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Investing in rural people in **Niger**

Niger covers a landlocked 1,267,000 km² tract of the Sahel north of Nigeria. With a poverty rate of 48.9 per cent and income per capita of US\$420, Niger is one of the world's poorest nations. In 2015, it ranked last among 188 countries measured by the United Nations Human Development Index.

Its population was estimated in 2016 at 19.8 million, growing at 3.9 per cent a year, one of the fastest rates in the world. Niger is prone to political instability, chronic food insecurity, droughts, floods and locust infestations.

Uranium and oil production are cornerstones of the economy, but agriculture is an important source of export earnings. Niger's climate is hot and arid. Farming centres on small-scale family farms that produce both rainfed cereals and vegetables and irrigated crops, including onions, sesame and cow peas. Animal husbandry (mainly camels, cows and small ruminants) play an important role in Niger's farming system.

Recurrent droughts are damaging natural resources, animal production and cereal yields, which are forecast to fall unless production systems are adapted to climate change.

Yet cereal, horticultural and animal productivity could be substantially increased by adopting improved cropping techniques, adapted seeds and breeds, animal-drawn ploughing, better irrigation techniques and other innovations.

This would enable rural families to produce enough for household consumption and a surplus for sale, while at the same time improving their resilience to climate change. Already, irrigated cropping is increasing and now accounts for 30 per cent of farm production and 90 per cent of agricultural exports.

Eradicating rural poverty in Niger



Niger's economy is closely linked to the mining and agropastoral sectors. The major challenge in this context is to develop effective, pro-poor strategies benefiting the most economically vulnerable populations, such as rural women and young people. The government's Economic and Social Development Plan 2017-2021 aims to increase GDP growth, contain debt, invest in social sectors and raise living standards. The plan has the following eight priorities:

- Promote cultural "renaissance"
- Continue the consolidation of democratic institutions
- Ensure the security of people and goods
- Guarantee access to water for all
- Ensure food and nutritional security through the 3N Initiative
- Develop communication and energy infrastructures
- Develop the social sector: education and health
- Promote youth employment.

The national strategy for achieving food security and sustainable agricultural development known as "les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens", or the 3Ns Initiative, aims to strengthen national capacities for food production, supply and resilience to food crises and natural disasters. In fact, achieving food sovereignty through implementation of the 3Ns Initiative is the government's top priority, as established in its June 2011 General Policy Statement. To this end, the strategy focuses on the following areas:

- Growing and diversifying agricultural, forestry, livestock and fisheries production
- Supporting urban and rural markets for small-scale producers
- Boosting vulnerable groups' resilience to climate change, food crises and natural disasters
- Improving the nutritional status of Nigeriens
- Maintain the momentum of reforms involving food security and sustainable agricultural development.

This national effort is integrated with subregional policies on rural development and food security, including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the agricultural policies of the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

IFAD's strategy in Niger

Since 1980, IFAD has financed 12 operations in Niger, one of which is ongoing. IFAD's interventions in the country have worked to strengthen the capacities and coping mechanisms of small-scale rural producers, with an emphasis on the most marginalized socio-economic groups. Based on a model of sustainable family farming, IFAD supports efforts to ensure food security and strengthen the resilience of rural households by intensifying and diversifying production, post-production and marketing activities.

Projects: 12
Total cost: US\$556.5 million
Approved IFAD financing:
US\$255.4 million
Directly benefiting: 1,023,200 households

The country strategic opportunities programme targets 195,000 rural households totalling approximately 1.4 million people. Its main strategic objectives are:

- Sustainably increase production by small producers in the agriculture, forestry and pastoralist sectors
- Improve smallholders' post-production and marketing activities
- Strengthen the social capital of poor rural people, making local institutions and commercial activities more sustainable.

This approach is based on successful participatory interventions that IFAD has supported in the past, working with smallholder farmers and pastoralists in Niger to adopt sustainable agrarian systems; secure access to land, water and other natural resources; sustainably manage those resources; and build the capacities of smallholders, implementing partners and service providers.

Over time, IFAD has also integrated a range of complementary and cross-cutting themes into its country programme, including:

- Adaptation of smallholder agriculture to climate change
- Economic empowerment and social advancement of women and young people
- Development of inclusive financing mechanisms
- Support for nutrition and the prevention of food crises
- Marketing strategies enabling the flow of trade from centres of production to areas of consumption at competitive prices.

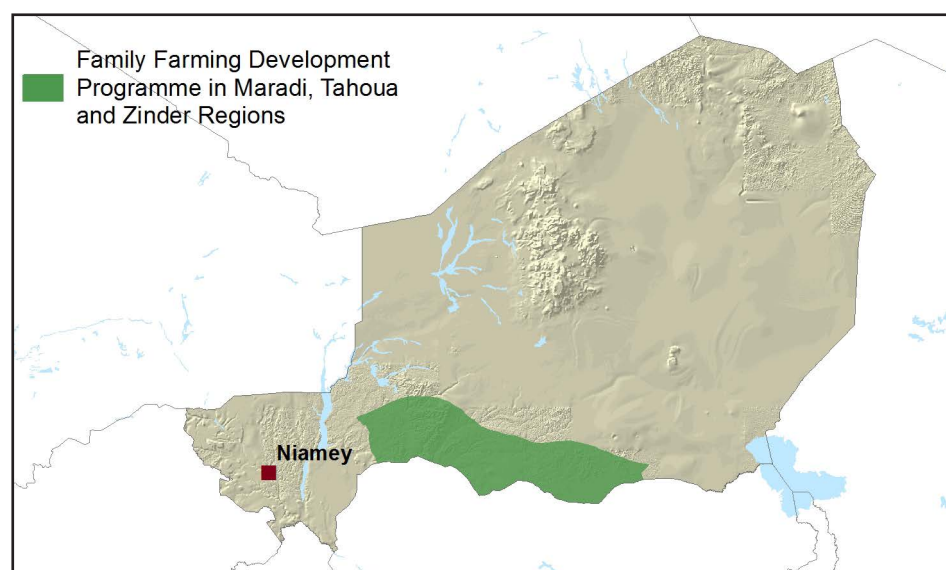
Ongoing operation

Family Farming Development Programme in Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder Regions

The programme's general objective is to help sustainably guarantee food and nutrition security and rural households' resilience to crises in the Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder regions. The development objective is to sustainably increase the income of 240,000 family farms, their resilience to external shocks, including climate change, and their access to local, urban and regional markets in the three regions.

In the programme area some 2,030,000 people – or 290,000 households – are involved in agro-sylvo-pastoral activities. ProDAF focuses particularly on 240,000 vulnerable family farms.

Total cost: US\$231.2 million
Approved IFAD loan: US\$24.2 million
Approved IFAD grant: US\$24.2 million
IFAD Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP): US\$13.0 million
Duration: 2015-2023
Cofinancing: OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID): US\$15.0 million; Global Environmental Facility: US\$ 7.64 million; OFID (loan): US\$3.8 million; Italian Cooperation (loan): US\$28.2 million; Ongoing IFAD projects (loan): US\$10.5 million
Directly benefiting: 290,000 households



The programme also targets two demographic groups: women and young people. Among the latter, special attention will be paid to young women particularly affected by early marriage. Women and young people must respectively represent at least 30 per cent of the beneficiaries of all programme activities.

The ProDAF approach is based on the following three principles of intervention:

- Improvement of food and nutrition security
- Territorial continuity of operations through the economic development pole
- Scaling up of current project activities of IFAD and its partners.

Planned operation

Family Farming Development Programme (ProDAF) in Diffa Region

The goal of this project is to raise the incomes and improve the food security of 20,000 rural households of which 30 per cent are refugees' households in Diffa region of Niger. Specifically, the project aims to contribute to:

- A sustainable increase in the productivity of irrigated areas, and strengthened local capacity to manage water resources
- Better transportation and marketing of products generated by small-scale irrigation.

The target group includes smallholder agro-pastoral farmers; vulnerable households with no land and no access to valley plots; grassroots producers' organizations; and rural communes implementing local development activities. The project stipulates that direct beneficiaries should be women and young people.

Total cost: US\$18.5 million

Approved IFAD loan: US\$6.2 million

Approved IFAD grant: US\$6.2 million

Duration: 2018-2023

Cofinancing: The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (grant): US\$3.6 million; Government of Niger: US\$2.2 million; Beneficiaries: US\$0.1 million

IFAD has invested in rural people for 40 years, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, we have provided US\$20.2 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached about 476 million people. IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency based in Rome – the UN's food and agriculture hub.

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Investing in rural people

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July 2018