous**
XME	0%	22%	75%	**Dangerous**

* Best ETFs exclude ETFs with TNAs less than $100 million for inadequate liquidity.

Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Fidelity MSCI Materials Index (FMAT), First Trust Materials AlphaDex Fund (FZX), and Guggenheim S&P 500 Equal Weight Materials (RTM) are excluded from Figure 1 because their total net assets (TNA) are below $100 million and do not meet our liquidity minimums.

Figure 2: Mutual Funds with the Best & Worst Ratings – Top 5

	Allocation of Mutual Fund Holdings			
Ticker	**Attractive-or-better Stocks**	**Neutral Stocks**	**Dangerous-or-worse Stocks**	**Predictive Rating**
Best Mutual Funds				
FMFEX	16%	43%	28%	Neutral
FSCHX	13%	56%	21%	Neutral
FSDPX	16%	43%	28%	Neutral
FMFCX	16%	43%	28%	Neutral
FMFTX	16%	43%	28%	Neutral
Worst Mutual Funds				
FMFAX	16%	43%	28%	Neutral
RYBIX	12%	40%	34%	Neutral
RYBAX	12%	40%	34%	Dangerous
RYBCX	12%	40%	34%	Dangerous
RYBMX	12%	40%	34%	Very Dangerous

* Best mutual funds exclude funds with TNAs less than $100 million for inadequate liquidity.

Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Vanguard Materials Index Fund (VAW) is the top-rated Materials ETF and Fidelity Advisor Materials Fund (FMFEX) is the top-rated Materials mutual fund. VAW earns an Attractive rating and FMFEX earns a Neutral rating.

SPDR S&P Metals & Mining ETF (XME) is the worst rated Materials ETF and Rydex Series Basic Materials Fund (RYBMX) is the worst rated Materials mutual fund. XME earns a Dangerous rating and RYBMX earns a Very Dangerous rating.

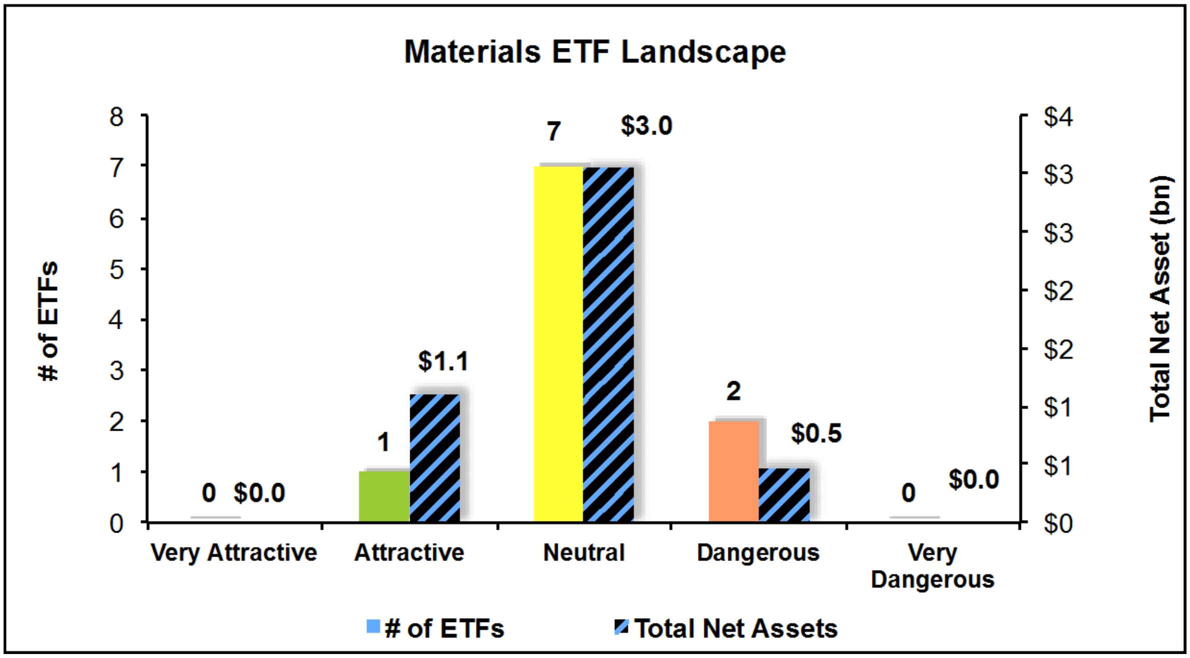
162 stocks of the 3000+ we cover are classified as Materials stocks.

Westlake Chemical Corp (WLK: $47/share) is one of our favorite stocks held by Materials ETFs and mutual funds and earns a Very Attractive rating. Over the past five years, Westlake has grown after-tax profits (NOPAT) by 22% compounded annually. Over the same time period, WLK's NOPAT margins increased from 8% to 15%. The company's return on invested capital (ROIC) has improved from 8% in 2010 to a top-quintile 15% in 2015. Despite the profit growth, WLK is down 28% over the past two years, which has left shares undervalued. At its current price of $47/share, Westlake has a price-to-economic book value (PEBV) ratio of 0.9. This ratio means that the market expects Westlake's NOPAT to permanently decline by 10% from its current level. If WLK can grow NOPAT by just 6% compounded annually for the next five years, the stock is worth $70/share today – a 49% upside.

Steel Dynamics (STLD: $24/share) is one of our least favorite stocks held by XME and earns a Dangerous rating. Over the past decade, Steel Dynamic's NOPAT has declined by 1% compounded annually. More alarming, the company's ROIC has fallen from 16% in 2005 to a bottom-quintile 4% in 2015. Steel Dynamics has failed to generate positive economic earnings in any of the past seven years, which further highlights the deterioration of the business. However, STLD remains overvalued, and market expectations are too high. To justify its current price of $24/share, Steel Dynamics must grow NOPAT by 16% compounded annually for the next 16 years. Given the decline in profits over the past decade, this expectation seems overly optimistic.

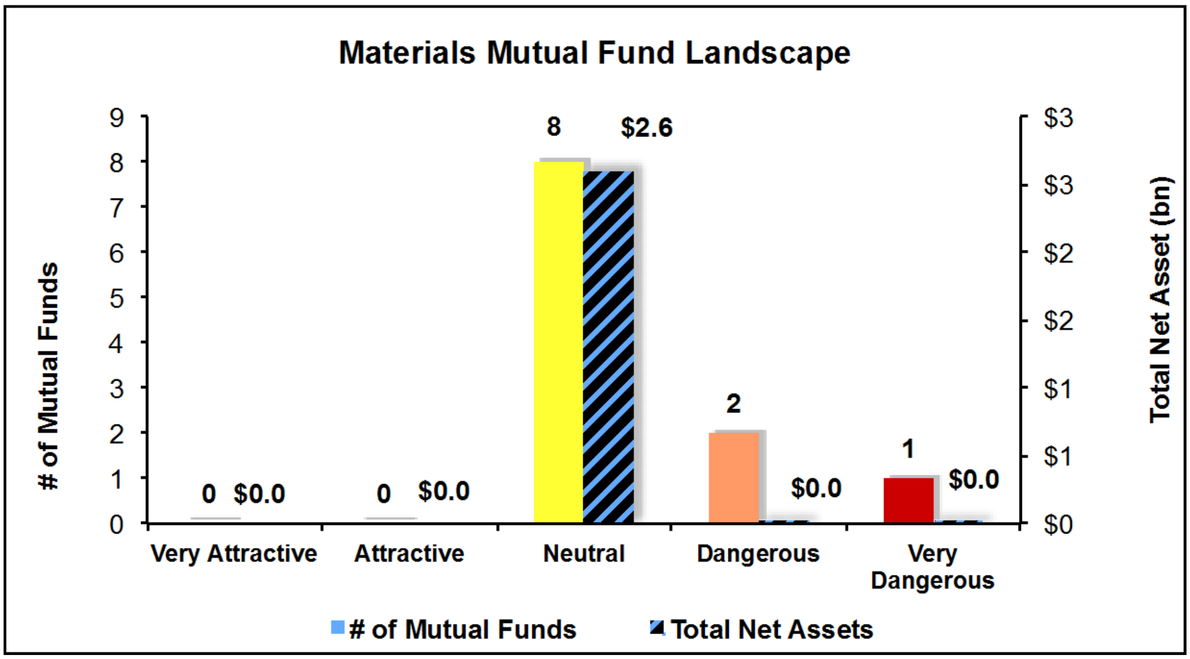
Figures 3 and 4 show the rating landscape of all Materials ETFs and mutual funds.

Figure 3: Separating the Best ETFs From the Worst ETFs



Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Figure 4: Separating the Best Mutual Funds From the Worst Mutual Funds



Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Disclosure: David Trainer and Kyle Guske II receive no compensation to write about any specific stock, sector or theme.

New Constructs® – Profile

How New Constructs Creates Value for Clients

We find it. You benefit. Cutting-edge technology enables us to scale our forensic accounting expertise across 3000+ stocks. We shine a light in the dark corners of SEC filings so our clients can make safer, more informed decisions.

Our stock rating methodology instantly informs you of the quality of the business and the fairness of the stock's valuation. We do the diligence on earnings quality and valuation so you don't have to.

In-depth risk/reward analysis underpins our ratings. Our rating methodology grades every stock, ETF, and mutual fund according to what we believe are the 5 most important criteria for assessing the quality of an equity. Each grade reflects the balance of potential risk and reward of buying that equity. Our analysis results in the 5 ratings described below. Very Attractive and Attractive correspond to a "Buy" rating, Very Dangerous and Dangerous correspond to a "Sell" rating, while Neutral corresponds to a "Hold" rating.

QUESTION: Why shouldn't fund research be as good as stock research? Why should fund investors rely on backward-looking price trends?

ANSWER: They should not.

Don't judge a fund by its cover. Take a look inside at its holdings and understand the quality of earnings and valuation of the stocks it holds. We enable you to choose the best fund based on its stock-picking merits so you do not have to rely solely on backward-looking technical metrics.

The drivers of our forward-looking fund ratings are Portfolio Management (i.e. the aggregated ratings of its holdings) and Total Annual Costs. The Total Annual Costs Rating (details here) captures the all-in cost of being in a fund over a 3-year holding period, the average period for all fund investors.

Our Philosophy About Research

Accounting data is not designed for equity investors, but for debt investors. Accounting data must be translated into economic earnings to understand the profitability and valuation relevant to equity investors. Respected investors (e.g. Adam Smith, Warren Buffett and Ben Graham) have repeatedly emphasized that accounting results should not be used to value stocks. Economic earnings are what matter because they are:

1. Based on the complete set of financial information available.
2. Standard for all companies.
3. A more accurate representation of the true underlying cash flows of the business.

Additional Information

Incorporated in July 2002, New Constructs is an independent publisher of investment research that provides clients with consulting and research services. We specialize in quality-of-earnings, forensic accounting and discounted cash flow valuation analyses for all U.S. public companies. We translate accounting data from 10Ks into economic financial statements, i.e. NOPAT, Invested Capital, and WACC, to create economic earnings models, which are necessary to understand the true profitability and valuation of companies. Visit the Free Archive to download samples of our research. New Constructs is a BBB accredited business and a member of the Investorside Research Association.

DISCLOSURES

New Constructs®, LLC (together with any subsidiaries and/or affiliates, "New Constructs") is an independent organization with no management ties to the companies it covers. None of the members of New Constructs' management team or the management team of any New Constructs' affiliate holds a seat on the Board of Directors of any of the companies New Constructs covers. New Constructs does not perform any investment or merchant banking functions and does not operate a trading desk.

New Constructs' Stock Ownership Policy prevents any of its employees or managers from engaging in Insider Trading and restricts any trading whereby an employee may exploit inside information regarding our stock research. In addition, employees and managers of the company are bound by a code of ethics that restricts them from purchasing or selling a security that they know or should have known was under consideration for inclusion in a New Constructs report nor may they purchase or sell a security for the first 15 days after New Constructs issues a report on that security.

DISCLAIMERS

The information and opinions presented in this report are provided to you for information purposes only and are not to be used or considered as an offer or solicitation of an offer to buy or sell securities or other financial instruments. New Constructs has not taken any steps to ensure that the securities referred to in this report are suitable for any particular investor and nothing in this report constitutes investment, legal, accounting or tax advice. This report includes general information that does not take into account your individual circumstance, financial situation or needs, nor does it represent a personal recommendation to you. The investments or services contained or referred to in this report may not be suitable for you and it is recommended that you consult an independent investment advisor if you are in doubt about any such investments or investment services.

Information and opinions presented in this report have been obtained or derived from sources believed by New Constructs to be reliable, but New Constructs makes no representation as to their accuracy, authority, usefulness, reliability, timeliness or completeness. New Constructs accepts no liability for loss arising from the use of the information presented in this report, and New Constructs makes no warranty as to results that may be obtained from the information presented in this report. Past performance should not be taken as an indication or guarantee of future performance, and no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made regarding future performance. Information and opinions contained in this report reflect a judgment at its original date of publication by New Constructs and are subject to change without notice. New Constructs may have issued, and may in the future issue, other reports that are inconsistent with, and reach different conclusions from, the information presented in this report. Those reports reflect the different assumptions, views and analytical methods of the analysts who prepared them and New Constructs is under no obligation to insure that such other reports are brought to the attention of any recipient of this report.

New Constructs' reports are intended for distribution to its professional and institutional investor customers. Recipients who are not professionals or institutional investor customers of New Constructs should seek the advice of their independent financial advisor prior to making any investment decision or for any necessary explanation of its contents.

This report is not directed to, or intended for distribution to or use by, any person or entity who is a citizen or resident of or located in any locality, state, country or jurisdiction where such distribution, publication, availability or use would be contrary to law or regulation or which would be subject New Constructs to any registration or licensing requirement within such jurisdiction.

This report may provide the addresses of websites. Except to the extent to which the report refers to New Constructs own website material, New Constructs has not reviewed the linked site and takes no responsibility for the content therein. Such address or hyperlink (including addresses or hyperlinks to New Constructs own website material) is provided solely for your convenience and the information and content of the linked site do not in any way form part of this report. Accessing such websites or following such hyperlink through this report shall be at your own risk.