



HUMANITARIAN WORKING GROUP (GTH-OIREN)

Call for consolidated action by all stakeholders to help 3.3 million people facing an early hunger gap and soaring food prices in 2023.

ADVOCACY NOTE

Call for consolidated action by all stakeholders to help 3.3 million people facing an early hunger gap and soaring food prices in 2023.

The purpose of this note is to draw the attention of humanitarian and development actors to the urgent need for coordinated action in the face of the coming lean season, the effects of which could further weaken vulnerable communities as the security, health, food, nutrition and climate crises in Niger overlap.

Precarious situation in Niger, urgent action to cope with the lean period.

Niger continues to face high levels of food insecurity, with two million people having irregular access to safe and nutritious food in the last quarter of 2022. According to data from the

March ²⁰²³¹, the situation is likely to worsen during the next lean season, from June to August 2023, potentially affecting 3.2 million women, men and children, or 12.6% of the total population, unless urgent measures are ^{taken}². In 2023, humanitarian needs will remain high due to conflict, forced population displacement, food insecurity, child malnutrition and epidemics. According to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) ²⁰²³³, 4.3 million people will need humanitarian assistance, an increase of 14% compared to 2022. This increase can be explained by the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in new departments in the regions of Tillabéri, Tahoua and Maradi, but also by the after-effects of the 2021-2022 food crisis. The 2023 HRP targets 2.7 million people for urgent humanitarian aid, i.e. just over 60% of those estimated to be in need.

Insecurity in certain areas has led to multiple population displacements. The vulnerability of displaced people and refugees can be seen from their original economic profile. For the most part, they are farmers, herders (N'guigmi and Tillia) or fishermen (N'guigmi). Traumatized by the violent events they witnessed or suffered, most of them left, leaving their livelihoods behind. This situation has exacerbated the vulnerability of displaced persons and refugees, but also of the host populations, through various factors. In addition, interviews conducted in the departments of N'guigmi (Diffa) and Tillia (Tahoua) revealed that both the host populations and the IDPs/refugees have seen their agricultural production capacity reduced or even annihilated in these localities, due to the difficulty of moving outside villages or the lack of access to arable land for refugees and IDPs. *ACF (Oct. 2022) Impact of the security situation on access to social services for the populations of the departments of N'Guigmi and Tillia.*

Violence against civilians and threats from non-state armed groups have forced many households and communities to move against their will to more secure areas. The presence of these internally displaced people, refugees or returnees in the host areas has significantly increased the pressure on natural resources, infrastructure and basic social services. *(National strategy for sustainable solutions, Niger, May 2023).*

¹ https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/ch/Fiche_com_Mars_2023_VF.pdf

² "Don't abandon Niger" - Ambassador Cindy McCain calls for increased donor support amid growing food insecurity - Niger | ReliefWeb.

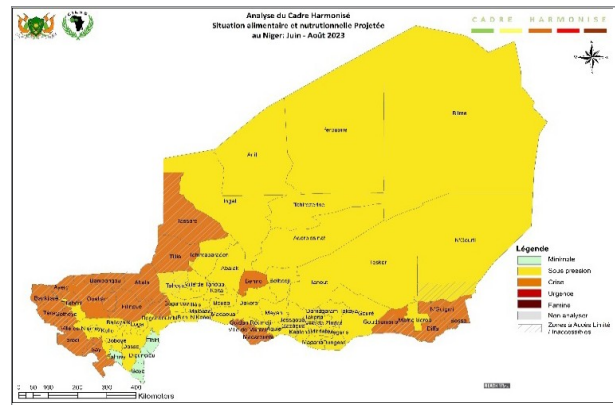
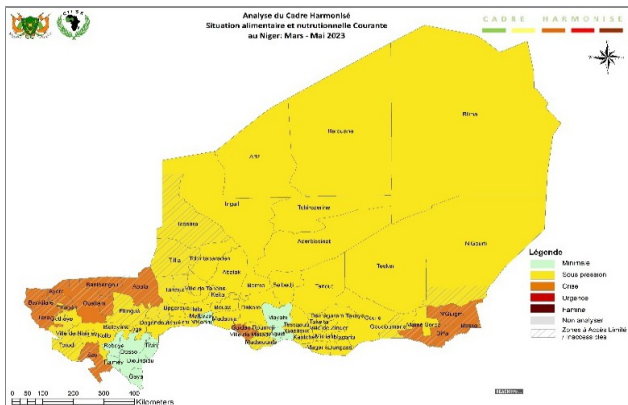
³ <https://response.reliefweb.int/niger>.

Very critical food and nutrition situation.

The SMART (*Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition*) results for October 2022⁴ confirm that the nutritional situation remains worrying. Between January and September 2022, almost 300,000 children under the age of five suffering from severe acute malnutrition were admitted for treatment (62% of the annual target), including 12% of cases with medical complications⁵. The global acute malnutrition rate is 12.2% (compared with 12.5% in 2021), of which 2.4% suffer from severe acute malnutrition (a rate higher than the emergency rate of 2%) and 9.8% from moderate acute malnutrition. In the Dogon-Doutchi department (Dosso region), acute malnutrition in children under 5 has reached a prevalence rate of 16.1%, exceeding the emergency threshold of 15%.

At the end of the March 2023 Harmonised Framework analysis in Niger: 2 454 354 people are food insecure (phase 3 and +) and 398 060 people are under pressure (phase 2). In the projected phase (June to August 2023), it is estimated that almost 3.3 million people will be food insecure (phase 3 and above) and 7,341,355 people will be under pressure (phase 2). This poses a major challenge for the State and humanitarian actors to take urgent measures to help communities mitigate the shock.

The tables below give more details of the areas affected in the current and projected situations.



Staggering rise in food prices.

Sahelian communities rely on their own production as their main source of consumption. But with production falling as a result of the impact of climate change and the security crisis in most countries in the region, people are becoming more dependent on the markets, where prices are rising, for supplies of basic foodstuffs (cereals, tubers, pulses).

Prices of foodstuffs, particularly millet, continue to rise, at an average rate of 5 to 10% compared to 2021, but within a range of 10 to 25% compared to the five-year average. On markets such as those in Tillabéry and Tahoua, where insecurity has disrupted supply channels, the rise in average prices varies between 20% and 40% compared to the five-year average.⁶

⁴ <https://pnin-niger.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/RAPPORT-SMART-Niger-2022.pdf>
⁵ <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2022/12/1130962>
⁶ "Niger Price Bulletin, FEWS NET, February 2023".

Our fears if nothing is done.

The OIREN Humanitarian Working Group believes that if urgent and substantial action is not taken at the beginning of June and before the end of the lean season, the situation could deteriorate further.

Recommendations.

The alert data shows the urgent need for an immediate response to prevent the food and nutrition crisis from worsening. We therefore recommend

To the Government of Niger

- To provide a rapid response based on current needs, acting in a coordinated way with all humanitarian actors to ensure an appropriate response to the lean season,
- Ensuring security and access conducive to the redeployment and maintenance of basic social services in areas affected by food insecurity and crises,
- Increase the funds allocated to the national response plan by strengthening the mechanisms for mobilising resources dedicated to the humanitarian response,
- Monitor the implementation of the national response plan using inclusive and transparent mechanisms accessible to all stakeholders,
- Continue and step up the "sale of cereals at moderate prices" operation in areas with production shortfalls and areas under a state of emergency,

- Facilitate community awareness-raising campaigns on food security issues, using the national media - national TV and radio + community radio stations.

To our donors

- Ensuring sufficient and flexible funding for an appropriate humanitarian response that targets the factors exacerbating the food and nutrition crisis in Niger.

Technical and Financial Partners

- Provide immediate assistance (food, water, etc.) to vulnerable, destitute and displaced populations,
- Support communities to better develop their capacities and strategies for prevention, positive adaptation and resilience to regular crises and shocks, and to preserve their livelihoods,
- Continue and strengthen measures to prevent and treat acute malnutrition in areas where alert rates are reported,
- Maintain the "do no harm" principle and the "conflict sensitivity" approach at the heart of the response.

To civil society players

- Continuing to raise community awareness of food security issues, stock management and the prevention of malnutrition.





FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Mohammed Chikhaoui

Coordinator-Representative | Humanitarian Working Group (GTH-OIREN) Niger
+227 80 07 00 48 | mohammed.chikhaoui@rescue.org

Djaffra TRAORE

Lead of the GTH Technical Advocacy Group / Advocacy Coordinator Action Contre la Faim Mission Niger
+227 81 51 51 60 | djtraore@ne.acfspain.org