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ABSTRACT

A land-locked Sahelo-Saharan country, Niger is faced with very difficult climatic conditions. Unlike the neighbouring Sahelian countries, the Sudanian zone (with a rainfall above 600 mm a year) is virtually non-existent in Niger, which restricts its agricultural potential. Less than 12 percent of the country is arable land. Across the years the food situation has become increasingly worrying because of desertification, over-exploitation of land, recurrent drought and demographic growth which outstrips agricultural production. It is in this difficult context that WFP has been operating in Niger since 1971.

In accordance with the Country Strategy Note (CSN) drawn up by the Government jointly with the United Nations system, WFP's strategy over the next four years will hinge around three types of activities: rural development, education and public health. The objective of the strategy is to encourage agricultural production while protecting the ecological heritage through food-for-work activities, to increase the mother and child health care coverage and to encourage young girls in the nomadic/transhumant environment to attend school. The WFP programme activities will focus on the three most vulnerable regions, with particular attention to the targeting of women. It is estimated that over the next four years (1999-2002) the programme will require a total of 63,500 tons of food.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Niger ranks at the bottom out of the 174 countries listed in the UNDP Human Development Index because of its sharp slump since the eighties. This country is judged to be one of the least developed countries (LDCs) by the United Nations and one of the low-income, food-deficit countries (LIFDC) according to FAO. The school attendance rate is only 27 percent for primary schools, and only 20 percent in the case of girls. The adult literacy rate is only 12 percent on average (eight percent for women), one child in four dies before the age of five, and one child in three suffers from chronic malnutrition. Life expectancy at birth is only 46 years, and the annual per capita income is 270 dollars.¹
2. The first structural adjustment programme implemented in 1983 did not manage to revive the economy. Between 1985 and 1994 the per capita gross national product (GNP) fell by 2.1 percent a year. Moreover, Niger does not seem to have benefited at all from the devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994, firstly because the trade balance has widened, and secondly because Niger's competitiveness against the commodities of Nigeria, with which 45 percent of its trade is transacted, was short-lived. From the end of August 1994, the CFAF-naira exchange rate returned to the level it was before the devaluation thanks to economic measures adopted by the Nigerian authorities. The economic crisis became acute in the nineties because of the considerable external debt burden and cashflow difficulties, especially with regard to delays in paying civil servants' salaries and the backlog of payments due from the Government to public enterprises.

FOOD INSECURITY, POVERTY AND HUNGER

Food insecurity at the national level

3. Food insecurity in Niger has continued to grow through the years. For several years now the food deficit has become a structural phenomenon because of a 3.3 percent population growth rate outstripping agricultural production. Coupled with the problems of desertification and over-exploitation of the land, this is creating a constant state of food insecurity throughout the country, affecting over two thirds of its population of 9.2 million, of whom an enormous number suffer from malnutrition. There are three types of food insecurity in Niger: a) chronic food insufficiency, affecting a substantial part of the population, and stunting the growth of children and making them underweight; b) seasonal food insufficiency during the lean period, when many peasants no longer have any cereals and food prices are very high; c) food insufficiency due to widespread and acute shortages as a result of natural disasters such as drought.
4. As the most important sector in Niger's economy, agriculture accounts for 40 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) and employs over 80 percent of the labour force. It is concentrated in the south of the country over a stretch of 200 kilometres, crossing from east to west. The country has 15 million hectares of arable land, or 12 percent of the whole territory. The basic crops are cereals (two million tons a year) and sorghum (300,000 tons a year). The south of the Maradi Department, which is a food surplus area, contributes over 30

¹ All monetary values are in United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.



percent to the national cereal output. Two other producing zones are in the south of the Departments of Zinder and Dosso. Four other Departments, Diffa, Agadez, Tahoua and Tillbéri (mainly in the herding zone) suffer from substantial food deficits.

5. Before 1989, the national annual cereal output was sufficient on average to cover the people's needs. Since 1989, even though annual cereal production has risen, Niger has not had one single food surplus year. On the contrary, it suffers from very serious annual food shortages of around 322,000 tons on average. Because of high population growth, the cereal demand is growing exponentially. Between 1993 and 1994 the demand rose by 54,000 tons, between 1994 and 1995 by 79,000 tons, and between 1995 and 1996 by 127,000 tons. These needs are estimated according to a national consumption average of 242 kilograms per capita. Cereals provide over 80 percent of the calories for the rural sedentary population and 65 percent for nomads and town-dwellers. Currently, a normal harvest automatically results in an agricultural deficit. This means that Niger is dependent on food imports. Officially, over the past 10 years, annual commercial imports have been around 143,000 tons with food aid of 50,000 tons. In addition to this, one should add the non-official imports from Nigeria (300,000 tons in 1996 according to the Permanent Monitoring Unit of the Interstate Commission to Combat Drought in the Sahel (DIAPER).
6. With a minimal national reserve and a very weak capacity to respond to natural disasters, Niger remains extremely vulnerable to cyclical droughts.

Poverty and the incidence of food insecurity

7. According to a national budgetary and consumption survey, two thirds of the population live below the poverty threshold (an annual income below CFAF 75,000 in urban and CFAF 50,000 in rural areas) and over three million live in extreme poverty (with an annual income of CFAF 50 million in urban and CFAF 35,000 in rural areas). The poorest groups live in: a) chronically food-deficit zones where environmental degradation is very marked; b) zones in which children are chronically malnourished, with a very high morbidity rate; c) areas where school attendance rates are very low.
8. The zones marked by very pronounced environmental degradation, where there are chronic food shortages, are in the Departments of Agadez, Diffa (districts of N'guigmi, Mainé-Soroa and Diffa), Tahoua (districts of Tchintabaraden, Illéla and Tahoua), Tillabéri (districts of Filingué, Ouallam, Téra and Tillabéri), Zinder (districts of Tanout and Gouré), Maradi (districts of Dakoro and Mayahi).
9. As regards chronic malnutrition of children under five, the UNICEF report on women and children emphasizes the disparity between urban and rural areas. Severe malnutrition is two times higher in the rural than in the urban environment (17 percent compared with eight percent); moderate malnutrition, to a lesser degree, is more frequent in the rural than in the urban environment (34 percent compared with 25 percent). The areas most affected by child malnutrition are in the rural regions of the Diffa Department and in the north of the Zinder and Maradi Departments. Chronic infant malnutrition leads to a very high incidence of sickness and increased mortality. Health coverage is also much lower in the rural environment (17 percent) than in the urban environment (90 percent). The districts with the lowest health care coverage are (Mayahi, Dakoro, Guidan-Roundji and Aguié (Department of Maradi), Ouallam and Say (Department of Tillabéri), Gouré and Magaria (Department of Zinder) and Illéla (Department of Tahoua).
10. According to the population and health survey conducted by the Government, there is a correlation between the educational level of mothers and the health and nutritional status of



children. Over 34 percent of the children of illiterate mothers suffer from chronic malnutrition, compared with 24 percent for those of mothers who have attended school. The rates are respectively 16 and nine percent for severely chronic malnutrition. In the urban environment, primary school attendance is 68 percent compared with only 18 percent in the rural environment (nine percent in the case of girls). The lowest school attendance rate is therefore in the rural regions, and particularly the rural districts of Zinder, Tahoua and Maradi, and mainly refers to girls.

11. According to these three criteria (environment, malnutrition and school attendance) the districts in which poverty is greatest are those in the Department of Diffa and those in the north of the Departments of Zinder and Maradi.
12. The groups which are most vulnerable to food insecurity are: a) small farmers and small herdsmen whose farm and herd sizes are not sufficient to guarantee a livelihood for the family; b) the settling agro-pastoralist population (Peuls, Touaregs and Toubous) who do not own the lands they farm; c) the many families with several children under five years of age living in the outskirts of the urban centres and in agricultural areas with a very high population growth rate; and d) the herders who have lost everything and cannot afford to reconstitute their herds.
13. Women and children are a particularly vulnerable group in Niger: one child in four dies before the age of five, and seven women out of a thousand die in childbirth. Women undertake most of the responsibilities for providing food and water for their family, and during the period when the men leave home, women are entirely responsible for the survival of their family. In addition to religious beliefs—often discriminatory on the status of women—a number of cultural practices (such as female circumcision) can have very serious repercussions on their health.
14. In the areas that are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, wealth depends on the size of the household, namely the number of people able to perform agro-pastoral work. It is therefore very difficult to reduce the population growth rate.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND POLICIES ON POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

15. Following the first Structural Adjustment Programme at the beginning of the eighties and the serious economic crisis, expenditure on education and health care was cut back drastically. Since 1981, expenditure on education fell from 40 to eight million dollars a year, and on health care from 12 to eight million. However, the Government has drawn up plans of action.

Government health policy

16. Three factors reduce the effectiveness of the health care system: a) the low level of coverage and the poor quality of health care due to a lack of drugs and staff; b) the over-centralization of management responsibilities; c) poor allocation of government resources. Three quarters of expenditure are for costly medical care which only benefits a minority of the urban population.
17. Aware of these constraints, in 1995 the Government initiated a Health Care Development Plan whose basic objectives are to: a) provide more health care coverage by decentralizing the health services based on the development of the "Health District"; b) improve prevention through vaccination, health education and mother and child health; c) extend primary health



care coverage and improve the quality of services; d) promote better training for health care personnel; e) combat priority diseases; f) improve the provision and availability of generic drugs; and g) promote greater information, and better education and communication to foster a positive attitude to health care.

18. The plan also involves measures at the district level. This demands the active participation of village units responsible for management and planning the districts' health care priorities.

Government education policy

19. Even though the Government devotes about 15 percent of its budget to education, the sector is still weak. In its five-year plan (1995-2000) and its national plan of action for the survival, protection and development of the child, the Government's target between now and the year 2000 is to raise school attendance rates to at least 35 percent for both girls and boys, and the adult literacy rate to 30 percent. To achieve this, the Government has adopted the following measures: a) reallocating at least 60 percent of the resources for the education system to primary education; b) sensitizing the people with a view to encouraging school attendance (particularly for girls); c) encouraging parents' associations; d) decentralizing the education system by assigning responsibility for basic education to the local communities; and e) improving the quality of teaching.

Policies and strategies to combat food insecurity

20. According to "The Guiding Principles for a Rural Development Policy for Niger" drawn up by the Government, the national strategy on food security has three essential objectives: a) to give the people the possibility of producing or procuring sufficient food thanks to agricultural development and environmental protection; b) to guarantee the stability of the supply by setting up emergency food stocks; and c) to encourage off-farm sources of work and income.
21. In order to raise agricultural production and protect the environment, the main priority is to combat desertification and the land degradation by promoting land recovery schemes, such as the use of manure, the use of plant varieties with strong rooting systems, and planting such trees as acacia, neem, mango and guava to act as wind-breaks and to slow down desertification. It is also proposed to diversify agricultural production by stressing off-season crops, such as onions, tomatoes, peppers, beans, garlic and pulses; encourage the development of irrigated cropping and specialization in different types of production, depending upon the comparative benefits and the specific features of each region; and improve the rural credit distribution system and strengthen the early warning system.
22. With regard to the stability of the supply, the Government envisages several strategies: a) setting up grain banks; b) keeping security stocks by improving the conditions of storage in the chronic food-deficit areas; c) supporting local food distribution networks; and d) regulating imports depending upon demands and needs of the domestic market, in other words importing cereals (mainly from Nigeria) when food production is abnormally low.
23. In order to encourage new sources of employment and income, the Government is enhancing the development of small rural enterprises, offering jobs through highly labour-intensive public works programmes being implemented by the Agence nigérienne des travaux d'intérêt public (Niger Agency for Public Works—NIGETIP).
24. In 1994, with FAO support, the Government drafted the "Complete Food Security Programme" divided into sub-programmes, around which hinge 41 actions to improve the national food security situation. There are six specific sub-programmes: institutions and services (rural training, cooperatives, credit and marketing); food production (agriculture,



livestock and fishing); infrastructure (storage, transport and water); income-generating activities; raising the status of women (family planning, alleviating household work and giving women access to credit); and environment (land rehabilitation and reforestation).

25. Three instruments have been put into place to provide information on the national food situation: cereal balance forecasts, a market information system and the early warning system (SAP). The cereals balances compare the forecast cereals available and the theoretical needs of the people at the end of each agricultural season. Availability is calculated in terms of the estimated national output, stocks and imports. The market information system (SIM)—set up in 1989—is managed by the Office des produits vivriers du Niger (Office of Food Products in Niger—OPVN) financed by Germany and the EU through DIAPER. It surveys the availability of cereals on the market and price trends at the local, regional and national levels. The cereal balances and the SIM are necessary elements to ensure the sound operation of SAP. SAP was also put in place in 1989. It has a permanent secretariat which reports to the Office of the Prime Minister, and is mainly supported by the EU (CILSS/DIAPER). It collects, analyses and disseminates information available on food security.

ASSESSMENT OF WFP PERFORMANCE TO DATE

The WFP programme in Niger

26. Since 1971, over 170,000 tons of food, worth a total of 140.2 million dollars, has been channelled to Niger. WFP's activities have related mainly to development assistance, even though small emergency operations have also begun. Two of these emergency operations began within the framework of one of the development projects, relating to the resettlement of Niger nationals repatriated from Algeria in 1990 (2,640 tons) and assistance to refugees from Chad in 1994 (46 tons). Other emergency operations related mainly to providing food assistance to drought victims in 1972 and 1984, totalling one million and eight million dollars' worth of food, respectively.
27. With regard to development, WFP has worked around three main areas: education (since 1971), health care (since 1976), and rural development (since 1983). About 40 percent of the food has been allocated to rural development and 30 percent each to the other two sectors. WFP's development programme still revolves around these areas through three operational projects, one in each sector. Another project, Niger 2734 (Rural development) was completed in 1996.

1 - Rural development

Niger 2734—“Multi-purpose rural development”

28. Worth a total of 30 million dollars, of which 52,000 tons of food has been distributed, this project was initiated in 1986. It was expected to last for four years and was subsequently continued in a second phase in 1990 until 1996. This was the follow-up to another project, 2661, which had started in 1983.
29. Project Niger 2734 was designed to promote the rural development of eight departments and 34 districts of the country by combating desertification (the central hub of the project—80 percent of the food), setting up rural infrastructure (eight percent), training programmes (10 percent) and establishing grain banks (two percent). Combating desertification included water conservation, land rehabilitation, plant production, wind-breaks and dune-fixing.



Furthermore, the project provided subsistence and food-for-work activities for the 6,500 returnees from Algeria in 1990 (nomads who had lost their livestock following the 1984 drought) and 400 Chadian refugees in 1994. Unlike the Keita project (the second WFP rural development project), project Niger 2734 operated according to a system in which WFP food was allocated directly to the governmental technical services. These received requests for assistance, studied them and either accepted or rejected them.

30. According to the mid-term evaluation conducted in 1994, the results of the project were unsatisfactory. Initially designed to support rural development projects supported by donors or government services, food assistance gradually became a source of general budgetary support without being able to establish any quantitative relationship between WFP assistance and outputs. This situation was due from the beginning to a number of weaknesses in the design and formulation of this multi-sectoral project and to a lack of clarity in the plan of operations. It was also amplified by the fact that much of the external funding was frozen, and secondly by the establishment of a decentralized structure as from 1991 which resulted in poor monitoring and evaluation.
31. Generally speaking, the project did make it possible to create a large number of temporary jobs and to distribute the food to a large number of people. Because of the migration of the male population, women played a very important part in it (on average 60 percent).
32. Food aid has certainly played a positive role in mobilizing the people who took part in highly labour-intensive works of community interest. When food aid was used to maintain what had already been achieved (about 15 percent of the cash), it contributed to creating dependency. Generally speaking, food aid in the project did not have the expected impact because of the great diversity of the actions being assisted, which were poorly planned, and did not necessarily target the regions that were most prone to food insecurity, and with the absence of any coherent M&E system. The grain banks component, which was limited in time, and supervised and financed by ILO, was successful.

Niger 3579—“Integrated Rural development in the districts of Keita, Bouza and Tchintabaraden”

33. Worth 14.5 million dollars, with 23,000 tons of food distributed, the project was put into place in 1989 for a period of three years, and was subsequently continued for a second phase between 1992 and the end of 1997.
34. The objectives and activities of the project, which were concentrated in three districts (Keita, Bouza and Tchintabaraden), were similar to those of project Niger 2734. However, the project does not work on the basis of quarterly applications addressed to government services, and it is clearly defined in terms of timing and area. It is financed by the Government of Italy and supervised by FAO.
35. Bearing in mind the situation (on the borderline of the arable lands of Niger which are erosion-prone) and the comparatively high population density, the results obtained are on the whole very satisfactory: the economic status of the small farmers has improved, and the ecological landscape has been rehabilitated whereas formerly it was completely bare. The ecological trend has been reversed, and this has had a decisive impact on agricultural production and food security in the region. Annual millet production is now around 40,000 tons which meets the food requirements of the region and accounts for two percent of the national output.
36. WFP food aid in this project has encouraged the villagers to take part in works of community interest. The daily ration, valued at 1.33 dollars (170 percent of the average income in Niger)



represents an income transfer to families taking part in the project in the zone, which previously suffered from a serious food deficit. At the beginning of the project, women accounted for between 76 and 80 percent of the labour force, which fell to 48 percent as from 1994. This shows the positive impact the project has had on initiating a sedentarization process in the male population, who formerly tended to migrate. This has enabled women to devote themselves to other activities such as developing food crops (sweet potato, bean, lettuce and tomato) and cash crops (cow pea, onion and sunflower).

37. An internal M&E unit has been set up. Comprising an international expert, a national coordinator, and EDP expert, two surveyors and two enumerators, it submits quarterly and half-yearly reports to the WFP office, together with a programme schedule of activities to be carried out, and an estimate of food required by the project. The duties are being correctly performed and its performance can be described as good. Conversely monitoring the indirect impact on socio-economic conditions is still inadequate. At the end of a survey carried out in March 1997 by FAO consultants, it became necessary to set up a monitoring division within the project for socio-economic development and the advancement of women.
38. **Future orientation.** In view of the takeover by the local people of the outputs of the Keita project, WFP should now gradually disengage from the zone. Management structures (cooperatives and enterprises) have already been put into place to ensure continuity. These efforts must definitely be stepped up.

2 - Health

Niger 2072—“Support for MCH activities and nutritional rehabilitation and education”

39. Worth a total of 25.4 million dollars, including 51,000 tons of food distributed, the project began in 1976 and has been taken up in three successive phases. The current phase began in 1992 and will terminate in December 1997. Forming part of the Niger Health Care Development Plan, WFP assistance supports the Government's efforts to improve the health care coverage of rural populations and the development of preventive health care activities, while improving nutritional rehabilitation work.
40. This phase is designed to increase the number of expectant mothers, nursing mothers and children under five years of age to attend the 80 health care nutrition rehabilitation facilities (out of the 310 which currently exist within the country), and eight paediatric centres. Over 63 percent of the centres being assisted are in the rural areas. About 25,000 people receive WFP rations every year (millet, cowpeas, oil, milk and sugar).
41. The project is short on data, which makes it very difficult to properly analyse improvements in attendance rates. A national consultant was therefore engaged in 1996 to set up a monitoring system, but his guidelines proved to be too complicated. In addition to the problems of monitoring and evaluation, there was no proper targeting of the beneficiaries which would have made it possible to channel the aid to the most vulnerable zones. The project also suffered from a lack of coordination between the different parties involved and the failure to set up support services in the health care sector (WFP, UNICEF, EDF, WHO, Aide-Action and Association française des volontaires du progrès—French Action of Progress Volunteers (AFVP)).
42. **Future orientation.** More accurate targeting is needed. The active participation of the village units must be contemplated to ensure that food aid is not passively accepted without something in return. It is also essential to enhance cooperation with the main actors in the



health care sector such as UNICEF, WHO, Aide-Action, the World Bank and EDF. A number of discussions have already started with Médecins sans frontières in order to carry out a nutrition survey in the health centres in the Department of Zinder.

3 - Education

Niger 2445—“Food aid to primary schools in nomad and transhumant areas”

43. Worth 45 million dollars and with 54,000 tons of food expected to be distributed by October 2000, the project began in 1975 and has been taken up again four times. The last phase began in October 1996 for a period of four years. Project Niger 2445 followed project 621 which began in 1971.
44. In addition to improving nutrition, the objective of the project is to support the Government's policy to extend basic education for all children of school age.
45. Following the technical review mission in November 1995, it was decided that WFP assistance could be used during the phase 1996-2000 for children in areas where food security is most precarious. It was also agreed that priority should be given to the nomadic and transhumant populations, particularly for girls. Three meals a day (consisting of millet, guau, fish, milk, oil and sugar) are supplied 280 days a year to 16,000 children in nomadic areas. In transhumant areas, the number of pupils assisted will gradually be reduced from 9,600 in year one to 7,000 at the end of the project. They receive three meals a day, 200 days a year. Moreover, the families who send their daughters to school also receive quarterly rations of 50 to 100 kilograms of millet.
46. **Future orientation.** For the new phase, funding has been allocated for setting up a monitoring system. A computer has been given to the national project management office, and training on keeping attendance records has been imparted to school directors. WFP is expected to partially phase out. In theory, this phasing out should be offset by a gradual takeover by the local and national authorities, and thanks to the galvanization of the pupils' parents' associations. Monitoring will be carried out in order to ensure that the number of girls attending school increases (by at least five percent over two years for each school). Closer cooperation is planned with certain NGOs, particularly Aide-Action (school building) and AFVP.

Strengths and weaknesses of the WFP programme

47. Over the past decade, WFP projects have been designed around the socio-economic priorities established by the Government of Niger (rural development and social policy). Food aid has been used to combat the deterioration of the environment and to enhance agricultural production in the Keita project region. With regard to the multi-purpose rural project schemes, these have specifically aided certain villages and regions to improve their agricultural potential, but they have failed to have sustainable medium- and long-term effects.
48. In the area of health care, food aid forms part of the Government's policy set up in 1995 (the Health Care Development Plan), particularly with regard to extending health care coverage. In the next phase, food aid will have a greater impact once it covers all the health care centres in the most vulnerable districts. As regards education, the phase that began in October 1996 forms part of the National Plan of Action for the Survival, Protection and Development of the Child, and is designed to increase primary school attendance particularly by girls. The new incentive in this case is the provision of food rations to parents who send their daughters to school.



49. Even though WFP food aid had been incorporated into government priorities, it was not used effectively because of a lack of targeting at the design and implementation stages of the projects. Moreover, very few specific measures have been adopted for the women taking part in deciding the activities, their management or implementation, or to enable women to enjoy a fair share of the benefits.
50. In Niger, WFP has shown substantial shortcomings regarding M&E. The lack of data at the national and regional levels has greatly hampered the ability to carry out any analysis which could have enabled changes to be made to the way in which projects are implemented and the guidelines for implementation. However, WFP has been very efficient in monitoring the transport of food, establishing the number of participants and evaluating the output indicators.
51. With regard to the food-for-work projects, food aid should only be used during the inter-season period, and mainly in food-deficit regions.

FUTURE ORIENTATION OF WFP ASSISTANCE

Proposed strategy

52. Over the next five years, WFP will have to operate in an environment which will become increasingly degraded. Considering that per capita food production is falling, any phasing out by WFP from these three areas of activity (rural development, health care and education) cannot be contemplated in the short term. Conversely, careful targeting of beneficiaries for food resources will guarantee an optimum impact on the poorer populations, particularly the women. The food-for-work activities in the rural development sector will remain important, albeit to a lesser extent than in the past. To combat hunger, WFP's strategy is based on the active participation of the people, particularly women, and on governmental and non-governmental partnerships. WFP will also continue to provide assistance in mother and child health, and education, which are the priorities set out in the CSN (1998-2002) drawn up by the Government with the help of the United Nations system.
53. Because of the vulnerability of the country and the recurrent droughts, it is highly likely that over the next few years emergency aid will be necessary. Since the national food stocks are too small to provide temporary relief, WFP would need to draw from stocks stored, generally varying between 5,000 and 10,000 tons, and channel them to drought-affected areas. WFP must therefore spell out its role in the national disaster relief strategy, and must be done in close cooperation with SAP and the other donors. The WFP Regional Office in Ouagadougou will draw up relief plans which will be carried out by the end of 1997 and enable the WFP country office in Niger to develop a clear strategy to meet emergency situations. Detailed information will then be able to be incorporated into the Country Programme Document, particularly the level of disaster relief stock allocations.

Programming assistance and required resources

54. With regard to rural development, Keita is the only operational project at the present time. It will be completed in June 1998. Considering the fairly unsatisfactory results of the Niger 2734 project, WFP food aid will only be used to support rural development projects that are clearly limited in time and which have guaranteed external funding and supervision. WFP must only become involved in operational projects in areas affected by desertification and food insecurity. Gradual phasing out of the Keita region must be contemplated. WFP will support any initiatives which form part of the Government's plan (guidelines for a rural



development policy) in order to improve food availability through food production and environmental protection.

55. The volume of food required for any new WFP intervention will depend on WFP's involvement with other partners. However, this sector may be able to absorb an estimated 20,000 tons of food over the four years of the programme.
56. WFP's activities will be implemented within the framework of the District Health Care Development Plan (1995-2000) drawn up by the Government, designed to improve the quality and coverage of primary health care services. The ongoing project (Niger 2072) should end in December 1997. A project outline for a new phase covering a four-year period will be prepared as soon as possible. Unlike the present phase, it will cover all the centres in the nine most vulnerable districts. The new phase will require 28,000 tons of food over four years.
57. One crucial condition for the success of the new phase is to step up cooperation with the main parties involved in the health care sector, including UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank and EDF.
58. A new phase, providing assistance to school canteens, has just been initiated, and will run through to October 2000. It forms part of the Government's plan whose objective is to raise primary school attendance. This new phase is targeted to the children of the nomadic and transhumant populations. Particular stress is placed on girls' school attendance by providing dry rations to the families (2,000 per year) who send their daughters to school. Under this new project, the amount of food distributed in transhumant areas will be gradually reduced in order to make the local authorities take greater responsibility for it. In nomadic areas, for the four years of the project, 16,000 pupils will receive three meals a day each year for 280 days a year. In transhumant areas, the number of pupils receiving assistance will gradually drop from 9,600 in the first year to 7,000 at the end of the project. They will receive three meals a day, 200 days a year. A total of 15,500 tons of food has been programmed over four years.
59. WFP must step up cooperation with the other parties involved. An education component has been included in the FAO Complete Food Security Programme (1994-2000), emphasizing the establishment of school infrastructure and a school nutrition programme. Under its sectoral Basic Education Programme (1995-2000) UNICEF, with the support of the World Bank, has set up a project for distributing micro-nutrients and anthelmintics in the schools in the Departments of Zinder, Maradi, Tahoua, Agadez and Tillabéry. The European Union, under the eighth EDF (1995-2000), has set as its priority the promotion of basic education. Under its programme to combat poverty, UNDP, in conjunction with UNESCO, has drafted a basic education development strategy whose activities are designed to improve school curricula. WHO has promoted a health education, school hygiene, sanitation and water-supply programme.
60. The food needed for the forthcoming WFP programme totals 63,500 tons divided as follows: 28,000 tons for health, 15,500 tons for education and 20,000 tons for rural development.

Modalities of WFP assistance and operational aspects

61. Of the 63,500 tons required for the programme, 52,500 tons (47,700 tons of millet and 4,800 tons of cowpeas) will be purchased locally. This means 11,925 tons of millet and 1,200 tons of cowpea a year. As in the past, these purchases will in no way upset the markets. National millet output is about two million tons. What WFP will purchase in millet every year will therefore only be 0.6 percent of domestic output. Moreover, these purchases will be a way of



transferring income to Niger traders and peasants. The 11,000 tons of imported food (sugar, oil, grain, milk and fish) will come through the port of Cotonou in Benin.

62. Because of the extremely acute crisis of public funding, it is vital for WFP to continue subsidizing internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) costs over the next five years. For each ton of food distributed, the costs will be around 25 dollars for education, 40 dollars for health and 18 dollars for rural development.
63. Under the new programme it is essential to review the composition of the rations. These differ from one project to another. For rural development projects, every individual receives a household ration (millet, oil, milk, sugar, fish, cowpeas) to feed four other people. For education, each child receives millet, grain, milk, fish, oil and sugar. For the health project, women are given millet, oil, cowpeas and sugar, and children are given milk.

RISKS

64. The Government of Niger is about to conclude a second Structural Adjustment Programme with the World Bank, before July 1997. These reforms are likely to increase poverty in the short term. This situation could increase food aid requirements in every region in the country, which will make the targeting of WFP aid more complex.
65. The limited resources at the disposal of the Ministries implementing WFP projects must be offset by strengthening the WFP country office, and probably by partially funding some of the execution costs.
66. The possibilities of receiving bilateral and multilateral aid are still small in a situation in which some major partners have suspended bilateral cooperation with Niger.



ANNEX I

DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD					
	1993	1994	1995 <i>(tons)</i>	1996	Average
Project 3579	2 450	3 245	1 996	2 336	2 507
Project 2734	4 620	3 920	2 858	1 956	3 339
Project 2445	3 145	3 467	2 529	2 190	2 833
Project 2072	7 088	7 252	6 748	6 917	7 002
Total	17 303	17 884	14 131	13 399	15 681

ANNEX II

NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES				
	1993	1994	1995	1996
Project 3579	7 380	9 720	5 940	6 930
Project 2734	24 575	20 850	15 200	10 400
Project 2445	21 840	24 075	17 560	15 210
Project 2072	33 770	34 555	32 160	32 940
Total	87 565	89 200	70 820	65 480

For project 3579 (rural development of Keita) each person receives a household ration of 2.75 kilograms of food, sufficient to feed four other people for each day of work.

For project 2734 (multi-purpose rural development), each person receives a household ration of 2.8 kilograms, sufficient to feed four other persons for each day's work.

For project 2445 (school canteens) each child receives three meals a day. These meals are supplied to 16,000 nomadic children, 280 days a year. For the transhumant pupils, the number assisted will gradually be reduced from 9,600 in year one to 7,000 at the end of the project. They receive three meals a day, 200 days a year.

For project 2072, expectant mothers, nursing mothers and at-risk children receive a daily ration of 945 grams, 260 days a year. Preschool-aged children (six to 59 months of age) suffering from moderate malnutrition receive an individual daily ration of 180 grams, 260 days a year. Preschool-aged children (six to 59 months) suffering from serious malnutrition receive an individual ration of 320 grams, 365 days a year.

