



WFP Niger Country Strategic Plan (2020-2024) Proposal to the Government of Belgium

Country:	Niger
Executing Agency	World Food Programme
Project Title:	Provide emergency cash assistance to crisis-affected populations (refugees, IDPs, Host Communities and returnees)
Total Budget of Proposal:	EUR 1,000,000
Project sites:	Nationwide Niger
Estimated Number of Beneficiaries:	6,511
Project Duration:	12 months
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1. Description of context

Niger is a land-locked, low-income country in the Sahel. The country faces insecurity, a protection crisis, recurring climate shocks (drought and floods), epidemics, endemic poverty, and a lack of access to basic social services. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased from 2.3 million in 2018 to 4.3 million in 2023 (17 % of Niger's population), with 2.7 million people targeted for assistance this year.

According to Cadre Harmonisé March 2023, 3.3 million people (13 % of Niger's population) are acutely food insecure during the June-August 2023 lean season¹. This is the second highest projection since the inception of the Cadre Harmonisé analysis in 2012 and follows last year's unprecedented food crisis, where 4.4 million people faced acute food insecurity. In addition, the country continues to face very high rates of malnutrition. The prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) among children is 12.2% (well above WHO's emergency threshold of >10%) and the prevalence of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is 2.4%.

There is growing evidence of a link between conflict and food insecurity in Niger: 39% of the population in food insecurity phases 3 and 4 (1.1 million people) during the 2023 lean season are in hard-to-reach areas, even though these areas only host 18 percent of the population. The spillover from conflicts in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria continues to directly contribute to food insecurity in Niger, disrupting market activities and preventing farmers and pastoralists from accessing their lands and crops, leading to a growing livelihoods crisis, and increasing displacement. A new satellite-based analysis method developed by WFP shows that the area under cultivation in northern Tillabéri and the Lake Chad basin area (Diffa region) has decreased significantly due to conflict (see red dots on the maps below). It was found that between 2016 et 2022, over 17% of cropland was abandoned (25% and above estimated area loss) in zones affected by conflict and instability across the country.

¹ Résultats de l'analyse de l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle aiguë courante en mars-mai 2023 et projetée en juin-août 2023 : https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/ch/Fiche_com_Mars_2023_VF.pdf

Figure 1: Map of cropland area and security incidents in 2022 in Niger (Tillabery, Tahoua, and Dosso)

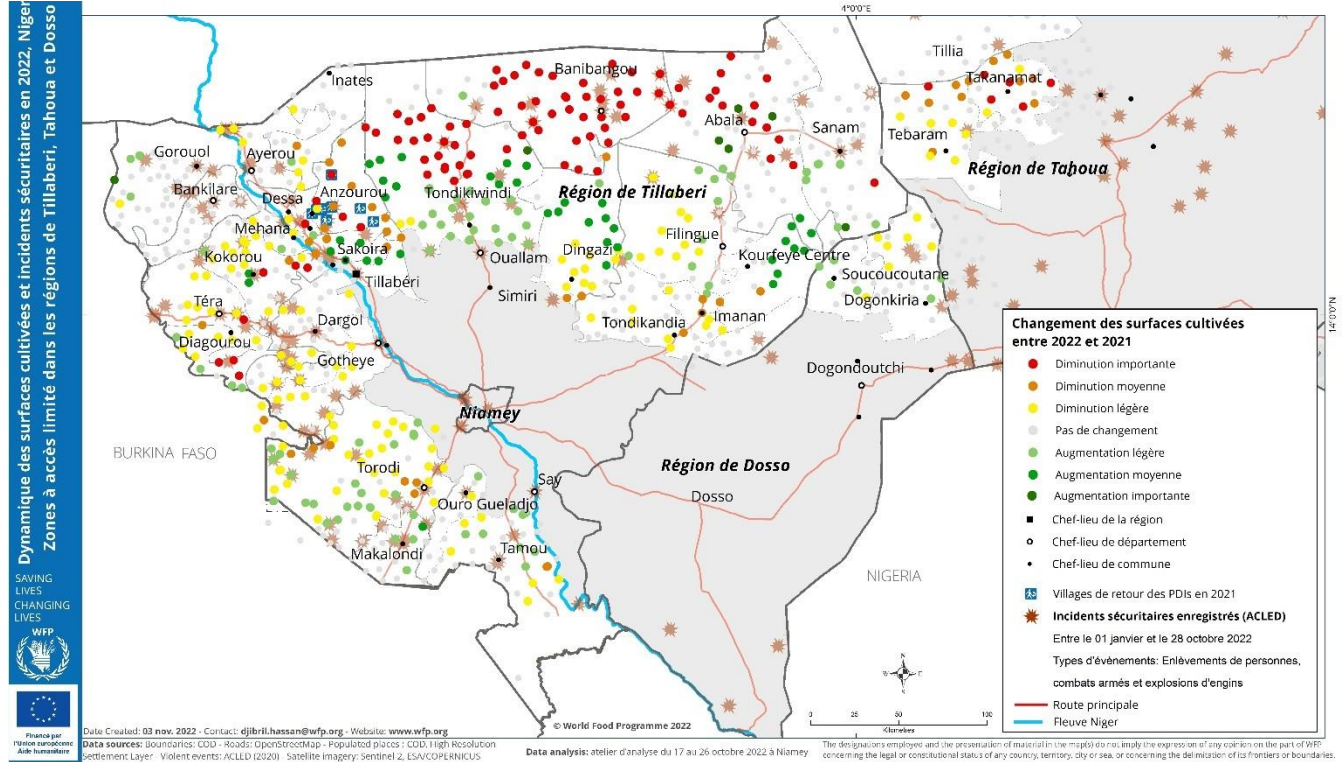
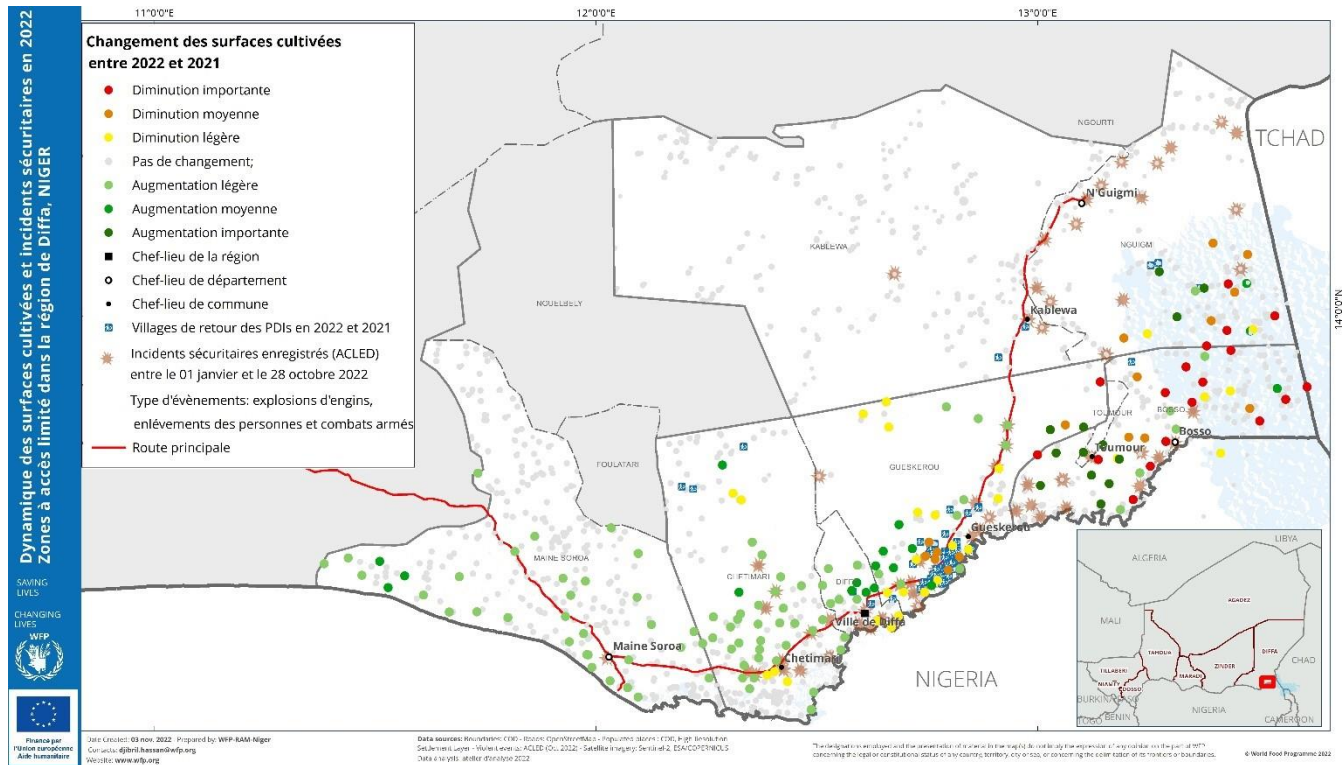


Figure 2: Map of cropland area and security incidents in 2022 in Niger (Diffa)



Rising displacement linked to the escalating conflict in neighboring countries and within Niger further drives humanitarian needs; 698,096 people are currently forcibly displaced in Niger, including 358,185 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 251,760 refugees, and 50,377 asylum seekers. There has been an 85 percent increase in internal displacement since 2019 alone. The humanitarian

situation is particularly concerning in the Agadez region, and especially in Assamaka, where more than 9,000 migrants in distress turned away from Algeria have arrived since January 2023. WFP and its implementing partner COOPI are currently assisting nearly 4,000 migrants stranded outside the IOM transit center and are getting ready to respond to potential new arrivals of migrants.

Since July 26th, the self-proclaimed National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP), a group of high-ranking militaries, has staged a coup and is claiming power. The situation in Niger is complex and fraught with tension but, despite the ongoing political instability, WFP is making all efforts to secure the continuation of life-saving food and nutrition assistance at scale as vulnerable communities enter the peak of the lean season, while sustaining critical resilience building and social cohesion activities. WFP and UNHAS continue to liaise with authorities for the authorization of additional exceptional flights and to resume regular UNHAS activities across Niger. This will enable the continuation of humanitarian assistance in the field and to secure MEDEVAC services. Regional sanctions and access restrictions may pose challenges to operations, but WFP will strive to maintain assistance and continuously monitor the impact on the food security and nutritional status of vulnerable communities.

2. Needs analysis

As mentioned, following the unprecedented food crisis experienced in 2022, the food security outlook for 2023 in Niger remains highly concerning, with 3.3 million people during the lean season (June – August) acutely food insecure according to the results of the March 2023 Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analysis.

Already since the start of the lean season, insufficient funding has forced WFP to establish a prioritization plan. The enacted measures imply drastic cuts in the number of food insecure individuals receiving WFP emergency food assistance (1.1 million instead of the planned 1.5 million), a reduction of the duration of lean season assistance (two months instead of three), and a reduction of rations provided to beneficiaries in protracted displacement during the lean season (maintained at 65% of the Minimum Expenditure Basket, instead of being increased to 80% during the lean season). A further reduction in food assistance is likely during the second semester and into the year 2024, should funding prospects not improve.

The shortfalls will inevitably compromise the impact of WFP’s food assistance on households’ food security and its ability to save lives and protect livelihoods, jeopardizing development gains. In 2021, WFP Niger was only able to assist over half of the planned beneficiaries during the lean season response, and with reduced rations. The impact on beneficiaries was clearly visible in the lean season post-distribution monitoring data, with endline levels of food insecurity being much higher compared to 2020, when there were not ration cuts. The percentage of households with an acceptable Food Consumption Score at the endline of the agricultural lean season was 46% in 2021, compared to 86% in 2020, while the % decrease in the average reduced coping strategies index (rCSI) was 52% in 2021 against a larger improvement of 82% in 2020. Drastic measures can raise protection concerns, potentially increasing tensions between refugees, IDPs and host communities, by straining competition for already limited resources. They can force the most vulnerable households to resort to severe negative coping mechanisms with long term repercussions, such as selling assets, withdrawing children from school, early child marriage, child labor, and sexual exploitation. Lastly, changes in ration sizes compared to what had been initially communicated to beneficiaries and local authorities may also increase security risks and mistrust towards WFP, its donors and partners. Against this background, early confirmation of funding is more critical than ever, as WFP is expecting needs – and related operational requirements – to increase in the coming weeks.

3. Description of the Project

Description of activities

WFP's emergency response activities are grouped under Strategic Outcome 1, Activity 1 of the CSP: “Provide an integrated package of food and nutrition assistance to crisis-affected people and during the lean season (refugees, internally displaced persons, host communities and returnees)”.

Through this contribution from Belgium, WFP intends to provide unconditional emergency assistance to 6,511 vulnerable people over a period of 12 months. The main activities under Activity I that will be funded are:

- Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) for IDPs for which the threshold for providing assistance under inter-agency multisectoral rapid response mechanism framework is 50 households and for vulnerable populations affected by floods.
- Protracted Emergency for refugees, host communities, and those affected by protracted acute food insecurity (i.e., the most vulnerable populations in CH phase 3 to 5 throughout the year) and post RRM assistance². From 2023 onwards, WFP’s emergency food rations are based on actual household needs as determined by a food gap analysis. This analysis varies between different beneficiary groups (refugees, protracted IDPs, recently displaced IDPs, lean season populations), depending on their access to productive assets, livelihoods, food stocks, and the timing (seasonality) of assistance.

Two Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)-based food gap analyses were completed in early 2023 in close coordination with the government (DNP-GCA), food security cluster, and UNHCR (for refugee caseloads). The ration sizes are informed by this gap analysis.

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Needs-based plan</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>RRM (recent/new IDP)</i>	Ration	100%	No food gap analysis has been carried out for RRM beneficiaries, as they are assumed to have no sources of income or food as they have been displaced less than 6 six months ago, and therefore require a 100% ration.
	Duration	3 months	
<i>Protracted (refugees + IDP + Host population)</i>	Ration	65% ³	Based on the food gap analysis carried out in February 2023 jointly with UNHCR and the WFP-UNHCR Global Programme and Targeting Hub, as part of the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) exercise carried out in 2022/23
	Duration	12 months	

WFP’s preferred transfer modality is cash wherever security conditions, market conditions, protection considerations, and cash/food pipeline allow. The decision to provide cash or food is done on a commune-by-commune basis, based on the most recent security and market conditions for that commune, so WFP cannot at this stage identify whether cash or food commodities will be provided to all targeted communes.

All cash transfers will be unrestricted cash for food. WFP does not use any food vouchers for emergency assistance. As part of the targeting and distribution processes, beneficiaries participate in numerous sensitization sessions to encourage beneficiaries to spend the cash on food.

WFP’s food assistance using food commodities is provided to affected populations via monthly food rations consisting of cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, salt, and fortified products. Food rations can be adjusted as per the availability or shortfalls of some commodities, including ration cuts and substitutions of certain products, to ensure the available resources are used in an optimal way while ensuring that beneficiaries continue to get an adequate level of nutrients.

Targeted areas

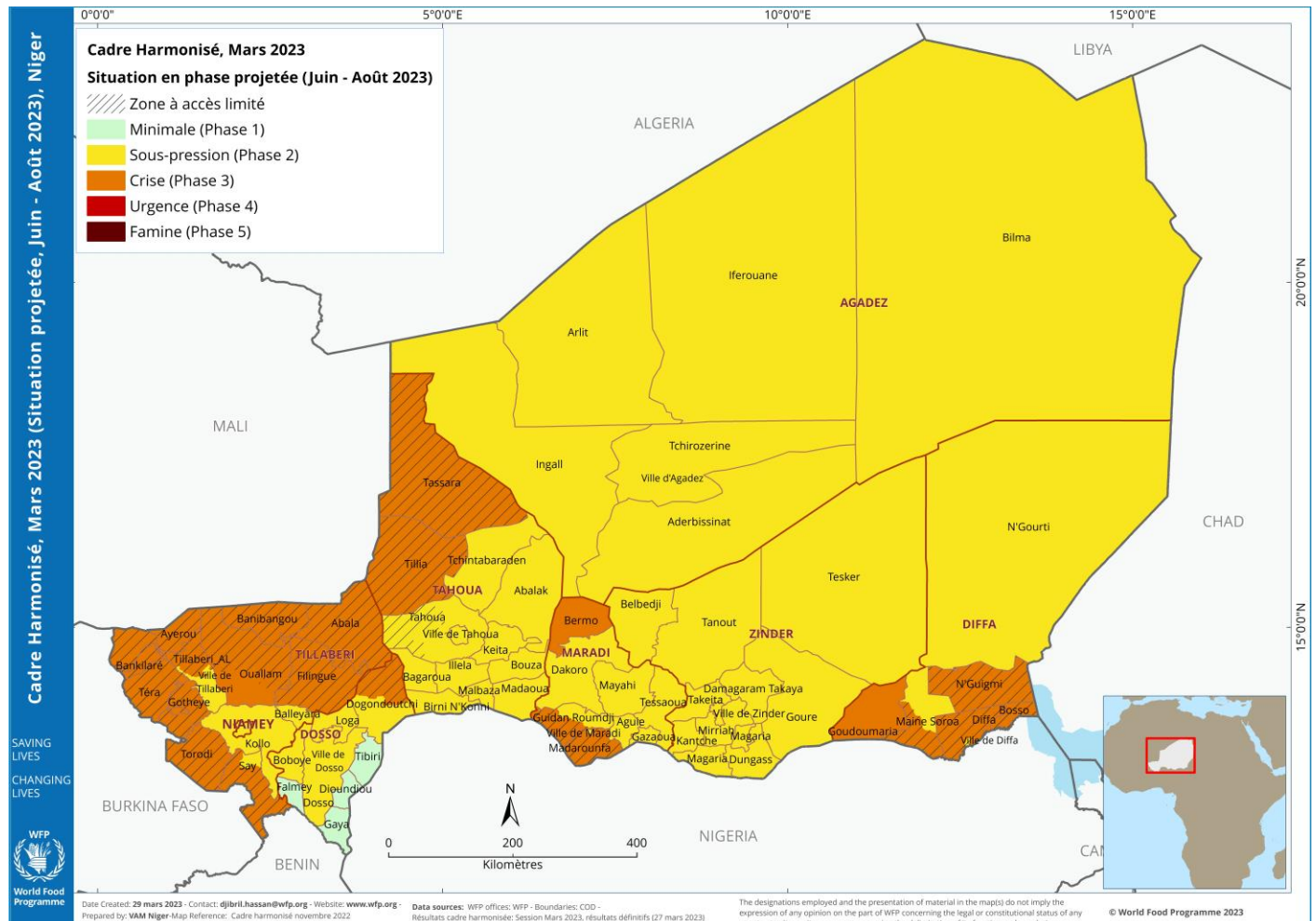
The communes targeted for this action will be identified using WFP’s standard geographic targeting protocol for emergency operations:

² WFP conducts a vulnerability targeting exercise (using HEA method, as described below), to identify those highly vulnerable beneficiaries who will continue to receive assistance and be integrated into the protracted caseload (we call this “post-RRM assistance”). RRM beneficiaries are not integrated into lean season caseloads.

³As mentioned above, funding shortfalls have forced WFP to maintain the protracted ration at 65% during the lean season, rather than increasing it to 80%.

- Communes targeted for the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), which supports recently displaced IDPs, are identified through the RRM consortium alert system, which activates an RRM response for each new wave of displacement.
- Communes supported with WFP’s protracted assistance programme are targeted at the beginning of the year based on the prevalence of insecurity and displaced populations.

Figure 3: Food insecurity projections for the period June-August 2023 as per the March 2023 CH Analysis, combined with WFP emergency intervention areas.



Beneficiary targeting

Except for the RRM which is status- (displacement-) based, all assisted households will be identified through a participatory community targeting approach based on the household economy approach (HEA). This approach categorizes all households in the targeted villages on the basis of their livelihoods and asset ownership. WFP emergency food assistance will target only those households classified as very poor. Targeting will pay specific attention to gender and protection aspects, in order to identify the most vulnerable households within the targeted communities, as well as refugees and IDPs households as the context evolves.

4. Programme Implementation and Coordination

Humanitarian coordination in Niger is led by the Office of the Prime Minister who coordinates activities through the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and Crisis Management for IDP, the Ministry of Interior’s General Directorate of Civil Registry and Refugees for Refugees, and the Dispositif National de Prévention et Gestion des Crises Alimentaires (DNP-GCA) which is responsible for food security and the coordination and implementation of relief activities. UN and NGO coordination is led by a Humanitarian Coordinator who is supported by mandated agencies and organizations through the Humanitarian Country Team. Within this structure, various working groups on CMCOORD, Access, Relocations, etc. have been established.

Anchored within the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food Security Cluster (FSC) is co-led by FAO, WFP, and a local NGO Alliance Contre la Faim et la Malnutrition. The Cluster currently serves as a platform to share information on food security and agriculture situations and coordinate the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) processes in Niger. WFP and FAO are jointly working on the national anchorage and TOR of the cluster to enhance its role as a key actor for the planning and decision making of FSC partners, including the government. Monthly meetings are organized at the regional and national levels with governmental partners, national and INGO, and UN agencies.

WFP has strong collaboration with local, regional, and national authorities in the areas of food security, nutrition, and vulnerability analysis. Annual vulnerability assessments are undertaken by the Government, with the technical and financial support of the European Union, WFP, UNICEF, FAO, UNDP, and Comité inter-État de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS).

WFP is a member of the coordination mechanisms in the framework of RRM. WFP provides timely, integrated, and protection-sensitive humanitarian assistance to crisis affected populations through the rapid response mechanism and the DNPGCCA to save lives and protect livelihoods. Through the RRM, WFP works with partners in Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua, and Tillabéri regions to address urgent food and nutritional needs and improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable households through a nexus approach following a shock resulting in a population movement. Together with other RRM partners, WFP coordinates the response on the ground to better distribute the intervention areas and avoid duplication.

The targeting is done through Multi-Sectoral Assessments (MSA) and targeting exercises conducted by RRM partners, which identified the vulnerable displaced people requiring immediate assistance. Generally, the targeting criteria for non-food interventions are used to inform eligibility for food assistance, given the strong relationship between food and non-food needs highlighted by the MSA. If required, food security-specific indicators can be included in the targeting exercise.

Every time the RRM framework is activated, WFP and the other RRM partners leverage each other complementarity to maximize the effectiveness of their response. The importance of RRM goes beyond the distribution of food, shelter, nonfood items, and others, as the immediate response triggers and facilitates the sequencing of other critical assistance modalities for newly displaced families. Thus, the RRM serves as an entry point to address different humanitarian needs.

WFP has a holistic approach to ensure integration and complementarity between different components of its program. Relief activities are designed in a way to ensure the gradual transition for early recovery and development activities. IDPs and refugees are provided with unconditional food assistance for an initial period of 3 months based on their status followed by assistance based on their vulnerability – depending on their level of vulnerability, post-emergency activities are either conditional or unconditional.

Due to the ongoing political instability, coordination with the various government authorities remains unclear and humanitarian access remains a challenge. Nevertheless, WFP is continuing life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities . WFP will strive to limit the impact of these operational challenges on beneficiaries given the criticality of sustaining support at the current peak of the lean season.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

WFP Niger's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework is aligned with WFP's corporate M&E requirements and aims to provide the necessary information on how WFP programmes are implemented, who receives assistance and what type of assistance they receive, and what impact this assistance has on beneficiaries. This is done through 3 distinct types of monitoring activities.

Process monitoring monitors the implementation of WFP activities, to ensure that they are carried out in a timely, efficient, and safe manner, in line with WFP and international humanitarian standards. This is done via daily field visits to project implementation sites by WFP field monitors, as well as third-party monitors (TPMs) for areas that WFP staff cannot access. All data is collected via tablets using standardized activity checklists and is transferred automatically to the Country Office's M&E unit in Niamey. In 2022, WFP monitoring staff/ TPMs monitored over 5,100 sites on the ground (compared to 3 140 sites in 2021), across all of its operations.

Monitoring findings are used to identify issues such as inadequate food storage conditions in nutrition centres or school canteens, insufficient beneficiary sensitizations on the community feedback mechanism (CFM), late payments of community extension workers in charge of nutrition sensitization outreach, etc. The findings are presented weekly at the sub-office level for immediate action and are synthesized in quarterly reports shared with the entire country office – including senior management.

Output monitoring aims to capture the number of beneficiaries reached and amounts of cash/ food/ nutritional products distributed, as well as the assets created through food-for-asset or other livelihood activities. Output data on food/ cash distributions and malnutrition prevention are captured monthly through beneficiary distribution reports, logistics commodity delivery documents (for in-kind food assistance), and financial service provider distribution reports (for cash assistance). Data on assets/ income created through food-for-asset or other livelihood activities are collected by WFP’s cooperating partners in each project site.

Outcome monitoring seeks to measure the impact of WFP’s interventions on beneficiaries and communities, in terms of food security, nutrition, livelihoods, social cohesion, access to natural resources, etc. Data is collected via household surveys conducted remotely by phone or in person. Separate baseline and end line surveys are conducted for each emergency activity (protracted, RRM, lean season). Outcome monitoring allows WFP to measure the progress made and adjust activities as needed and inform WFP’s overall programming strategy (including targeting approaches, ration sizes, the timing of assistance, etc.).

Market Monitoring

WFP works with the national market monitoring agency (SIMA) to collect prices of 46 food items in 76 markets across the entire country, every month. This regular monitoring feeds into the national price database as well as WFP’s global price monitoring system. Compared with last year (June 2022), cereal and pulse prices are lower (-7% for millet and -36% for cowpea), while NKP fertilizer and urea prices have risen by 12% and 7% respectively. However, staple prices remain much higher than normal, if compared to the average of the last five years, in line with global inflation trends, linked to increased fuel and transport prices, and reduced supply of key global commodities such as wheat, vegetable oil, sugar, etc. linked to the Ukraine crisis.

Figure 4: Map of the gap between millet prices in June 2023 and the average price in June over the past 5 years, highlighting the seasonal price anomaly.

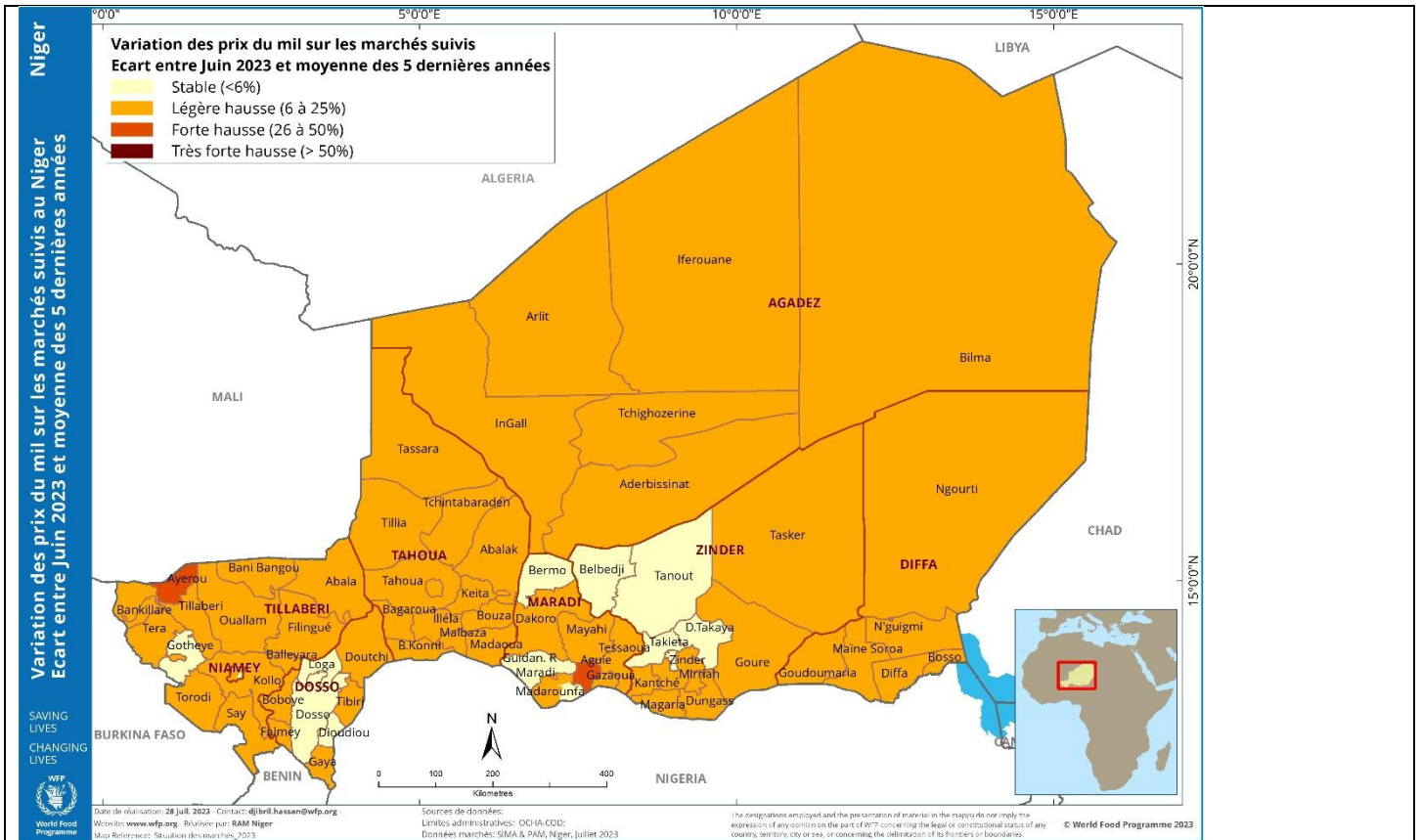


Figure 5: Percentage of standard food basket (covering 65% of daily caloric needs) that can be bought locally given market prices in June 2023 with 26 000 XOF per household per month (“Protracted” Ration)

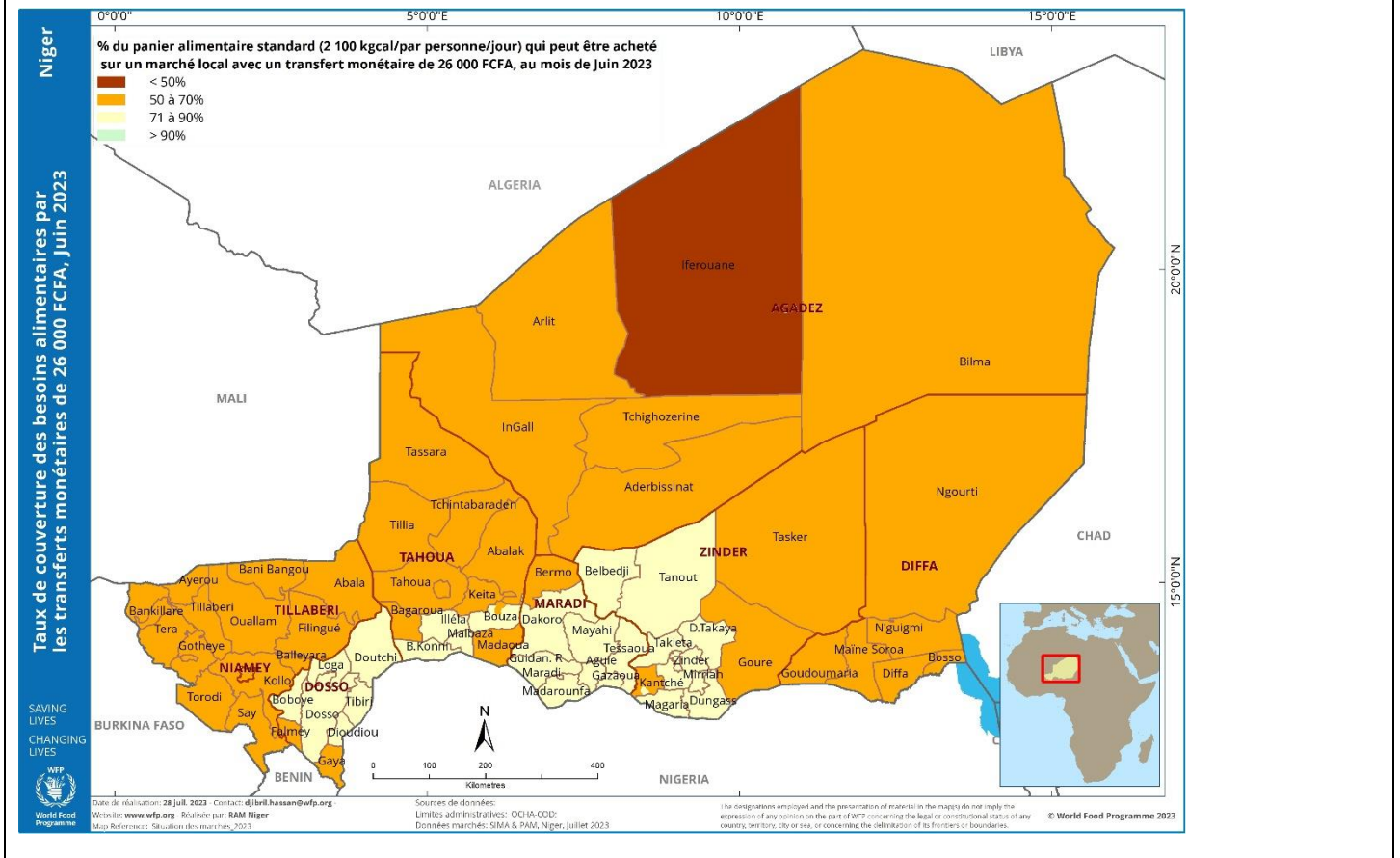
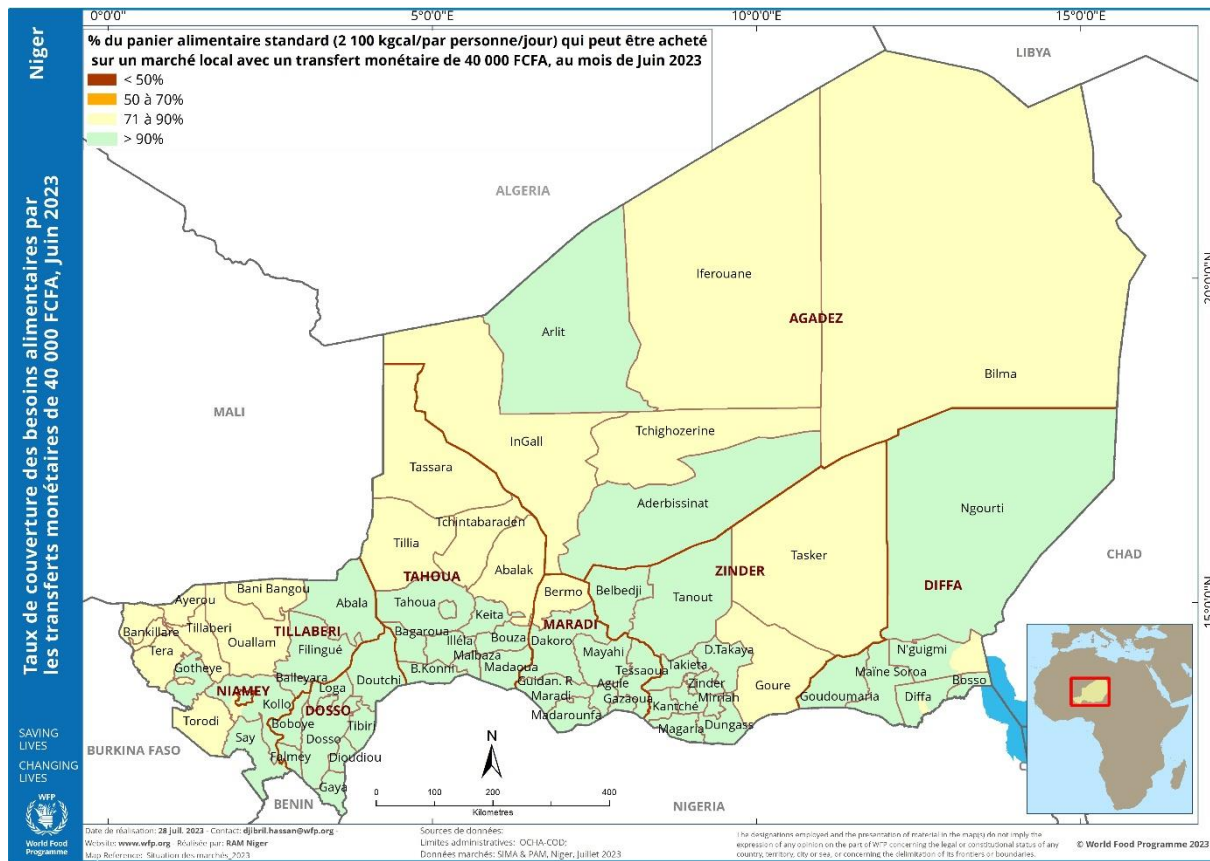


Figure 6: Percentage of standard food basket (covering 100% of daily caloric needs) that can be bought locally given market prices in June 2023 with 40 000 XOF per household per month (RRM Ration)



6. Reporting and visibility

WFP publishes the Annual Country Report (ACR) by the end of the first quarter of every year for each of its operations. As such, this contribution will be officially reported in the 2023 and 2024 ACR, expected to be published in March 2024 and March 2025, respectively. The ACR is the principle means through which WFP informs donors of how resources for given projects were obtained, utilized, and accounted for during the preceding year.

WFP also disseminates monthly country briefs, external situation reports, and external dashboards that showcase current achievements, challenges, and needs pertaining to WFP's assistance to its beneficiaries in Niger.

Representatives from the Government of Belgium may also be kept informed of the evolution of WFP operations in Niger through exchanges or bilateral meetings with WFP at the country level as well as the facilitation of field visits upon request.

Visibility: WFP is committed to pursuing its donor visibility strategy to acknowledge the contribution and thank the people of Belgium for their generosity. WFP will aim to ensure visibility for the Belgian Government's funding, and demonstrate its impact, through various media platforms, regular local donor bulletins, and annual reports. The logo of the Government of Belgium will be placed on WFP reports and all visibility materials, as appropriate, along with other donors. Banners and posters with donor logos will be displayed on WFP leaflets to ensure that beneficiaries are aware of the assistance provided by the Government of Belgium.

- **Social media posts:** posts will tag Belgium's official accounts on social media and will range from photos to infographics to videos. The aim of the posts will be to convey Belgium's contributions in a human-centric way, bringing forward stories that do not necessarily always mention assistance directly but instead focus on humanising communities by amplifying their voices and featuring 'relatable' narratives. Posts announcing and acknowledging the contribution will also be made.
- **Media mentions:** Belgium's contributions will be mentioned when conducting media interviews (when appropriate).

- **Field visits:** organizing joint visits to specific sites across Niger, whether simply with donors or with media accompanying the team. However, the sensitivity of the situation in Niger (conflicts/insecurity) must be taken into consideration before moving forward with any on-site visits and visibility.
- Support from the Government of Belgium will also be highlighted in above mentioned communication channels, when appropriate. WFP will also provide visibility photographs and beneficiary stories to the Embassy of Belgium.

7. Budget

The total budget needs from July to the end of the year (December 2023) under the emergency response component of WFP Niger CSP are currently valued at USD 32 million but could increase as a result of the current situation.

Breakdown budget of the contribution from Belgium:

Activity Costs Summary	USD	EURO
Transfer	914,913	825,251
Implementation Costs	81,244	73,282
Direct Operating Costs (DOC)	996,156	898,533
Direct Support Costs (DSC)	44,827	40,434
Total Direct Costs	1,040,984	938,967
Indirect Support Cost (ISC)	67,664	61,033
Grant Total Activity Costs	1,108,647	1,000,000