

FOOD AND NUTRITION INSECURITY

URGENT ALERT ON WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Urgent action is imperative in light of the critical projections for June–August 2024, which underscore the escalating food and nutrition insecurity.



The latest Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analysis of March 2024 explored the food and nutrition landscape across West and Central Africa. For the current period, fourteen countries were analyzed, including Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Benin, Nigeria, and Cameroon. The projected analysis encompassed three more countries beyond the initial fourteen, namely Niger, Gambia, and Cape Verde.

The findings unveiled an alarming scenario for 2024: as of March 2024, over 38.1 million people, constituting around 9.5% of the population analyzed in the 14 countries, are currently (March-May) in phase 3 or worse—signifying Crisis, Emergency, and Catastrophe on the CH classification scale.

Looking ahead, the projected outlook for the period June-August 2024 appears even more severe: nearly 52 million people across the 17 analyzed countries are anticipated to face phases 3 to 5 during the lean season of June-August. This translates to 12% of the analyzed population struggling to meet their basic food and nutrition requirements during a period

Timely and decisive measures are essential to mitigate the impending crisis and safeguard the well-being of vulnerable populations in the region.

when food and nutrition insecurity typically peaks across the region.

This figure surpasses the last projected estimate for 2023, indicating a pressing need for sustained and urgent interventions.

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World Food Programme



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Delving deeper, 6 out of the 17 countries are expected to have over 10% of their analyzed population in a crisis or worse situation during June-August 2024. These countries include Mauritania (656 652, 14%), Burkina Faso (2 734 196, 12%), Niger (3 436 892, 13%), Chad (3 364 453, 20%), Sierra Leone (1 569 895, 20%), and Nigeria (31 758 164, 16%).

The evolution of the population in phase 3 to 5 from the current to the projected period also underscores the gravity of the situation: only four countries are expected to witness a marginal improvement or to maintain the same percentage (Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Guinea), while the remaining countries are projected to experience an escalation in the population facing phases 3 to 5 during June-August compared to the current scenario.

An estimated 131 673 875 people in the analyzed countries are projected to be in phase 2—Under Pressure—during the next lean season, namely 30% of the analyzed population. This signifies that their level of vulnerability remains precarious, and even minimal shocks or crises could push them into phase 3 or worse.

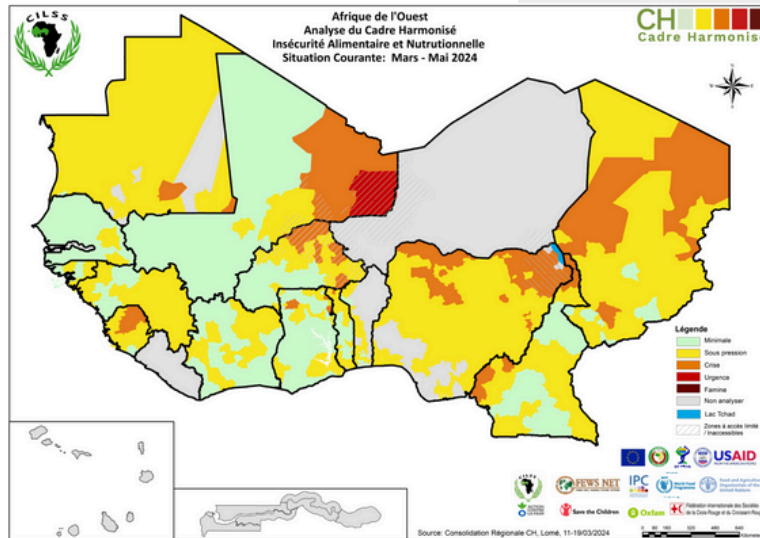


Figure 1: Results of the CH analysis for the current situation of March-May 2024

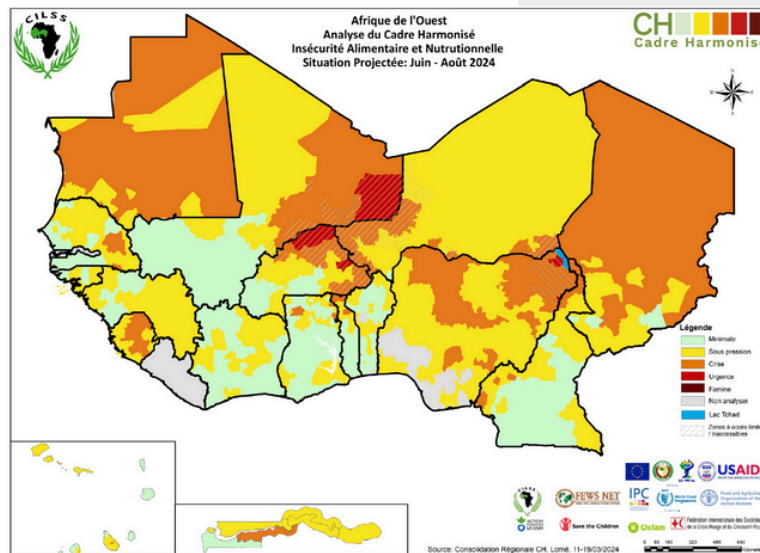


Figure 2: Results for the CH analysis for the projected situation of June-August 2024

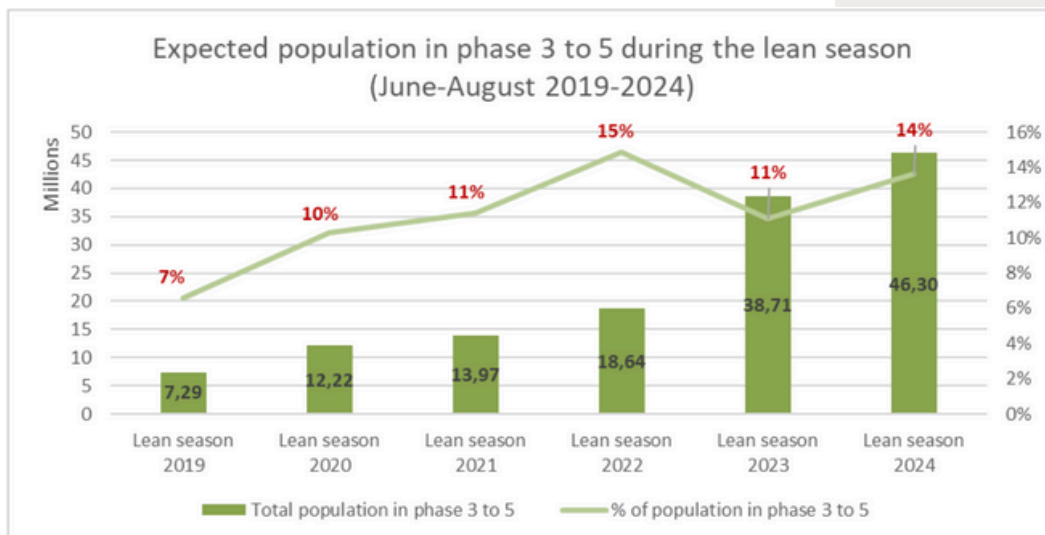


Figure 3: The countries analyzed include those of the Sahel region (Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad), as well as Cameroon (extreme north) and Nigeria (Bay States)

The nutritional situation remains alarming, with more than two-thirds of the analyzed areas classified as serious or critical.

In 2024, the integrated food security and nutrition response is crucial as there are 2.8 million cases of wasting (GAM) across the 6 Sahelian countries, including 640,000 cases of severe wasting (SAM) in areas with urgent needs for food and nutritional assistance. More than 39% and 44% of GAM and SAM cases, respectively, are in dire need of immediate nutritional and food support.

According to the latest IPC acute malnutrition analyses (figure 5), the nutritional situation remains highly concerning, with over two-thirds of the analyzed areas classified as serious (Phase 3) or critical (Phase 4), and with Chad, Mali, and Northern Nigeria being the worst affected.

Recent nutrition surveys in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Northern Nigeria reveal unacceptably high levels of wasting in children under five, with certain areas reaching emergency levels (>15%), such as Menaka and Gao in Mali, Sokoto State in Northern Nigeria, and various localities in Burkina Faso hosting displaced populations. These surveys also indicate elevated levels of acute malnutrition in adolescents and women of reproductive age, particularly in humanitarian settings. In Northern Nigeria, the prevalence of acute malnutrition among women aged 15-49 ranges from 19% to 31% in Sokoto State and from 11% to 19% in Zamfara State.

In Mali, the highest prevalence of acute malnutrition (>10%) among women of reproductive age is observed in Kayes, Gao, Kidal, and Menaka, with pregnant women being the most affected (>20% with acute malnutrition).

In coastal countries, a higher prevalence of child wasting is generally observed in areas bordering the Sahel countries, according to 2022 survey data.

Pays	Priorités FS/NUT Hotspot	SAM Burden	GAM Burden
Burkina Faso	High	34 063	98 459
	Very High	71 500	214 062
Burkina Faso Total		105 563	312 521
Chad	High	87 536	385 612
	Very High	127 545	579 514
Chad Total		215 080	965 126
Mali	High	32 357	100 543
	Very High	23 922	90 589
Mali Total		56 279	191 132
Mauritania	High	5 712	20 875
Mauritania Total		5 712	20 875
Niger	High	207 006	1 088 412
	Very High	41 214	252 341
Niger Total		248 220	1 340 753
Senegal	High	6 523	25 137
Senegal Total		6 523	25 137
Total Central Sahel		410 062	1 844 406
Total Sahel		637 377	2 855 544

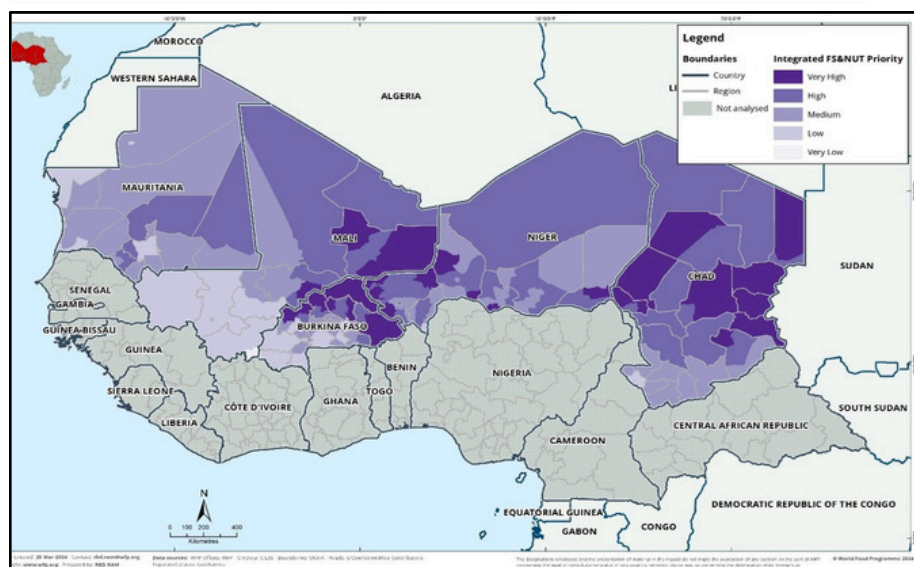


Figure 4: Priority areas for an integrated food security/nutrition response in 2024 (Data sources: WFP Offices - CH data: CILSS ; Website: www.wfp.org)

In Benin, child wasting in the Alibori department reached close to emergency levels (14.7%). In Ghana, the prevalence of child wasting varies from 1.8% in the Western North to 7.8% in the Northern Region. In Togo, child wasting in the three Northern Regions approaches the critical threshold of 10%, with rates of 7.3% in the Kara Region, 9.2% in the Maritime Region, and 9.8% in the Savanes Region.

Across 9 Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Northern Nigeria, and Senegal), admissions for severe wasting increased by 16% in 2023 compared to 2022, with 2.3 million children receiving treatment (figure 6). This marks the highest level of admissions observed since 2019.

Recent analyses on cost of the diet highlight a critical issue: over 60% of households in our region struggle to afford healthy and nutritious diet. This alarming reality stems from a worsening food environment, exacerbated by the persistent high costs of nutritious foods in areas across Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Benin. It's imperative that we address these challenges to ensure equitable access to quality nutrition for all.

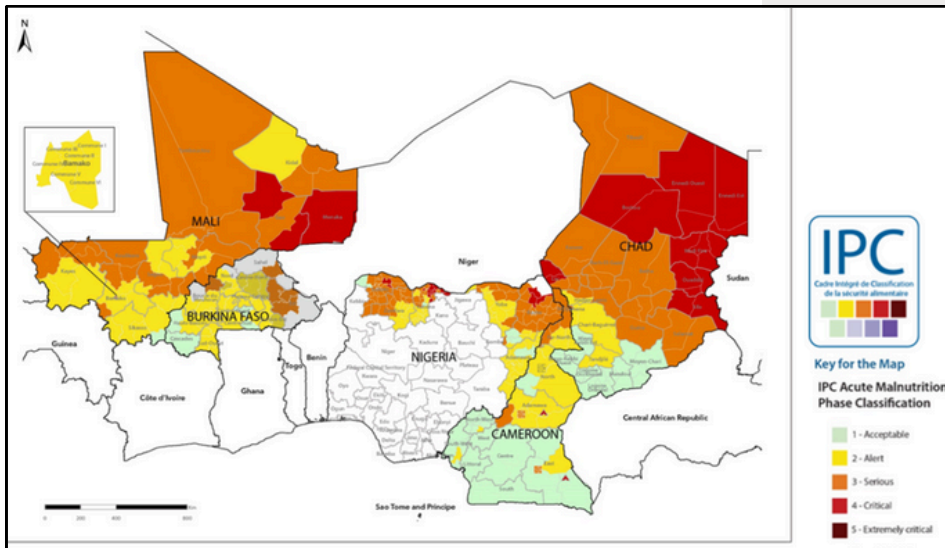


Figure 5: Results of the IPC acute malnutrition analysis (period February-May 2024)

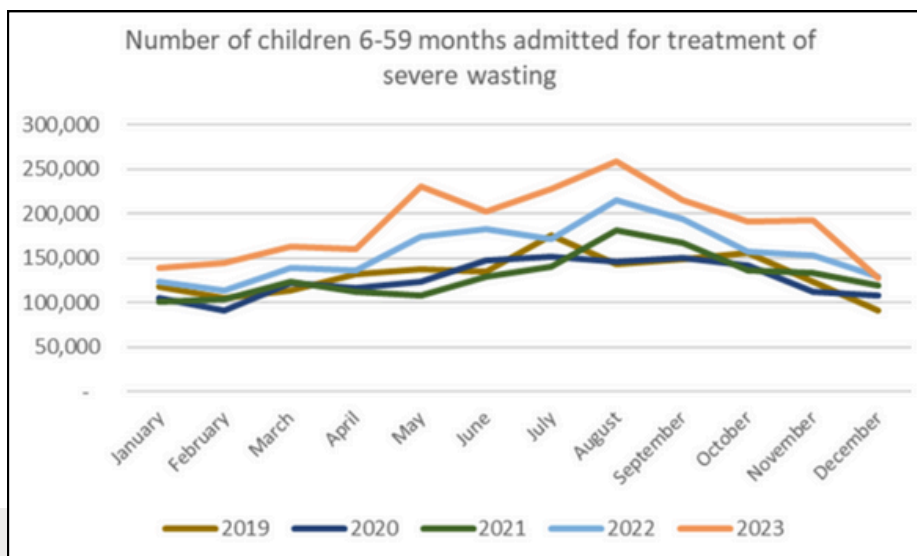


Figure 6: Number of admissions for treatment of severe wasting, Sahel countries (2019-2023)

Conflicts and insecurity, as well as prolonged periods of drought and flooding, persist as key drivers of this critical situation.

As of March 2024, the central Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger) and Chad collectively registered over 3 million internally displaced people, a staggering eight-fold increase compared to five years prior. Additionally, these four nations provide refuge to nearly 1.2 million refugees and asylum seekers.¹ While the primary driver of displacement remains conflict, it's noteworthy that 20% of cases arise from challenges accessing land in the Sahel region. In Niger and Chad, land access issues accounted for one in three displacements during the latter half of 2023.

Inadequate access to production areas in insecure zones and the high costs associated with agricultural inputs and staple foods further contribute to the challenges.

Persistent Conflicts and Economic Challenges amplify Food and Nutrition Security Crisis in West and Central Africa.

The functioning of agricultural markets is notably disrupted in areas affected by civil insecurity, particularly in the Liptako Gourma area (Burkina, Niger, Mali), the Eastern basin encompassing Nigeria, and Chad. Here, supplies are depleted, and household demands rise beyond the norm. Across most countries in the region, prices of essential cereal staples continue to increase, with increments ranging from 10 to over 100%.

This rise is particularly acute in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, especially in regions grappling with civil insecurity where supply chains face intensified challenges.

Moreover, inflations resulting from economic challenges in Ghana (23%), Nigeria (30%), Sierra Leone (54%), Liberia (10%), and Gambia (16%) remain significant factors exacerbating the situation. The regional inflation level remains alarmingly high, standing at 21% compared to 18% in January 2023.

The effects of climate change, increase food insecurity, disease outbreaks, political instability, and insecurity limit access to nutritious diets and basic social services, and affect care and feeding practices. Recurrent and multiple shocks exacerbated vulnerabilities, resulting in a concerning nutrition situation for women and children.

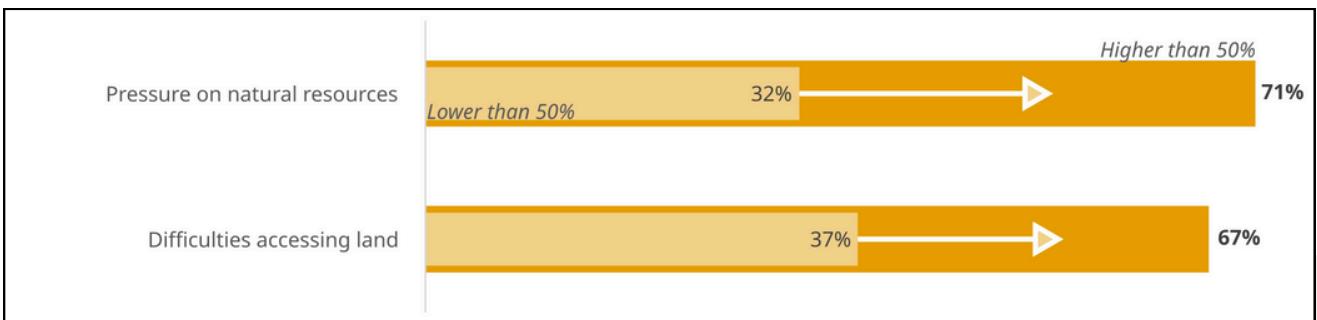


Figure 7: Reported pressure on natural resources and difficulties in accessing land in Central Sahel and Chad's Lake Province, according to the population displacement, 2023, Project 21

¹ UNHCR, R4 Sahel, Last update March 2024, <https://data.unhcr.org/fr/situations/sahelcrisis>

Food insecurity and protection risks amplify each other, with a massive impact on the most vulnerable communities.

The Project 21 analyses show an increase of protection risks and restricted access to basic services in areas categorized as phase 3 or worse, particularly in the central Sahel and Chad, with a particular impact on children and women. Communities report twice as many cases of gender-based violence and four times more instances of extortion in areas projected to be in phases 3 and 4 for 2024.

Children in phases 3 to 5 have only half as much access to primary school, with a disparity in access to education between girls and boys that is higher by almost 15 points.

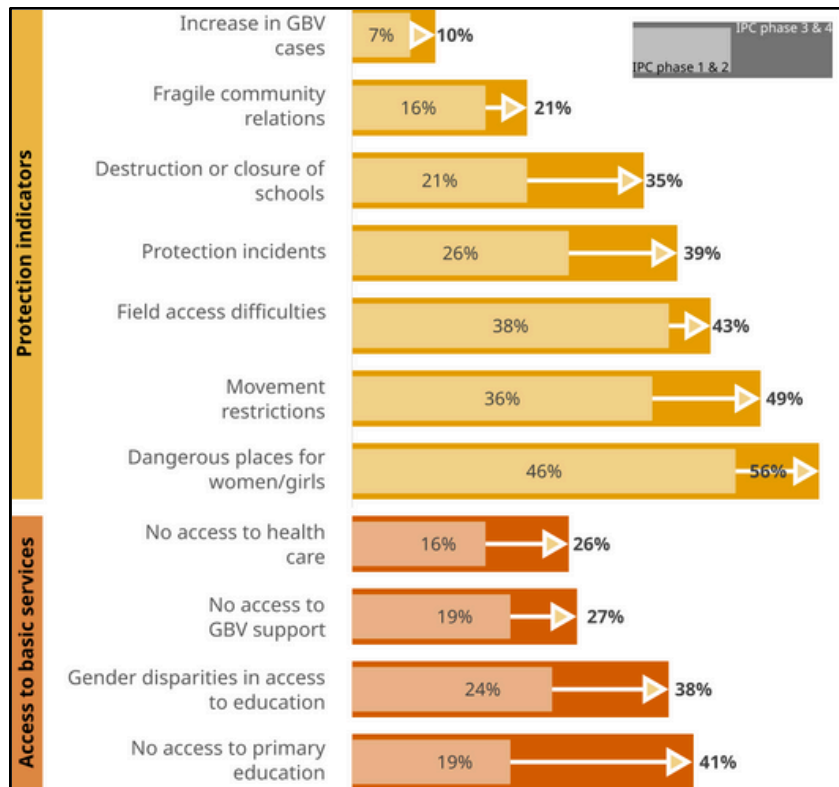


Figure 8: Protection indicators in areas affected by food insecurity in the lean season (May-Aug. 2023), in Central Sahel and Chad's Lake Province, Project 21



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate action is vital to reinforce emergency response capabilities, enabling the rapid delivery of essential food and nutritional assistance to populations, including IDPs/refugees, experiencing food and nutrition insecurity (Phase 3 to 5), thereby safeguarding lives, and mitigating the further increased risk of malnutrition during the lean season.

To Governments and Technical and Financial Partners:

- To facilitate access for humanitarian interventions in hard-to-reach areas.
- To mobilize financial resources to fund the implementation of National Response Plans (NRPs).
- To mobilize financial resources to meet all the nutritional input requirements (RUTF and RUSF) for the management of cases of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).
- To mobilize funding for the implementation of anticipatory actions aimed at mitigating the risks associated with the deterioration of the food and nutrition situation among the most vulnerable populations in the region.
- To make substantial short- and medium-term investments in food security and nutrition programs, including social protection strategies, to reverse the growing trends.

To Technical and Financial Partners, international NGOs and National Civil Society Organizations:

- To strengthen cross-sector analyses and integrate protection data into the analysis of the food crisis, particularly in conflict affected areas.
- To mobilize funding for the implementation of integrated approaches, ensuring complementary actions to security and nutrition responses.
- To provide financial and technical support for national and regional initiatives put in place by governments and regional institutions (CILSS, ECOWAS, etc.) aimed at strengthening the food and nutritional security and resilience of populations at risk.

