**PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)**  
**CONCEPT STAGE**

Report No.: PIDC23138

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I. **Introduction and Context**

**Country Context**

1. Food insecurity is a big concern for Niger. It is estimated that 2.5 million people in Niger are chronically food-insecure and unable to meet their basic food requirements even during years of normal harvest. During periods of constrained access to food, millions more can quickly fall into transitory food insecurity.

2. Due to adverse agro-climatic and environmental conditions, low institutional and implementation capacity, precarious livelihood conditions and high population growth, Niger is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world. The most recent poverty assessment from 2011 estimated the national poverty headcount rate at 48 percent (down approximately 5 percentage
points from the 2006 rate) with most of the poor living in rural areas. Niger remains at the bottom of UNDP’s human development ranking. Its human development index (HDI) score was 0.337 in 2013, well below the SSA average of 0.502, and saw little improvement since 2006.

3. Significant gender disparities contribute to Niger’s low human development indicators. The CPS notes that “high levels of gender inequality have hindered female participation in Niger’s development processes.” Niger ranked 151st out of 152 countries in UNDP’s 2013 gender inequality index. A 2015 WB Research Working Paper (Report # 7199) concluded that in “Niger, as in many other African countries, productivity is even lower among female peasants” indicating the gender differentials in agricultural productivity. The analysis finds that in Niger average plots managed by women produce 19 percent less per hectare than plots managed by men. The primary factors that contributed to the observed gender productivity gap in Niger are: (i) access to farm labor, with women facing significant challenges in accessing, using, and supervising male farm labor; (ii) use of fertilizers, with men using more inorganic fertilizer per hectare than women; and (iii) ownership of land and characteristics, with men owning more land and enjoying higher returns to ownership than women.

4. Over the past years Niger made progress on nutrition indicators, but the country still lags substantially behind other low-income countries and sub-Saharan African counterparts. Malnutrition accounts for more than one third of child mortality in the country and remains high due to host of health, sanitation and behavioral factors, exacerbated by recurrent food shortages. Only 23 percent of children under 6 months were exclusively breastfed in 2012. Furthermore, 44 percent of children are stunted and 36 percent are underweight. There is also a growing divergence in poor nutrition: 16 percent of women suffer from a state of chronic energy deficiency while 14 percent of women are overweight. The diet is largely based on cereals, mainly millet and sorghum, with some starchy roots (essentially cassava). In rural areas, the diet is complemented with pulses, while in urban areas it is more often complemented with vegetables. Consumption of foods of animal origin, and of fruit and vegetables, foods that are rich in micronutrients, remains low. Consumption of milk, a tradition in the agro-pastoral population, is declining because of the reduction in the number of cattle due to drought and to the degradation of the terms of trade of cattle against cereals. The rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) among children under five has declined from 16.7 percent in 2010 to 13.3 percent in 2013, which is still above the critical threshold of 10 percent after years of being above the emergency threshold of 15 percent (WHO).

5. Niger is extremely vulnerable to severe climate shocks with drought being the most important risk in terms of frequency and impacts. The growth rate of Niger’s GDP has dipped into negative territory eight times during 1984 to 2010, and drought was largely responsible for negative GDP growth rate in six years. Between 1980 and 2012, 10 major episodes of drought have been recorded, of which 5 led to severe food crisis. The food crisis resulting from the 2011 drought affected more than 7 million people or half of the country’s total population. The World Bank’s Poverty Assessment (2011) highlighted poor harvest as the biggest shock for rural households, which led to reduced consumption, loss of productive and durable assets, and loss of income for about 45 percent of affected households.

6. Climate change is likely to exacerbate food security situation in Niger. While there is uncertainty regarding long term climate change projections (2050-2100) for Niger in general, however, over short to medium term, rainfall deficits will most likely continue to plague the agricultural sector in Niger and frequency and severity of droughts might remain same or increase.
7. Niger is one of the founding members of the Global Alliance of Climate Smart Agriculture launched in September 2014. The Alliance aims to improve food and nutrition security of populations to adapt agricultural practices, food chains and social policies so that they take into account climate change and use natural resources efficiently. Considering the country’s vulnerability to climate shocks, it is natural for Niger to be the founding member of this Global Alliance. Niger aims to make climate smart agriculture central in its existing and planned agricultural sector interventions.

**Sectoral and Institutional Context**

8. Agriculture is the most important sector of Niger’s economy and accounts for over 40 percent of national GDP and is the main source of livelihood for over 80 percent of the country’s population. The performance of the agricultural sector, however, due to its high exposure to risks, is very volatile. Niger has experienced multiple shocks, largely caused by agricultural risks, over the past 30 years, which impose high welfare cost in terms of food availability, food affordability, and malnutrition. It also adversely affects household incomes, performance of the agricultural sector, the government’s fiscal balance, and the growth rate of Niger’s economy.

9. The main challenges facing Niger in agriculture development and food production are: (i) high vulnerability to climate risk with drought being the major risk to crop production and livestock; (ii) low level capacity and technology penetration including low usage of improved seeds; (iii) lack of access to finance; (iv) low development of irrigation infrastructure and poor management; (v) high level of malnutrition; (vi) land degradation and soil fertility reduction; (vii) weak institutional capacity with weak advisory service and limited access to decision-support information system; (viii) low level value addition; and (ix) limited opportunities to diversify income. The project will contribute in addressing these challenges.

10. Crop production in Niger takes place in a context of low and variable rainfall, and high and increasing pressure on cultivable land due to the high population growth rate. The potential for irrigation is limited, and its use is relatively low. Production is further constrained by the predominance of traditional management systems, with limited use of irrigation, improved seeds, fertilizer, mechanization and lack of information (e.g. weather forecasting, market information, advisory warning against pests of crops).

11. Droughts recorded between 1973 to 2010 have strongly impacted the livestock sector thereby negatively affecting 87 percent of the population that relies on livestock for part of their livelihood. Niger has the largest herd population in the Sahel (10.5 million tropical livestock units -- TLUs). The livestock sub-sector contributes significantly to national GDP (13 percent of GDP and 40 percent of agricultural GDP). The various production systems provide a significant portion of the meat and milk consumed both inside the country and in neighboring countries. It is estimated that Niger lost between 25 to 45% percent of cattle and 13 to 38% of small ruminants as a result of each drought episode.

12. Lack of access to finance is one of the paramount challenges for the majority of Nigerien farmers as it confined them to sub-optimal inputs and methods, and low productivity. Agriculture continues to receive less than 2% of total credit. Banks remain reluctant to expand loans to the sector because of structural challenges such as risks related to weather variability and climatic changes, weak value chains, and lack of acceptable collateral (and enforcement). Microfinance
institutions which could have played an important role in agriculture finance are currently constrained by the lack of resources.

13. With development partners’ support the government is increasing public spending on the sector and is taking steps to change production systems and respond appropriately to recurrent food crises. In April 2012, the government adopted the 3N (Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens) Initiative as its national strategy to boost agricultural development and resolve the food and nutrition insecurity. The 3N Initiative developed the Priority Investment Programs (PIP) to improve availability, accessibility, and utilization of food in a sustainable manner, however, a focus on ensuring stability of food system, especially in view of recurrent food crisis in Niger, was missing from the PIP.

14. The World Bank conducted a risk assessment of the Niger agricultural sector in 2013. The risk assessment highlighted the exposure and vulnerability of Niger to frequent risks, primarily drought, and indicated that risk and volatility might be seen as a new normal under the context of changing climate. A shift from ex-post crisis response to ex-ante risk management is therefore needed in Niger, and this project aims to put in place structures and measures that would allow farmers to better manage risks and enhance resilience of farm households and their production systems. It will also build the institutional and financial mechanism in responding to the frequent occurrence of disasters, mainly drought.

15. To help build resilience of agricultural sector, the Government of Niger, with the WB support, has developed an Agriculture Risk Management Plan (PAGRA). This 10 year action plan’s (2014-2023) overriding goal is to help build the resilience of rural and semi-urban communities against the main agricultural risk factors.

16. The proposed project is seen as an anchor operation under the 3N initiative by the GoN and it will contribute to achieving the objectives of the Government of Niger in agriculture as defined in policy and action areas of the Initiative 3N and PAGRA, which are themselves a national variation of the Comprehensive Development Plan for African Agriculture (CAADP) and the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP). More broadly, the project is intended to be within the framework of the Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES).

Relationship to CAS

17. The strategic objectives of the Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) are to assist Niger achieve resilient growth, reduce vulnerability and strengthen capacity for service delivery. Accordingly, the CPS supports actions aimed at strengthening the macroeconomic foundation, the investment climate and access to finance to build resilient growth, improve agricultural productivity and marketing of selected crops and promote risk management in agriculture to mitigate the impacts of climatic change and weather variability. The proposed project is included in Pillar I (Promoting Resilient Growth) and will contribute to building resilience of agricultural sector while contributing to increased productivity of selected crops. In addition, the project also contributes to Pillar II (Reducing Vulnerability) and will result in increased adoption of climate smart agriculture practices in targeted communities.

18. Close relationships and coordination of activities will be established with other Bank-supported projects in Niger, particularly the following (i) the Project will scale up actions developed by the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) in the seed sector and PRODEX in small scale irrigation development; (ii) the Project will develop resilience actions at village and
households level to complement community-based actions implemented by CAP3 and CAP-RC; (iii) To complement the new PRAPS interventions in pastoralism management, the project will support mixed crops and livestock systems in agro-pastoral zones while PRAPS will target purely pastoral regions.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)
19. The proposed development objective is to increase agricultural productivity and enhance drought resilience of agro-pastoral systems in the targeted communities and households in Niger.

Key Results (From PCN)
20. The proposed PDO level performance indicators are: (i) Increased productivity (mt/ha), % compared to baseline; (ii) Increased land covered by improved agricultural practices contributing to CSA outcomes; (iii) Improved access to information, water, finance, and drought tolerant seed; and (iv) direct project beneficiaries (number), of which female (%).

21. A detailed results monitoring framework and indicators will be developed during the project preparation.

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description
22. The proposed project is expected to benefit Niger’s rural population by enhancing the sustainability of the agriculture and increasing their resilience to drought. The project will support agricultural productivity enhancing measures including support to local national seed value chains, provision of small scale irrigation infrastructure, introducing agricultural input efficiency improving measures, and on-farm natural resources management for environmental sustainability. The project is aimed at addressing vulnerability to food security and associated risks. The project is primarily focused on building resilience, however, it will attempt to deliver on triple win of climate smart agriculture: improving productivity, building resilience, and reducing emission, in selected locations in Niger. Achieving the above objectives requires (i) a systemic and holistic approach that considers all the important factors influencing the project, their frequent interdependencies and complementarities; and (ii) a selectivity requirement under the resource constrained environment of Niger.

23. This might involve implementation of a strategy based on the following five pillars:
   i. Scaling-up the most promising technologies and interventions from the Bank’s funded projects in Niger (Second Food security Emergency Program interventions in SLWM and households resilience to climate change; PRODEX intervention in promoting selected agricultural value chains; WAAPP, PACRC and CAP3;
   ii. Developing a value chain approach through interventions covering supply chains, delivery channels, and enabling environment issues to identify bottlenecks and leverage point in the chains and prioritize actions accordingly
   iii. Gender sensitivity: The project would look at various interventions through gender perspective and try to benefit, as far as possible, women through its interventions. The livelihood diversification sub-component would be primarily geared for women participants. Also, components involving grants and disbursements of assets would prioritize women beneficiaries. Special care would be paid to ensure that intervention do not contribute to increased drudgery and
burden for women. iv. Nutrition informed: The project will favor those interventions and leverage the activities of other projects that have a direct link with improving the nutritional outcome of the project beneficiaries.

v. Complementarity with other interventions: the Project will scale up actions and contribute to the achievement of higher levels goals. This approach will ensure alignment with the projects developed under the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) and the Family Farming Development Programme (ProDAF) funded by IFAD. The preparation process and the project’s design will be informed by the National Resilience Priority (NRP) prepared under the Global Alliance for Resilience - Sahel and West Africa (AGIR) supported by the European Union.

24. Potential Intervention Zones: Areas selected for project intervention constitute high potential for increasing agricultural production, highly prone to droughts and taking into account the areas are sufficient to allow planning and integrating project intervention at scale. Accordingly, the Project will focus on 10 departments which together account for approximately 46% of Niger’s cowpea (Niebe) production; 40% of Niger’s millet, production, 38% of national sorghum production, and 33% of national groundnut production, the principal cereal crops of the country. At the same time, all these 10 departments are highly vulnerable and have experienced more than 5 droughts between 1980-2009, contributing to aggravating food security situation in these departments as well as the broader country. In case of severe drought happening to the country, the Project will have the flexibility to intervene in other regions as part of the contingency emergency response. The list of the ten departments is given in Annex No. 4.

25. By focusing on these ten departments, the Project will significantly help stabilize agricultural production nationally and contribute at national level to the achievement of the Bank’s twin goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity. To finalize site selection, other dimensions such as the poverty concentration and climate change projections will be taken into account during the preparation process.

26. In the targeted area project will promote sustainable landscape management with coordinated interventions at spatial scales that attempt to optimize the interactions among a range of land cover types, institutions and activities. This sustainable landscape management will: (i) optimize the management of different activities depending on natural resource (agriculture, livestock, forestry) (ii) take into account the external environment (political constraints, policies, regulations, markets, etc.) that might alter the relation between the stakeholders (iii) encourage inclusive stakeholder consultations to maintain and enhance the services they provide.

The project is composed of six components that are well aligned with the development Objective and address the main challenges facing the agriculture sector in Niger.

Component I: Scaling up Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices (USD 63 million)
The aim of this component is to support farmers implement climate smart agriculture practices and technologies. The component is composed of three sub-components:
Sub-component #1.1. Building sustainable seed system and Scaling up CSA innovations (USD 23 million)

27. Most Nigerien farmers practice low-input agriculture. Despite the frequency of droughts, the adoption rate of improved and drought-tolerant seeds is very low. For example, improved seeds produced in 2011 cover only 2.88% of the area planted in 2012. Over the years, ICRISAT has
generated several crop varieties suitable to the agro-climatic conditions of the Sahel. The project will support the Niger improved seed industry through: (i) strengthening the capacity of INRAN’s agronomic research centers in the production of foundation seed; (ii) support to community-based seed production systems and to private sector companies operating in the seed production; (iii) construction of storage and packaging infrastructure; (iv) promoting the use of selected seeds; (v) strengthening of seed associations and inter-professional organizations; (vi) support for innovative mechanisms of seed marketing; and (vii) strengthening seed policy and institutional support to the national seed control and certification agency. Based on the results of FAO’s study entitled “Etude sur la sécurité semencière au Niger”, the selected seeds (drought tolerant seeds and nutrition-enhancing seeds) will include millet, sorghum, rice, cowpeas and women preferred crops (sesame, okra and sorrel). Infrastructure provision will favor construction models preferred by women.

28. The project will support the scaling up of CSA innovations developed by ICRISAT and INRAN. This will be through improving technical skills of FO’ members including women groups in CSA technologies, strengthening their organizational and managerial capacities, setting up a demand driven mechanism to ensure that farmers are receiving and implementing integrated CSA packages for better productivity and resilience to drought.

Sub-component #1.2 Sustainable Land and Water Management (SLWM) (USD 25 million)

29. Based on demand driven mechanism, and using CAP3 review and approval process, the project will support SLWM activities that directly or indirectly improve the productivity of the agricultural resource base, household’s resilience and reduce GHG emissions in selected watersheds. Three types of interventions will be considered and implemented in an integrated manner: (1) sustainable land management, (2) agro-forestry systems and (3) small scale irrigation development.

30. Sustainable land management is expected to improve water infiltration, reduce erosion and silting, and restoration of degraded lands. Activities that will be financed under this sub-component will include: rock or earth bunds, benches, half-moons, alone or in combination with small irrigation downstream in the watershed, etc. These land husbandry practices are well known throughout the Sahel, and in Niger in particular. Their implementation is expected to be initiated early in project execution.

31. Agroforestry systems: As part of a strategy based on scaling up of technologies developed by ICRAF in the Sahel region, the Project will support the use of trees and shrubs as part of agricultural systems. Agroforestry remains the most important source for carbon sequestration in Niger. Although Niger has, re-greened around 5 million hectares (mainly in Maradi an Zinder region) in 20 years, the project will address some challenges such as broader dissemination of agroforestry systems, availability of relevant agro-forestry species etc., which could contribute to scaling up proven initiatives in a larger geographical area. By supporting the agro-forestry systems, the project will also contribute to maintain/improve soil fertility, prevent soil erosion, facilitates water infiltration, contribute to carbon sequestration, and reduces the impacts of extreme weather. The Agroforestry activities will also help diversify income sources and provides energy and often fodder for livestock.

32. Small scale irrigation: The project would support the following actions contributing to the growth of small scale irrigation, favoring low-cost and resilient systems possibly including: (i) water harvesting infrastructure on farms (weirs, small dams, ponds, etc.) and groundwater
mobilization infrastructure (wells and boreholes); (ii) setting-up of an upgraded and adapted agricultural water management (managerial) system, (iii) infrastructure for delivering water to plots; and (iv) support for the dissemination of sustainable pumping technologies such as solar pump that will contribute to GHG emission reduction, and water saving technologies such as drip irrigation.

33. The design of this sub-component will be carried out to ensure that the implementation modality benefit both women and men.

Sub-component #1.3: Sustainable mixed crop-livestock systems (USD 15 million)

34. Agro-pastoral and mixed crop-livestock systems are dominant in the selected Departments. If pastoralists occupy the Northern part of Niger, most of the cattle and small ruminant populations are actually located in the southern part of the country, where the project will be implemented. Mixed crop-livestock farming is the dominant production system in this part of the country. Livestock production critically contributes to the 3 outcomes of CSA:
- Agriculture productivity and food security: animals contribute directly (through meat and milk output) and indirectly (through fertilization, draft power) to food production and also to income diversification.
- Adaptation to climate change: livestock represent a diversification assets, a coping mechanism for households (risk management tool, that contributes to HH resilience), and contribute to the management of organic matter in soils (through manure), which improves water retention and drought resistance.
- Mitigation: there is typically a great potential for GHG emission intensity reduction among low productivity ruminant systems such as those found in the project intervention area. Carbon sequestration in pastures is a further mitigation pathway.

35. These contributions can be strengthened through interventions that aim at (i) increasing the productivity and management of livestock (e.g. feeding practices, animal health, herd management and off-take rates), (ii) promoting alternative practices of integrated soil fertility management based on crop-livestock integration (e.g. manure management, use of crop residues and food by-products) and modern inputs, and (iii) supporting market access.

Component 2: Strengthening CSA institutions and support services delivery (USD 40 million)

36. This component aims to increase the capacity of households to better manage agricultural climate risk. It will mainly support actions aimed at improved access to information for decision-making, improving access to finance as well as actions to diversify the sources of household income, according to the needs expressed by the targeted households. The component is composed of three sub-components.

Sub-component #2.1. Improving producers’ access to information and advisory services [for decision support at the farm level and capacity building] (USD 10 million)

37. The Project will support the generation and dissemination of hydro-meteorological information and services, market information, early warning on crop pests, and farm technical and advisory services through appropriate communication tools (cell phone, radio, and other hardware). It will also finance the implementation “soft infrastructure” (databases, cyber networks, links with telecommunications) that will be needed to gather, organize, analyze, and deliver the geospatially relevant decision support to local agencies and communities.

38. The Project will contribute to strengthen national institutions efforts to build a coherent and
enabling policy environment for CSA implementation at the country and local levels. This will be done through mainstreaming CSA in policies and strategies, collection and processing of climate related data (including maps and soil fertility analysis) and dissemination of information products related to climate risk management at central and local levels.

39. Farmers’ organizations (FO) and local communes will be supported to ensure discussions on land use planning at local level, set up sustainable mechanisms for landscape management with effective consultation channels involving all the stakeholders.

Sub-component #2.2. Improving access to agriculture finance (USD 15 million)

40. Limited access to finance, is one of the bottlenecks for farmers in Niger to make necessary on-farm investments required for adoption and scale-up of agricultural practices leading to climate smart outcomes. The project will support the development of agriculture finance by: (i) building the capacity of financial intermediaries; (ii) exploring the use of instruments such as portfolio partial credit guarantee and/or line of credit to encourage participation of lenders such as commercials banks and microfinance institutions, in agriculture finance; (iii) identifying and addressing critical bottlenecks (supply, demand, and delivery issues) that limits agricultural credit flow in Niger. This component will be implemented within the FISAN (Fonds d'Investissement pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle) framework and will be complemented by the upcoming Bank’s trust funded technical assistance for the development agriculture finance which will focus on the creation of a more conducive legal and regulatory framework.

Sub-component #2.3 Securing and diversifying household incomes (USD 15 million)

41. Under this sub-component, the Project will support sub-projects with high potential of employment for the youth and women groups. Such sub-projects include: (a) animal production through the construction fattening units for cattle and sheep fattening, (b) local poultry development through improved dissemination of adapted habitat and improved breeds, (c) cattle artificial insemination, and milk collection and processing; (d) improved post-harvest and food storage equipment; (e) agro-processing; (f) fish farming development. The implementation of these activities will be associated with nutrition education enhances dietary consumption effects, and potential for consumer demand of nutritious foods. The Project will ensure that implementation of this sub-component (a) do not contribute to increased drudgery and burden for women, and (b) will have a direct link with improving the nutritional outcome of the project population. Overall support under this component will be developed through a value chain approach that will also address key access to market constraints.

Component 3: Contingency emergency response

42. This component establishes a disaster recovery contingency fund that could be triggered in the event of a natural disaster affecting the agriculture sector through formal declaration of a national emergency and upon a formal request from the Government of Niger. In that case, funds from other project components could be reallocated to Component 3 to finance emergency response expenditures and meet crises and emergency needs. Implementation of this component will follow the provisions of the Immediate Response Mechanism Manual (IRM).

Component 4 Project Management, monitoring and evaluation (USD 8 million)

43. The Project will be implemented under the 3N institutional arrangements at upper level and to some extent through the decentralization network on the ground. This component deals with
coordination and monitoring and implementation of the project and consists of two sub-components:

a. Project Management:

44. The purpose of this sub-component is to ensure that the project is implemented efficiently, on time and in accordance with the Loan Agreement. This would be the responsibility of a Project Coordination Unit and a small team of experts located at the national, and regional levels. The final arrangements for project management will be agreed at preparation stage.

b. Project Monitoring and Evaluation:

45. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system will be established to collect and process appropriate information, to verify the output, effects and eventually the impacts of project activities over time. Baseline information will be collected as part of the preparation process. As part of the monitoring activities, the project will develop partnership with research/learning institution for the monitoring benefits generated by climate-smart activities.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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