



## **Doing Business In NIGER: A Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies**

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# Chapter 1: Doing Business In Niger

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## Market Overview

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- The government of Mamadou Tandja completed its first five-year term in 2004. First-ever local elections were held in July 2004. The next local elections are scheduled for 2008; however, they will most likely be held in 2009, along with the next legislative and presidential elections.
- The country's macroeconomic policies, particularly the privatization of dormant parastatals, have been widely praised by international financial institutions and donors.
- The government actively seeks foreign private investment and considers it key to economic growth and development. It has undertaken a concerted effort to revitalize the private sector.
- In recent years, Niger promulgated revisions to the investment code (2000), mining code (2006), and petroleum code (2007), all with attractive terms for investors, including periods of tax and customs exemptions and tariff protection. Equal treatment of all investors is guaranteed, and total foreign ownership is allowed.
- The CFA is freely convertible to euro or dollars. There is no restriction on the number of euro or dollars that can be converted into CFA. There are restrictions, however, on converting CFA to Euro or dollars. For amounts greater than CFA 800,000 (approximately USD 1,800 or Euro 1,200) approval from the Ministry of Finance is needed. (Travelers need only show a passport and plane ticket.) There have been no expropriations since the 1970's and there is no pattern of discrimination against foreign firms.
- Niger is AGOA eligible and in December 2003 won apparel and textile certification. The AGOA third country textile provision was recently extended until 2012. Niger qualified for Category 9 of AGOA in 2006, which mostly allows the entry of hand woven fabric into the United States duty free.
- In 2008, Niger qualified for a three-year, USD 23 million threshold program from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to help reduce corruption, reduce the cost and regulatory process of starting a business, and increase girls' school attendance.
- The privatization of SONITEL, the state-owned telecommunications company, and SNE, the water company, demonstrates the GON's desire to promote the private sector; however, the privatization of the state-owned electric utility (NIGELEC) and

the national oil distribution company (SONIDEP) are on hold indefinitely. Three mobile phone and two Internet operating licenses have been granted and genuine competition in these sectors is helping to expand access and reduce costs for consumers. An independent multisectoral regulatory agency has been created to help ensure free and fair competition.

- The GON continues to implement the Public Expenditure Management and Fiscal Accountability Review Program (PEMFAR), which has led to the separation of regulatory and accountability functions in the Treasury and improved government mechanisms for the control of internal auditing of government expenditures.
- The World Bank and IMF support budgetary expenditure reform through the GON's Accelerated Poverty Reduction Strategy which is expected to continue through 2012.
- The industrial development of Niger is extremely limited. Despite a steep decline in prices on the world market followed by a price recovery in recent years, uranium mining remains the most important component of the formal economy and the most significant foreign investment. The two majority French-owned mining companies employ a combined workforce of about 1,650 persons and, after the government, are the nation's largest employers.
- The economy is open to foreign trade and foreign investment, including from the United States. The proximity and cultural links to Nigeria have resulted in a long history of lively trade across the 1400-kilometer common border.
- Niger is a part of the larger, French-speaking West African CFA monetary zone, potentially a much greater market if regional integration activities progress. As a member state of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) Niger adopted permanent preferential tariffs for internal trade. As part of WAEMU, Niger shares a common currency, the CFA, which is fixed to the euro. Niger is also a member of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) and, as such, has a well-established legal and regulatory framework. In addition, Niger is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and a potential gateway to the vast Nigerian market.

## Market Challenges

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- Major roadblocks to doing business in Niger include the small size of Niger's market, an unskilled and uneducated workforce, and low per capita income. The economy mainly consists of subsistence agriculture and informal market activity.

Niger has a small and fragile economy based largely on subsistence-level agriculture and animal husbandry. Niger ranks 174 out of 177 countries on the United Nations Development Program index of human development.

- The economy of northern Niger, particularly in and around the cities of Iferouane, Arlit, and Agadez, has been adversely affected by an escalation of violence by the

local rebel group, Movement for Justice in Niger (MNJ). On August 27, 2007, the President of Niger declared a State of Alert for the region. Several international organizations, including private and nongovernmental groups, have relocated personnel from these areas. Official Americans are not allowed to travel to the region. The tourist industry of northern Niger is virtually shuttered. Hotels and restaurants that catered to tourists have closed indefinitely.

## Market Opportunities

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- Best prospect sectors
  - **Oil Exploration and Mining**
    - Production tests by ExxonMobil-Petronas identified reserves of 300 million barrels of oil in the Agadem block in eastern Niger on the border with Chad. It has been estimated, however, that at least 1 billion barrels would be needed in order to make production viable, due to the expense of building a pipeline that would link this remote part of Niger to the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline.
    - In 2006 the Government of Niger refused to renew Exxon's license and also blocked Petronas's bid to take over exploration in this area. Recently, the GON awarded exploration and production permits to the Agadem block to three companies: the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation, the Saudi Arabian company Delta Oil and the Canadian company Ivanhoe. The CNPC already has exploration rights in two other potentially oil-rich areas in Bilma and Ténéré. The other major player in Niger's oil market is the Algerian national oil company, Sonatrach, which holds exploration rights to the Kafra block on the Niger-Algeria border. Algeria is also advising Niger on oil legislation that will make oil exploration and discovery arrangements more favorable to the government of Niger.
    - There are also significant proven reserves of gold in Western Niger that could provide an opportunity for investors and mining concerns. The European Union announced in June 2003 a USD 40 million dollar grant to Niger to revitalize its mining sector, to be paid out over the next six years. Niger's one commercial gold mining operation, moth-balled for several years due to low prices for gold on the world market, resumed operations in 2004 and has begun production. In 2006, gold was Niger's fourth most important export, accounting for approximately 9% of the country's total exports.
  - **Tourism**
    - Niger's northern desert region, centered around the historic city of Agadez, used to draw visitors from around the world who came to see the beauty of the highest dunes in the Sahara, the Aïr mountains, ancient rock carvings, and fossilized dinosaur remains.. Since February 2007,

however, the group “Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice” (MNJ) has been attacking military and other facilities in the north. Furthermore, landmines have been placed in the region and several have exploded killing military and civilian personnel. The resulting insecurity has devastated Niger’s tourist industry.

- In 2007, the Government of Niger cancelled the annual festival “Cure Salee,” in which visitors from around the world gather in Ingal (near Agadez) to celebrate Fulani and Tuareg dance, culture, and arts. Also cancelled was the “Festival de l’Aïr,” usually held in December in Iferouane, where visitors would experience Tuareg life and culture.
- Every other November a high-profile international fashion festival (FIMA), draws thousands of visitors to Niger. The next FIMA is scheduled for November, 2009.

○ **Telecommunications**

- There is growing potential in telecommunications. Under the terms of its privatization, SONITEL, the former state-owned phone company, was granted a monopoly on all international voice connections and Internet communications. In December 2004, this monopoly ended and all companies are now able to compete equally. Telecommunications and Internet service providers that get in early will be well placed to quickly gain market share.
- As part of the terms of privatization, SONITEL is barred from competing in the cell phone market. The Government has issued four cell phone licenses.
- 

○ **Other Business Opportunities**

- Export opportunities may exist for pharmaceuticals (herbal and generic drugs), heavy construction and earth-moving equipment, food processing, and coal-fired electrical generating equipment.
- Companies involved in mining equipment manufacturing, finance and investment, geophysical mapping, consulting, and wastewater treatment facility construction are best placed to benefit from the revitalization of Niger’s mining industry.
- Although not currently viable, considerable phosphate deposits could eventually be exploited as regional demand for fertilizer increases.
- There are also opportunities in the agribusiness sector in providing inputs such as fertilizers, hybrid seeds, and equipment. Food drying or other food processing is a mostly untapped market, particularly for onions, tomatoes, peppers and fruits, as well as processing of peanuts and sesame for oil. There is also a small market for imported processed foods and household products.
- With continued high levels of donor assistance, there are opportunities for providing consulting and engineering services to development projects supported by the World Bank and African Development Bank, other multilateral banks, and bilateral donors.
- In addition to gold, geological studies have shown that silver, tin, platinum and copper are found in Niger. Niger’s significant coal reserves are being used to meet a mere 5.5% of its electricity need. With an

expansion of the power grid and improved transportation, there would be great potential for additional coal mining and power generation station construction.

## **Market Entry Strategy**

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- Nigerien culture is largely traditional, and most potential business partners are practicing Muslims. Getting to know individuals is very important and taking time for visits and meals together is recommended. Rushing matters is unseemly and may only serve to destroy confidence in a foreigner's good intentions. Nigerien business people also like to be able to see and feel merchandise before entering into any agreements, no matter how basic the product.
- The legal system inherited from France is sufficiently different from the U.S. system that retaining a local attorney is advisable. Niger is a member of OHADA, which provides a common body of business law used throughout the WAEMU zone. A list of attorneys is available on the Embassy's Consular Section webpage: <http://niamey.usembassy.gov/niger/attorney.html>

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## Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment

For information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link below to the U.S. Department of State Background Notes.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5474.htm>

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### Using an Agent or Distributor

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Using a local agent is recommended, given language and cultural barriers.

The specific type of representation that a U.S. firm establishes in Niger must be tailored to fit the individual requirements of the product and its potential market. U.S. firms may employ the services of an agent, appoint a distributor or dealer, and/or establish a direct sales branch or subsidiary. Preferably, the agent or the distributor should be a local business/firm, fluent in French and aware of Niger's business practices. If the product requires some servicing, the U.S. exporter should make available a reasonable inventory of spare parts to his agent or distributor. U.S. companies also should provide brochures and marketing literature in French.

### Establishing an Office

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There are no restrictions on foreign companies opening a local office in Niger, though they must obtain a business certificate from the Ministry of Commerce. The “Guichet Unique”, or one-stop-shop, at the local Chamber of Commerce is the first step for foreign investors towards establishing a business in Niger and qualifying for investment

incentives. Committed to simplifying the registration process and to establishing an investor-friendly image for Niger, this one-stop-shop has theoretically reduced the amount of time required for the simple registration of a business from 60 to 10 days.

- Foreign investors will need the assistance of a notary in order to register and incorporate companies under the newly created OHADA, a regional initiative to harmonize commercial codes in Francophone Africa. The most common legal forms of incorporation are as the branch of a foreign company (“succursale”), the limited liability company (“Société à Responsabilité Limitée – SARL”) and the public corporation (“société anonyme – SA”). Once registered, a branch is regarded as a Nigerien judicial entity.

**Note:** *In French practice, the notaire or notary has completely different functions from a U.S. notary. The notaire is a specialist in contracts and legal documents.*

- All limited liability corporations, (SARLs) must have a minimum capitalization of CFA 1 million and at least one shareholder.
- The minimum capital required to create a public corporation is CFA 10 million with a minimum of one shareholder.
- Other types of business structures exist and include sole proprietorship, regional office, local agency and distributorship.

## Franchising

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The GON is open to all types of business and industrial investment. No American franchise companies currently operate in Niger.

## Direct Marketing

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There are no prohibitions on direct marketing. Direct mail is unlikely to be an effective strategy in Niger as home mail delivery does not exist, mail service to post offices is slow and sometimes unreliable. Telemarketing would be an expensive and somewhat frustrating strategy to use in Niger as fixed line phone service is limited. Fixed line service that does exist is expensive by world standards and is often unreliable and plagued by line noise. E-mail marketing is limited because home Internet access is uncommon. Internet cafes are expanding throughout the country but these businesses face a limited choice of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) with high rates and lackluster service. Digital cable is not presently a marketing option in Niger. Marketing via cell phones is a possibility. Cell phones are more common and more reliable in Niger than fixed lines. Direct response marketing, such as infomercials with solicitations for credit card purchases of products would be unlikely to work in Niger as few Nigeriens have credit cards. There are very few outlets in Niger that accept credit cards. Niger is almost entirely a cash-based economy.

## Joint Ventures/Licensing

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The Nigerien investment code provides incentives for joint ventures. Joint venture partnerships should specify the responsibility of each party since many local

entrepreneurs expect that the foreign investor will cover all costs. Although increasingly interested in joint venture activities, Nigerien entrepreneurs typically have little equity to offer.

Nigerien law does not contain any specific provision for licensing. The primary consideration is the formalization of a remittance procedure for any fees and royalties to the licensor, in compliance with local tax laws. In Niger, licensing agreements are mainly common in the tobacco, food and soft drink industries.

### **Selling to the Government**

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The government occasionally solicits international tenders of modest size for goods such as generic drugs, school supplies, and four-wheel drive vehicles. The bidding and bid award procedures are open, but some bidders have raised questions about the fairness of the process. As foreign economic assistance to Niger increases, procurement opportunities for U.S. businesses might increase, including development projects requiring engineering consulting services, technical assistance, agricultural planning, and specialized equipment. The World Bank and the IMF have made a revision of government procurement practices a condition for further economic assistance and debt relief. Transparency and accountability in government procurement have greatly improved over the past three years.

### **Distribution and Sales Channels**

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Distribution occurs both by modern and by traditional systems. The modern sector is dominated by a few medium size privately owned import-export firms that cover all aspects of trade from importing to retailing, but their number is decreasing. Existing alongside these companies are extremely competitive small-scale traders specializing in the wholesale and retail distribution of various consumer goods.

A very dynamic traditional or informal sector engages roughly 80 percent of the workforce. Informal traders in street markets carry out a sizable portion of domestic trade. Street vendors make up a dynamic, if somewhat marginalized, sub-component of the informal sector. In recent years, there has been a substantial build-up of more formal merchandising space.

Most products enter Niger overland by truck. These trucks load their products in the West African ports of Cotonou, Lome and Sekondi-Takoradi. Cote d'Ivoire has ceased being a popular port for products destined for the Nigerien market. Nigeria is not generally used as a port of call for products destined to be shipped via truck from port to the Nigerien market. Most products shipped into Niger by truck arrive from Burkina Faso or Benin after being unloaded at one of the aforementioned West African ports.

There is a lively cross border trade between Niger and Nigeria centered in the Nigerien city of Maradi.

Air freight is used for some limited importation into Niger. Air France, DHL, Royal Air Maroc as well as some regional African carriers serve Niger from the capital Niamey.

The major distribution and selling points in Niger include the capital Niamey and the city of Maradi.

### **Selling Factors/Techniques**

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Most local distributors of imported products expect their suppliers to provide advertising and promotional support, especially when introducing a new product or brand name. All sales promotion material and technical documentation should be in French. Yet, to reach the local population radio advertisements in one or more of the local languages would be advisable. In Niamey, small companies exist who hire youth to distribute samples of consumer goods, particularly at sporting or musical events. In addition, griots (a sort of a town crier) can be hired to spread publicity in open-air markets and other places where people gather. Small kiosks, vending carts and traffic light vendors are sales strategies that some companies use in Niger. Western style retail spaces as well as open-air markets exist throughout Niger. Some open air markets in rural areas in Niger operate only on certain days, as vendors will tour a region to sell their wares.

### **Electronic Commerce**

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Electronic Commerce is not well developed in Niger.

### **Trade Promotion and Advertising**

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There are 15 government-owned and private radio stations operating in Niger, as well as one state-run television channel and four private television channels. All radio and television stations carry paid advertisements.

The Nigerien media also includes approximately sixty newspapers. The government publishes the French language newspaper "Le Sahel" Monday through Thursday and "Sahel Dimanche" on Friday. All other newspapers are independent French language newspapers and are published weekly. All newspapers carry paid advertising.

Articles from many Nigerien newspapers, including the Le Sahel and Sahel Dimanche, can be viewed on: <http://tamtaminfo.com/>.

The newspaper Le Républicain can be viewed at <http://republicain-niger.com/>.

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Petroleum product prices are set by the Ministry of Commerce but largely reflect world market prices and the US dollar exchange rate. Other prices are set by the market.

U.S. exporters should price their products on a CIF (cost, insurance and freight) basis. Although new to the Nigerien market, U.S. exporters should request an irrevocable confirmed letter of credit.

### **Sales Service/Customer Support**

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Organizations such as the Association for the Defense of Consumer Rights (Association de Défense des Droits des Consommateurs), S.O.S.-Kandadji and ORCONI (Organisation des Consommateurs Nigeriens) provide limited support for consumers. Consumers in Niger are generally not accustomed to U.S. style guaranties. Much of their buying habits depend upon establishing a relationship of trust and experience with a particular vendor.

After-sales support and service are critical for sophisticated and heavy industrial equipment such as telecommunications equipments, industrial machinery, computer hardware and photocopiers. Product recalls are virtually unknown in Niger.

## **Protecting Your Intellectual Property**

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Niger is a member of the West African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI), which establishes the legal framework for protecting intellectual property and approves requests for registration. Protection is initially granted for 10 years and is renewable for up to another 10 years.

As a signatory to the 1983 Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, Niger provides national treatment under Nigerien patent and trademark laws to foreign businesses. Niger is also a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and a signatory to the Universal Copyright Convention. In practice, however, the government lacks the capacity and resources to enforce copyright violations, and counterfeit CDs and videocassettes are readily available in most cities.

Trade secrets can be adequately protected within individual business agreements in Niger.

Please refer to the Investment Climate Statement (ICS) in Chapter 6 of this Country Commercial Guide for further information regarding Intellectual Property in Niger.

## **Due Diligence**

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Many Nigerien firms do not keep accounting records that would be acceptable under international accounting standards. However, there are some Nigerien accounting firms that can help their Nigerien brethren construct and maintain accounting systems that would allow foreign investors to determine the health of a Nigerien firm. However, for due diligence to be performed adequately, prospective investors should consider visiting the Nigerien firms' operations and viewing the deeds of their property, etc.

To help American exporters formulate sound credit policies applicable to local markets, credit information on individual Nigerien firms can be obtained by requesting an International Company Profile (ICP) through the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, [www.export.gov](http://www.export.gov).

## **Local Professional Services**

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The specific type of representation that a U.S. firm establishes in Niger must be tailored to fit the individual requirements of the product and its potential market. U.S. firms may employ the services of an agent, appoint a distributor or dealer, and/or establish a direct sales branch or subsidiary. Preferably, the agent or the distributor should be a local business/firm, fluent in French and aware of Niger's business practices. If the product requires some servicing, the U.S. exporter should make available a reasonable inventory of spare parts to his agent or distributor. U.S. companies also should provide brochures and marketing literature in French.

Once the decision to open a business in Niger is made, the U.S. businessperson will require legal counsel and a "notaire" or notary for all the legal formalities associated with the incorporation of a company. The Embassy has available a list of lawyers and notaries. It is advisable that U.S. firms approach firms specializing in financial and tax advisory services.

U.S. firms can find below names and contact information for some local accounting firms:

Audit & Conseil Sidibe & Associés  
B.P.: 12914  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73 75 75  
Fax: (227) 20 73 81 78  
Email: [acsa@intnet.ne](mailto:acsa@intnet.ne)  
Contact: Mr. Lawel Moussa

Cabinet Comptable Abdou Baoua  
B.P.: 11803  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 75 36 31  
Email: [cabbaoua@intnet.ne](mailto:cabbaoua@intnet.ne) / [cabinetbaoua@yahoo.fr](mailto:cabinetbaoua@yahoo.fr)  
Contact: Mr. Abdou Baoua

Cabinet EFIC  
B.P: 12498  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73 51 13  
Contact: Lawali Hamani

Fiduciaire Conseil et Audit (FCA)  
B.P.: 07  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73 38 13 or 20 73 80 83  
Fax: (227) 20 73 51 95  
Email: [fca@intnet.ne](mailto:fca@intnet.ne)  
Contact: Mr. Nouhou Tari

Cabinet Yéro Garba  
B.P.: 11146  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73 30 69 or 20 73 58 10 or 20 73 30 00

Fax: (227) 20 73 80 34  
Email: [excom@intnet.ne](mailto:excom@intnet.ne)  
Contact: Mr. Yéro Garba

While these companies are established in Niamey, you should contact each one to ascertain their specific capabilities. U.S. Embassy Niamey is not recommending these firms by including their contact information in the Country Commercial Guide.

## Web Resources

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- <http://www.arm-niger.org/>
- <http://www.niger-export.ne/>
- <http://www.agoa.gov/>
- <http://www.uemoa.int/index.htm>
- <http://www.ohada.com/>
- <http://niamey.usembassy.gov/niger/attorney.html>

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## Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment

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### Commercial Sectors

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- [Computers and Software](#)
- [Used Clothing](#)
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## Mining / Uranium

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	43210 tons	43210 tons	43210 tons
Total Local Production	3400 tons	3431 tons	3513 tons
Total Exports	149.23 Million	159.76 Million	148.75 Million
Total Imports	N/A	N/A	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar. Data are from the National Institute of Statistics.

Niger is the world's sixth largest producer of uranium and has approximately one-fifth of the world's total deposits. A processing plant at the Arlit uranium mine began production in 1971.

The French nuclear power concern Areva is the majority (60+%) shareholder in Niger's two national mining companies: the Societe des Mines de l'Air (SOMAIR), est. 1968, and the Compagnie Miniere de l'Akouta (COMINAK), est. 1975. The Government of Niger retains a roughly 30% stake in the concerns, with the remainder in the hands of Spanish (3%) and Japanese (6%) investors. Since acquiring control of both companies from COGEMA in 2000, Areva has merged their management and other shared functions, though it retains the names to distinguish between the subterranean mining concerns of SOMAIR, which take place on the edge of the city of Arlit, and the open-pit surface mining of COMINAK, which takes place a few kilometers away near the village of Akokan. Together, the two companies employ 1,632 persons and mine about 3,200 tons of uranium each year.

In 2007 more than 120 mineral exploration and development permits were awarded to a variety of foreign companies, including those of US, Canadian, Indian, and Chinese registry. Due to the recent boost in the price of uranium most of these permits were awarded for uranium exploration and development in northern Niger.

Other mineral resources include: cassiterite ore, phosphates, molybdenum, salt, and coal. Foreign firms are involved in explorations for gold along the Burkina Faso border, and coal mining has also seen an increase in foreign investment recently.

Foreign companies are also currently involved in extraction of gold deposits. The Société des Mines du Liptako (SML), a holding company majority owned by the Canadian company Etruscan, Ltd., began gold production at the Samira mine in October 2004. The pre-production mineable reserves from the Samira Hill and Libiri pits are estimated to total 10.08 million tons grading grams of gold per ton. For Samira Hill's fiscal year 2007, 1.4 million tons of ore were processed at the Samira Hill Gold Mine with an average of 1.98 grams of gold found per ton. In total, 76,399 ounces of gold were produced. Niger also has large deposits of coal and phosphates.

## **Best Products/Services**

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Significant quantities of silver, platinum, phosphates, titanium, nickel and other minerals may exist in the same western Niger region as the gold seams.

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Opportunities may exist to supply equipment transportation and other services.

## **Resources**

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<http://www.world-nuclear.org/sym/2004/souley.htm>

<http://www.wise-uranium.org/uccog.html>

<http://www.wise-uranium.org/uoaf.html#AKOUTA>

<http://www.wise-uranium.org/uoaf.html#ARLIT>

<http://www.etruscan.com/s/SamiraHill.asp>

## Telecommunication Equipment

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	0.65 Million	0.67 Million	N/A
Total Imports	3.48 Million	5.12 Million	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	0.90 Million	1.78 Million	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar. . Data are from the National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Communication, Culture and Arts.

U.S. equipment is likely to be competitive as the telecommunications system is restructured, modernized and extended.

### Best Prospects/Services

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Sonitel, Niger's telecommunications operator, continues to dominate the market. Sonitel was privatized in November 2001 when controlling interest was sold to Dataport, ZTE/LAAICO, a Chinese-Libyan joint venture, owning 51 percent of capital. Liberalization of some services accompanied privatization. Sonitel requested bidding for a modernization of its domestic satellite connections. After an extended delay a company was selected to fulfill the bid for this equipment under circumstances that did not appear to follow open and fair competitive business practices, in particular as regards meeting the technical specifications outlined in the tender announcement.

Three companies now provide cellular telephone services, and there is a competitive Internet services market. As a result, there has been a boom of Internet-related activities and services and in cell phone usage.; although internet usage remains low compared to other countries. The French telecommunications company Groupe Orange was awarded a license for land line, cell phone, and internet usage. Services are expected to begin in mid 2008.

### Opportunities

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Since December 2004, the Sonitel monopoly ended and all companies are now able to compete equally. In addition to the three cell phone companies, SahelCom, Celtel and Atlantic Telecom Niger Moov, already operational, one license has been granted for Wireless Fidelity Internet service. The company that received this license, Afripa Telecom, provides satellite Internet services via a technology known as Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT).

Future growth areas may include Internet services, digital switching technology, satellite services, and cellular phones.

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<http://www.ne.celtel.com/fr/index.html>  
[http://www.gsmworld.com/roaming/gsminfo/net\\_netl.shtml](http://www.gsmworld.com/roaming/gsminfo/net_netl.shtml)  
<http://www.telecelniger.com/services/telecel.htm>  
<http://www.wtng.info/wtng-227-ne.html>  
[http://www.gsmworld.com/roaming/gsminfo/net\\_nesa.shtml](http://www.gsmworld.com/roaming/gsminfo/net_nesa.shtml)  
<http://www.intnet.ne/>  
<http://www.iana.org/root-whois/ne.htm>

## Vehicles

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	3.16 Million	3.30 Million	4.74 Million
Total Imports	49.02 Million	69.12Million	91.00 Million
Imports from the U.S.	4.04 Million	7.41 Million	9.60 Million

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar. Data are from the National Institute of Statistics..

### Best Prospects/Services

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The market for four-wheel drive vehicles, dominated by Japanese makers, and pre-owned vehicles, imported from Europe and the United States, is substantial.

### Opportunities

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With the fall in the value of the Dollar against the Euro and the Yen over the past year, imports from the United States are increasingly attractive.

Nigerien interest in visiting the U.S. to purchase used vehicles at auctions and at dealers has grown over the past year. Nigeriens will go the U.S., often cash in hand, to purchase a few used vehicles to ship back to West African ports. Some Nigeriens are also interested in purchasing new vehicles in the U.S. market for use in Niger. Interest in U.S. vehicle makes as well as non-U.S. vehicles produced for the U.S. market is high among many Nigeriens. Some Nigeriens associate cars made for the U.S. market as more durable, powerful and luxurious than their European counterparts.

## Resources

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[www.ccaian.org](http://www.ccaian.org)

## Pharmaceutical

## Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	2.11 Million	2.25 Million	3.91 Million
Total Imports	19.56 Million	21.95Million	25.28 Million
Imports from the U.S.	2.13 Million	3.23 Million	3.58 Million

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar. Data are from the the National Institute of Statistics.,.

## Best Prospects/Services

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U.S. products may be competitive with European imports purchased by the parastatal drug enterprise, ONPPC, Office National des Produits Pharmaceutiques et Chimiques, and private pharmacies. U.S. companies may find it difficult to compete with Asian and Nigerian manufacturers in the cheaper end of the market.

## Opportunities

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There is an undeveloped market for more complex, harder to manufacture generic drugs where high quality is important. Phyto-Riker, an American company, sells its products on the Nigerien market through a local pharmaceutical distributor, Copharni.

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[www.ccaian.org](http://www.ccaian.org)

[http://www.nundroo.com/drc/references\\_niger.html](http://www.nundroo.com/drc/references_niger.html)

<http://www.phyto-riker.com/>

[http://www.remed.org/html/body\\_fr\\_niger.html](http://www.remed.org/html/body_fr_niger.html)

## Construction Equipment

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	0.83 Million	1.23 Million	N/A
Total Imports	30.57Million	34.29Million	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	8.46 Million	6.61 Million	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar.. Data are from the National Institute of Statistics..

### Best Prospects/Services

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The uranium mining companies, Cominak and Somair, already purchase large Caterpillar dump trucks and loaders and other American made drilling and ore moving equipment, which have proven themselves in this market.

### Opportunities

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There may be other sales opportunities for heavy earth moving equipment, particularly as other mining operations and road construction projects get underway.

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<http://www.stat-niger.org/>  
[www.ccaian.org](http://www.ccaian.org)

## Oil Production Equipment and Services

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Imports	79.25 Million	82.63Million	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	6.24 Million	6.57 Million	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar.. Data are from the National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Mines and Energy..

### Best Products/Services

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Currently all oil production equipment and services are imported.

### Opportunities

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Now that oil has been found in Niger, there may be increased demand for oil field equipment of all kinds. Exploration by Chinese and Algerien companies appears to be intensifying.

### Resources

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<http://www.cnpc.com.cn/english/inter/Exploration.htm>

[http://www.petronas.com.my/internet/corp/centralrep2.nsf/frameset\\_home?OpenFrameset](http://www.petronas.com.my/internet/corp/centralrep2.nsf/frameset_home?OpenFrameset)

<http://www.exxonmobil.com/corporate/>

## Coal Reserve

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	11.4 Million tons	11.4 Million tons	11.4 Million tons
Total Local Production	182,060 tons	176,320 tons	160,360 tons
Total Exports	0.36 Million	1.51 Million	2.41 Million
Total Imports	4.54 Million	6.29 Million	6.94 Million
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar.. Data are from the Ministry of Mines and Energy..

### Best Products/Services

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Major coal reserves have been found in central, south and west of Niger.

### Opportunities

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A market may exist for coal-fired electrical generating equipment as the national need for energy increases. For example, the electricity needs of the uranium mining sites are supplied by coal. Excess power not used by the uranium mines is sent to Agadez and surrounding areas.

### Resources

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<http://www.sonichar-niger.com/>

## Computers and Software

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	0.32 Million	0.33 Million	0.34 Million
Total Imports	10.04 Million	13.20 Million	15.46 Million
Imports from the U.S.	2.78 Million	2.03 Million	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar.. Data are from the National Institute of Statistics.

### Best Products/Services

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Many imported U.S.-manufactured hardware and software products are sold on the local market. There is room for further growth in this sector.

### Opportunities

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All major U.S. brand names - via their European branches - are well represented by local distributors and/or agents. Consequently, 2004 statistics indicate that France is the largest exporter of computers, with 47 percent of the market, although a good portion of that consists of U.S. brands. Direct imports from the United States accounted for seven percent of the market in 2004.

### Resources

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<http://www.stat-niger.org/>

## Used Clothing

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	7.03 Million	8.76Million	N/A
Total Imports	27.16 Million	28.55 Million	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	14.04Million	19.68 Million	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar.. Data are from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Promotion of the Private Sector.

The country's rapidly growing population (3.3 percent per year) and low per capita income have fuelled the demand for used clothing in Niger.

### Best Products/Services

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The Market of Gaya is the hub for clothing distributed to other markets in Niger or re-exported to Nigeria. The major players are the wholesalers who buy their clothing directly from abroad and sell to a myriad of local retailers. Wholesalers in Niger are looking for U.S. exporters who can deliver high quality and fashionable clothing with regular and timely shipments.

### Opportunities

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Nigerien consumers particularly want low-cost active wear products, such as sports clothing and shoes, as well as casual-wear jeans and related outerwear.

### Resources

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[www.ccaian.org](http://www.ccaian.org)

<http://www.nigerphonebook.com/gouvernement/ministere-du-commerce-et-de-la-promotion-du-secteur-prive.html>

## Cosmetics

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	0.05 Million	0.107 Million	N/A
Total Imports	3.53 Million	6.28 Million	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	0.15 Million	1.19 Million	N/A

Data for exports and imports is in millions of US Dollars at the average exchange rate for each year . The exchange rate for 2005 was 526.29 CFA per dollar, the exchange rate for 2006 was 521.67, and the exchange rate for 2007 was 478.60 CFA per dollar.. Data are from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Promotion of the Private Sector and Unilever Niger.

U.S. cosmetics are a highly regarded and sought-after product in West Africa, especially hair and cosmetic products developed for the African-American market. France is the largest supplier with approximately 40 percent of the market share.

The import figures from the United States are misleadingly low because they do not account for imports from U.S.-affiliated companies that have established manufacturing plants in Africa. Nor are cosmetics sourced through Europe reflected in U.S. trade figures with Africa, mainly in Ghana or Nigeria. U.S. import figures also do not take into account the large quantities of undeclared cosmetics products carried in suitcases by Nigerien traders.

### Best Products/Services

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Hair and cosmetic products developed for the African-American market, perfume, lotions, and toiletries.

### Opportunities

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High on the list of products sought by Nigerien consumers are hair, facial and skin-care products. Large quantities of counterfeit products from the sub-region are available in the country. They are often marketed under well-known U.S. brand names. Local production (especially for soap, skin-care and perfumes) is dynamic and well suited to low-income consumers. Local distribution could prove profitable to U.S. vendors.

### Resources

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<http://www.stat-niger.org/>

Niger is a land-locked nation with a particularly harsh climate and inhospitable geographical features - less than 3% of the land is arable. Nevertheless, agriculture contributes approximately 40% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and nearly three-quarters of the labor force is employed in this sector. Based principally on subsistence farming and livestock breeding, the country's economy is still largely at the mercy of the vagaries of the climate.

Niger's economy is dominated by rain-fed agriculture, while livestock production accounts for about a third of the value added in the agriculture sector. The main purpose of agriculture policy in Niger is to achieve food self-sufficiency in spite of climatic hazards and through the following efforts:

- Encouraging dry-cropping in rural areas
- Expediting hydro-agricultural projects, such as depressions and water-points to bring more irrigable land under cultivation;
- Improving soils by the introduction of phosphates, nitrogen-based fertilizers and manure; and
- Replacing traditional farming techniques with more modern methods

The following means are being employed to achieve these aims:

1. Rural productivity projects to farm rain-fed crops on dune lands. These projects aim to increase the production of cereals (millet, sorghum), as well as cash crops such as peanuts and cotton, through a better use of regional potential. Each department has a different crop productivity focus:
  - Niamey -- cereals, onion, rice;
  - Zinder – peanuts and millet;
  - Dosso - cereals, onions, black-eyed beans, peanuts, and cotton;
  - Agadez – onions and garlic
  - Maradi – cereals, onions, and peanuts.
2. Hydro-agricultural projects in the River Valley, depressions, basins, etc.
3. Agricultural extension services and use of fertilizers.
4. Training and deploying an adequate number of competent agricultural technicians.

The main food crops are: millet, sorghum, peanuts, black-eyed beans, rice, maize, potatoes, sugar cane, onions and manioc.

Nigeria is Niger's most important trading partner: In 2005, 75 percent of millet and sorghum imports and 25 percent of maize imports came from Nigeria. Other West African countries also have substantial trade with Niger. Benin accounted for 20 percent of maize imports, Burkina Faso for 15 percent of millet and sorghum and 60 percent of

maize, and Mali accounted for 10 percent of millet and sorghum. In recent years, both Burkina Faso and Mali's importance as a trade partner has grown.

## Rice

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	5202 tons	5369 tons	N/A
Total Exports	38 tons	200 tons	N/A
Total Imports	563,006 tons	286,668 tons	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Data are in thousands of tons. Data are from Ministry of Agriculture.

Rice is the main staple in Niger. Imported rice is consumed even in rural areas, especially during the lean season before the harvest.

### Best Products/Services

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The preference is for 100% broken rice originating from Asia, mainly Thailand and India. However, as average income grows, rice imports are gradually moving upscale with more consumers preferring fragrant rice. Importers are beginning to brand their products in the marketplace.

### Opportunities

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With a highly competitive domestic rice market, Nigeriens largely have been unwilling to pay the higher price of U.S. medium-quality rice.

### Resources

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<http://www.stat-niger.org/>

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ng.html#Econ>

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## Millet

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	5,653 tons	5,123 tons	4,958 tons
Total Exports	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Imports	337 tons	569 tons	836 tons
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Data are in thousands of tons. Data are from Ministry of Agriculture,.

Production of millet, the staple food of most of the people, depends heavily on rainfall.

### Best Products/Services

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As millet grows well on poorly fertilized and dry soils and thus fits a climate with short rainfall periods, Nigerien farmers concentrate their effort on its production. Nigerien importers prefer a variety known as finger millet, which is long-lasting and can be kept three to five years in the form of unthreshed heads.

### Opportunities

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With a highly competitive domestic millet market, Nigeriens largely have been unwilling to pay the higher price of U.S. pearl variety.

### Resources

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<http://www.stat-niger.org/>

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/nq.html>

## Sorghum

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	2,475 tons	3,016 tons	2,821 tons
Total Exports	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Imports	1,185 tons	501 tons	568 tons
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Data are in thousands of tons. Data are from Ministry of Agriculture.

Niger is one of the 10 biggest producers of sorghum in Africa. Conventional breeding methods continue to be used in Niger to improve and increase sorghum productivity.

### Opportunities

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Because of a production shortage, Nigerien importers and the government of Niger are now turning to imported grain sorghum.

### Resources

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<http://www.stat-niger.org/>

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/nq.html#Econ>

## Black-eyed Beans

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	5,859 tons	7,056 tons	N/A
Total Exports	6,907 tons	6,727 tons	N/A
Total Imports	561 tons	505 tons	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Data are in thousands of tons. Data are from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Black-eyed beans are an important crop and are competitive as an export to neighboring markets due to transportation costs. The Nigerien government is encouraging Nigeriens to diversify their crops with the raising of exports like onions, garlic and potatoes, in addition to black-eyed beans.

## Opportunities

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With a highly competitive domestic black-eyed beans market, Nigeriens largely have been unwilling to pay the higher price of neighboring countries' beans.

## Resources

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<http://www.stat-niger.org/>

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ng.html#Econ>

## Onions

### Overview

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	2005	2006	2007
Total Market Size	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Local Production	338.1 tons	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	82,284 tons	68,559 tons	N/A
Total Imports	108 tons	115 tons	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Data are in thousands of tons. Data is from Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Niger and the National Institute of Statistics.

Onions are Niger's second most important export, after uranium. The Nigerien government is encouraging Nigeriens to diversify their crops with the raising of exports like garlic and potatoes, in addition to onions.

## Opportunities

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With an estimated annual output of 400,000 tons, Niger's onion industry's strength lies in the high volume of its production and the monopoly enjoyed by its Violet de Galmi variety. The industry still needs branding and standardization and access to international markets.

<http://www.stat-niger.org/>

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ng.html#Econ>

## Chapter 5: Trade Regulations and Standards

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- [Trade Barriers](#)
- [Import Requirements and Documentation](#)
- [U.S. Export Controls](#)
- [Temporary Entry](#)
- [Labeling and Marking Requirements](#)
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### Import Tariffs

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Under the WAEMU Common External Tariff (CET), imports are divided into four categories: essential goods (0%); staple goods, including basic raw materials; capital goods and specific inputs (5%); intermediate goods and inputs (10%); and final consumer goods (20%). The tariff regime covers the following product categories:

-- Category 1 (zero rate): social, cultural and scientific goods, agriculture inputs, capital goods and computer and data processing equipment not available through local production.

--Category 2 (5%): raw materials, crude oil, and cereals for industries.

--Category 3 (10%): semi-finished products, intermediate goods, other cereals, diesel and fuel oil.

--Category 4 (20%): goods for final consumption, capital goods and computer and data-processing equipment already available through local production, new and used vehicles.

In addition to the CET, Niger and other members of the WAEMU apply permanent supplementary duties consisting of the levy on imports from third countries, which totals 2 percent; ECOWAS countries pay 0.5%. Outside the WAEMU framework, Niger has an import verification program for transactions exceeding 2 million CFA (around USD 3,500), which involves a tax of 1 percent.

### Trade Barriers

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There are no legal obstacles to U.S. or foreign businesses. A significant informal barrier for U.S. companies is Niger's historical economic ties to France, the former colonial power. Local companies are used to French business law, customs, and practices.

## **Import Requirements and Documentation**

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Importing companies must have a business certificate issued by the Ministry of Commerce and a certificate of payment of dues from both the Chamber of Commerce and the Nigerien Counsel of Public Transportation (maximum cost approximately USD1,300). All companies must be listed in the trade and employers registries and possess business and import licenses.

Importers must pay annual import license fee of CFA 500,000 (USD 1,140). To import the following goods requires further special authorization from the Ministry of Commerce: petroleum products, metal containers, sheet metal, bottled carbonated drinks, bottled beer, wax print cotton cloth, soap, and non-alcohol based perfume. (Note: This list likely reflects measures to protect the position of local importers and producers.)

*Import procedures include the following:*

1. Importers must deposit a Preliminary Import Declaration seven days before shipping imported goods having a value equal to or greater than CFA one million (USD 2,275)..
2. Automatic approval of the Preliminary Import Declaration is obtained by submitting three copies of the Pro Forma Bills of Lading with the declaration.
3. A Preliminary Import Declaration is valid for six months and can be extended for three months. Preliminary Import Declarations must be canceled and reissued if there is a change in supplier, an increase in the value of the order of more than ten percent, or a modification in the quantity of the order.
4. Any payment for imported goods greater in value than CFA one million (USD 2,275) must be made through an approved Nigerien bank or financial institution.
5. Any FOB import value equal to or greater in value than CFA two million (USD 4,545) must be inspected by Cotecna in the supplier's country before shipping.
6. Presentation of a clean report of findings issued by Cotecna is obligatory.
7. The Pre-Shipment Inspection Certificate delivered by Cotecna.

The following goods are exempted from Pre-Shipment Inspection:

- Imports with a total order FOB value equal to or below CFA 2 million
- Objects of art, precious stones, and gold
- Used personal and household effects, including one used vehicle
- Arms and ammunition other than those for hunting and/or sport
- Live animals
- Perishable goods for human consumption neither frozen, nor deep frozen (meat, fish, vegetables and fruit)
- Scrap metals
- Plants and flowers

- Cinematographic films, exposed and developed
- Current newspapers and periodicals, postal and fiscal stamps, stamped papers, bank notes and check books
- Personal gifts
- Crude oil
- Donations offered by foreign governments to international organizations, charities or philanthropic organizations recognized as being helpful to the public
- Bona fide gifts, imports for diplomatic entities and for United Nations organizations for their own use in Niger
- Cereals imported by the public sector or approved by the public sector
- Printed books, newspapers, pictures and all other items
- Imported goods after having been fixed/repaired in a foreign country
- Parts and spare parts imported by airline companies
- Goods imported by certain importers that have a special exemption authorization from the Government.

### **U.S. Export Controls**

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Nigerien exporters require a license issued by the Ministry of Commerce. Companies exporting from the United States do not face any country specific export controls imposed by the U.S. government.

### **Temporary Entry**

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There are no free trade zones in Niger, therefore, no provision for temporary entry exists.

### **Labeling and Marking Requirements**

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Niger's labeling requirements are applicable to canned and preserved food intended for human consumption. Such products must be marked in French with the following information:

1. Country of origin;
2. Product manufacture date, specified by the day, the month and the year;
3. The expiration date, marked in the same manner as the date of manufacture, preceded by the comment: "A Consommer de Préférence Avant le DD/MM/YY."
4. Ingredients.

For other non-food consumer products, it is critical that the label be written in French with the expiration date added. There are also labeling requirements for imported pharmaceutical products.

Niger currently uses ECOWAS 10-digit product numbers, but hopes to convert to the international harmonized system of product codes.

## Prohibited and Restricted Imports

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A foreign company may operate in any sector, with a few exceptions: it may not deal in arms or war ammunition (except collector's items), run a private security force, operate as an immigration or emigration agent, or organize religious pilgrimages. Prohibited imports also include narcotics, pornographic publications and hallucinogenic drugs, except those authorized by the Ministry of Health.

## Customs Regulations and Contact Information

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Customs duties, where applicable, are determined by the CIF (cost, insurance and freight charges) value for imports and the FOB (free on board) value for exports.

For questions regarding prospective customs fees, one may contact:

Department of Tax  
Ministry of Economy and Finance  
Government of Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 72 23 66 / 20 72 47 50  
Fax: (227) 20 72 43 81

## Standards

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- [Conformity Assessment](#)
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- [Publication of Technical Regulations](#)
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### Overview

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Niger's standards are derived from France's. Electricity used in the country is 220 volts 50 cycles, and the system of measurement is metric.

### Standards Organizations

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There is no organization in Niger that develops standards.

### NIST Notify U.S. Service

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. **Notify U.S.** is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your

access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL:  
<http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/>

## **Publication of Technical Regulations**

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The Nigerien body that publishes technical regulations is the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Promotion of the Private Sector. Regulations can be found at the “Centre de Formalité des Entreprises” and the “Centre de Promotion des Investissements” within the Nigerien Chamber of Commerce.

## **Labeling and Marking**

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Niger’s labeling requirements are applicable to canned and preserved food intended for human consumption. Such products must be marked in French with the following information:

1. Country of origin;
2. Product manufacture date, specified by the day, the month and the year;
3. The expiration date, marked in the same manner as the date of manufacture, preceded by the comment: “A Consommer de Préférence Avant le DD/MM/YY.”
4. Ingredients.

For other non-food consumer products, it is critical that the label be written in French with the expiration date added. There are also labeling requirements for imported pharmaceutical products.

Niger currently uses ECOWAS 10-digit product numbers, but hopes to convert to the international harmonized system of product codes.

## **Contacts**

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Direction du Développement du Secteur Privé  
Ministère du Commerce, de l’Industrie et de la Promotion du Secteur Privé  
B.P.: 480  
Phone: (227) 20 73 58 81  
Fax: (227) 20 73 21 50

Direction du Développement Industriel  
Ministère du Commerce, de l’Industrie et de la Promotion du Secteur Privé  
B.P.: 480  
Phone: (227) 20 73 58 25  
Fax: (227) 20 73 21 50  
Direction des Etudes et de la Programmation  
Ministère du Commerce, de l’Industrie et de la Promotion du Secteur Privé  
B.P. 480  
Phone: (227) 20 73 58 86

Fax: (227) 20 73 21 50

Niger is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Both organizations seek to increase cooperation in trade, investment, and financial flows among countries in the region. ECOWAS is working on harmonizing business practices and tariffs among member states. January 1, 2000, marked the beginning of the customs union for members of the WAEMU. No trade barriers will remain between all eight-member states on authorized goods. A common external tariff of maximum 20 percent was established on all imported goods from non-member states of the union.

Niger is a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

<http://www.guideniger.com/investir.htm>

<http://www.cotecna.com/>

<http://www.uemoa.int/>

<http://www.ecowas.int/>

<http://www.wto.org/>

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## Chapter 6: Investment Climate

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### Openness to Foreign Investment

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The government of Niger welcomes foreign private investment and considers it to be critical to economic growth. Under the investment code (revised in 2000) industrial investments enjoy tax and customs exemptions and even, in some cases, exemptions from the value added tax (VAT). Other tax benefits are possible, but terms must be negotiated with the GON on a case-by-case basis. All investors benefit from periods of special tax treatment and tariff protection, which vary with the level and location of investment. The investment code contains no provisions for screening and guarantees equal treatment to foreign investors regardless of nationality.

Total foreign ownership is permitted in all sectors except those few restricted for national security purposes, such as arms and munitions and private security forces, which require special arrangements. Foreign ownership of land is permitted, but requires authorization from the Ministry of Equipment and Territorial Management.

In mid 2006, the Government of Niger created the National Council of Private Investors (CNIP). The goal of the CNIP is to oversee Niger's investment climate, to study economic indicators of performance, and to propose specific ways in which investment priorities can be addressed. The Government of Niger is serious about eliminating all barriers to private sector growth. To that end, reductions in the following areas are being explored:

- the number of procedures required for starting a business;
- the length of time required for starting a business;
- the administrative costs for starting a business;

- the number of import tariffs;
- the total corporate tax rate as a percentage of gross profits; and,
- the number of corporate taxes required.

The two main indicators on which the CNIP has been working on are to reduce significantly the start-up time for new businesses and to remove certain regulations regarding construction.

The investment code offers advantages to sectors that the government deems key to the country's economic development: energy production, mineral exploration and mining, agriculture, food processing, forestry, fishing, low-cost housing construction, handicrafts, hotels, schools, health centers, and transportation.

Barriers to investment include the small scale of the economy, limited buying power, and low rates of capital accumulation. In addition, transportation costs are high and the government bureaucracy can be cumbersome and slow. Given Niger's low literacy rate, a trained labor force and service providers are not widely available.

#### **Conversion and Transfer Policies**

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Niger maintains an exchange system that is free of restrictions on payments and transfers. Investment capital and returns to capital can be transferred to and from Niger via local banks and international financial intermediaries. Niger is a member of the CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) zone ("franc zone") and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Euros and dollars are convertible for any amount of CFA at local banks. In order to transfer or convert more than CFA 800,000 to dollars or euros, an authorization for foreign exchange is required from the Ministry of Finance (although traveler's converting currency need only show their plane ticket and passport). The international investor community has not complained of difficulty in the transfer of funds.

#### **Expropriation and Compensation**

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The investment code guarantees that no business will be subject to acts of nationalization or expropriation, except when deemed "in the public interest" as prescribed by the law. The code requires that the government compensate any expropriated business with just and equitable payment. No expropriations have taken place in recent years and given the government policy of promoting private industry, none are expected.

#### **Dispute Settlement**

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While Niger has a court system to, inter alia, protect property and commercial rights, the administration of justice can be slow. The investment code also provides for the settlement of disputes and indemnification either by arbitration or recourse to the international center for settlement of disputes on investment, which was created in 1965 by the World Bank.

Niger is also a member of OHADA, the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (Organisation pour l'Harmonisation Afrique des Droits des Affaires). The OHADA Treaty aims to harmonize business laws in 16 African States by adopting common rules adapted to their economies, by setting up appropriate judicial procedures, and by encouraging arbitration for the settlement of contractual disputes. The Treaty includes regulations concerning business and commercial law, such as the definition and classification of legal persons engaged in trade, proceedings with respect to credit and recovery of debts, means of enforcement, bankruptcy, receiverships and arbitration.

### **Performance Requirements and Incentives**

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Performance requirements are not imposed as a condition for establishing, maintaining, or expanding foreign direct investments. Incentives do, however, increase as the size of the investment and number of jobs created increase.

The investment code offers generous, VAT-inclusive tax exemptions, depending on the size of the business. Potential tax exemptions include: start-up costs; property, industrial and commercial profits; services and materials required for production; and energy use. Exemption periods range from 10-15 years and also include waivers of duties and license fees.

### **Right to Private Ownership and Establishment**

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By law and in practice, foreign and domestic private entities have the right to establish and own business enterprises and engage in all forms of remunerative activity. Private entities can freely establish, acquire, and dispose of interests in business enterprises. Legally established private sector companies have the same access to markets, credit, and other business operations as do public enterprises (parastatals). The government is receptive to foreign interest in acquiring ownership in privatized parastatals. Foreign ownership of land is permitted, but requires authorization from the Ministry of Equipment and Territorial Management.

### **Protection of Property Rights**

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Niger is a member of the West African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI), which establishes the legal framework for protecting intellectual property and approves requests for registration. Protection is initially granted for 10 years and is renewable for up to another 10 years.

As a signatory to the 1983 Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, Niger provides national treatment under Nigerien patent and trademark laws to foreign businesses. Niger is also a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and a signatory to the Universal Copyright Convention. In practice, however, the government lacks the capacity and resources to enforce copyright violations, and counterfeit CDs and videocassettes are readily available in most cities. Trade secrets can be adequately protected within individual business agreements in Niger.

### **Transparency of Regulatory System**

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The current investment code, last revised in 2000, reduced bureaucratic obstacles to foreign investment and enlarged the scope of industries accorded special incentives to include air transportation and the construction & equipping of hotels. The government now promises to approve an investment three months from the date of application. Nevertheless, investors should be prepared for delays caused by the process of acquiring inter-ministerial approvals.

While efforts continue to make the tax laws more transparent, investors find it useful to specify financial obligations, such as tax liability, in individual business agreements.

An updated petroleum code, based on international standards, was adopted in 2007. In 2006 the government also revised the mining code. It offers specific incentives beyond those listed in the investment code: a five year income tax holiday for large mines (two years for small mines) and exemption from customs duties on imported equipment for use in mineral exploration or mining operations.

A multisectoral regulatory agency began operation in 2004 and has oversight over telecommunications and basic utilities (water & electricity) pricing.

### **Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment**

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The GON's policies do not limit the free flow of financial resources. Credit is allocated on market terms, and foreigners do not face discrimination in obtaining it. However, generally only well-established businesses obtain bank credit, as the cost of credit in Niger is high. Nigerien banks offer only a limited array of financial instruments: letters of credit and short to long-term loans.

### **Political Violence**

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In July 2007, a local rebel group, Movement for Justice in Niger (MNJ) ambushed a convoy in the Agadez region, kidnapping a Chinese citizen and holding him for ten days. Furthermore, landmines have been placed in the region and several have exploded killing military and civilian personnel. There were several landmine incidents in the south of Niger with the most recent on January 9, 2008 in Niamey. The U.S. Embassy in Niamey prohibits official personnel from traveling into areas of Niger north of the town of Abalak, and strongly urges other Americans to follow this guideline. Several international organizations, including private and nongovernmental groups, have temporarily relocated personnel from northern Niger. On August 27, 2007, the President of Niger declared a State of Alert for the region of Agadez, to include the cities of Agadez, Arlit, and Ifrouane. This State of Alert means that all travelers in and around these cities are liable to be stopped and held for questioning. Moreover, the Nigerien military now has the authority to hold individuals for questioning, without cause, for more than the standard 48-hours.

Large and small street demonstrations occur regularly in Niger. These demonstrations tend to take place near government buildings, university campuses, or other gathering places such as public parks. Although demonstrations can occur spontaneously, large student demonstrations typically begin in January and February and continue through May. During previous student demonstrations, NGO and diplomatic vehicles bearing "IT" or "CD" plates have been targeted by rock throwing demonstrators. Many past

demonstrations have featured rock throwing and tire burning, especially at key intersections in the city of Niamey.

## **Corruption**

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Official corruption occurs, and the Government publicly acknowledges that it is a problem and is making efforts to address it. In 2005 President Tandja and other leaders began to more publicly condemn corruption and some high profile anti-corruption cases were brought against government officials. The independent and opposition press increased their reporting on corruption related topics in 2005. A National Commission to combat corruption was established in May 2005. Foreigners are instructed not to pay bribes to any policemen, border guards, or other government officials. Bureaucratic processes are slower than American standards, but this is due more to inefficiency and lack of information technology than to corruption.

## **Bilateral Investment Agreements**

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Niger's bilateral investment agreement with the United States dates from September 1962. Foreign investment in Niger, however, is predominantly French or has some French participation. The investment code makes no distinction between investors' countries of origin. Niger's government welcomes foreign direct investment, regardless of source. Niger is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and the Lome Convention.

In 2008, Niger qualified for a three-year, USD 23 million threshold program from the Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to help reduce corruption, reduce the cost and regulatory process of starting a business, and increase girls' school attendance.

## **OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs**

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While Niger is eligible for coverage under OPIC programs, OPIC has not been involved in any Niger investment to date. Sectors for potential investment guarantees include: gold and other mineral mining and processing, petroleum production, fruit, vegetable and meat processing, semi-finished hide production and small-scale manufacturing. The Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im) has a number of programs in place specifically geared towards helping sub-Saharan manufacturers expand their business by financing U.S. exports of manufacturing equipment and services. The Ex-Im Bank credit committee approved in September 2005 the first Ex-Im insured loan to be awarded in Niger for approximately ten years.

## **Labor**

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The supply of skilled workers, technicians, and professionals is limited.

In 2005 there were no more than 81,144 salaried, formal sector workers, approximately 55% of whom are employed in the public sector. Approximately 85 percent of the country's population makes a living from agriculture, herding, petty manufacturing,

artisanal production or informal trading. Wages are low and 63 percent of the population lives on less than one dollar a day.

Labor-management relations are generally good. The National Federation of Labor Unions (USTN) is well organized and occasionally presses its salary, benefit and other demands (mostly for civil servants and parastatal workers) with limited strikes. However, high rates of unemployment and the threadbare state of public finances limit USTN's leverage. Labor law and practice conforms to International Labor Organization (ILO) principles.

### **Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports**

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Niger has been a member of the WTO since 1996 and as such is committed to trade liberalization and an opening of its markets to foreign investments. Local products and traditional handicrafts of WAEMU origin enter duty free, together with a limited number of industrial products from producing enterprises approved by the WAEMU Commission. According to estimates by the IMF, only one third of the WAEMU's intra-community trade is completely duty free due to the relatively low level of industrialization of members. Under the provisions of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), most Nigerien non-textile and apparel exports may enter the U.S. duty free. In December 2003, it was determined that Niger qualified for textile and apparel benefits provided under AGOA. Niger qualified for Category 9 of AGOA in 2006, which mostly allows the entry of hand woven fabric into the United States duty free. Niger is also negotiating preferential trade relationships with the European Union.

### **Foreign Direct Investment Statistics**

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Since the CFA devaluation made local inputs for import substitution or export much less expensive for foreign investors, Niger's investment potential has improved. Although ExxonMobil-Petronas' license for oil exploration in eastern Niger was not renewed in 2006, interest continues for a large number of concessions.

The Samira Hill Gold Mine represents the country's first commercial gold production and is owned by Etruscan, a joint Canadian-Moroccan company. Gold is Niger's fourth most important export.

Although French businesses have reduced their presence in Niger since the uranium bust in the 1980's, France remains the major source of much equipment and other manufactured goods.

Official statistics show Niger's second largest trading partner, after France, to be Nigeria. Nigeria, however, is Niger's largest trading partner when informal trade is also counted. South and East Asian countries also provide foodstuffs (rice from Pakistan, etc.) and inexpensive manufactured goods (China, India, etc.). Niger also has trade relations with Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and, in the region, with Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Benin.

Foreign investments: (Data are from each of the companies listed below for 2005).

<b>Name</b>	<b>Product</b>	<b>Millions USD</b>	<b>Country</b>
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Sonichar	Coal	5.8	France
Somair	Uranium	8.2	France, Germany
Cominak	Uranium	6.3	France, Japan, Spain
Braniger	Brewing	2.7	France
SONITEL	Telecom	9.3	China, Libya
UNILEVER	Soap	0.4	Netherlands, England
SEEN	Water	2.01	France

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<http://www.wise-uranium.org/uoافر.html#AKOUTA>

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### How Do I Get Paid (Methods of Payment)

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New to the market, U.S. exporters should request an irrevocable confirmed letter of credit drawn on one of the major banks. Large Nigerien importers often have sources of foreign exchange outside Niger; consequently, they can often offer credit documents issued by non-Nigerien banks.

### How Does the Banking System Operate

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The Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), a central bank common to the eight members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU or UEMOA), governs Niger's banking system. Along with BCEAO, the "Commission Bancaire" is a supranational supervisory entity created in April 1990 to control financial institutions. The eight member countries use the CFA franc issued by the BCEAO and pegged to the euro at a rate of 1 euro equals 656 CFA francs. The French Treasury guarantees parity and fixed convertibility. BCEAO has an operating account at the French Treasury where it is required to hold at least 65 percent of its foreign exchange reserves.

Nine commercial banks operate in Niger. The system is characterized by the over liquidity of banks and their hesitancy to lend for medium and long-term loans.

The banking system is served by three medium-sized local banks: BIA Niger (Banque Internationale pour l'Afrique), Ecobank and SONIBANK (Societe Nigerienne de Banque). There are several small commercial banks: Bank Of Africa; BCN (Banque Commerciale du Niger, a Libyan-Nigerien joint venture); Credit du Niger; BINCI (Banque Islamique du Niger pour le Commerce et l'Investissement) with Saudi and Islamic Development Bank ownership; BSIC (Bank of the 23 CEN-SAD member countries), BRS (Banque Régionale de Solidarité); a development bank where all WAEMU member countries are shareholders, and the new Banque Atlantique.

In 1995 there was a run on the Meridian-BIAO Niger Bank (predecessor of BIA Niger) precipitated by the liquidation of the Meridian International Bank in Paris. The Minister of Finance intervened to restore public confidence and other local banks offered cash loans to help Meridian-BIAO Niger through the crisis. Since that incident, the banking system in Niger has functioned normally although many former customers have never returned their assets to the formal banking system. Other financial institutions, such as insurance companies and leasing companies, are also present in Niamey.

### Foreign-Exchange Controls

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Niger has not yet lifted all restrictions related to foreign exchange controls. Foreign exchange payments are still submitted to the Ministry of Finance for authorization, then are submitted and executed by Niger's commercial banks. There is free convertibility of the CFA franc via the banking system for commercial transactions. The rate varies daily according to the euro-U.S. dollar rate. CFA franc banknotes are not legal tender outside of the WAEMU. Travelers may exchange foreign currency for CFA francs without limit at commercial banks. On the other hand, in order to exchange more than CFA 800,000 to dollars or euro an authorization for foreign exchange is required from the Ministry of Finance (although traveler's converting currency need only show their plane ticket and passport).

U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks

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There are no U.S. banks presently operating in Niger.

BIA (Banque International pour l'Afrique) has a large international network in Africa and Europe (Brussels, Paris, London) with a share capital of 2.8 billion CFA francs. Its customers range from big industries and commercial and agricultural companies to small and medium sized companies, and it has offices throughout the country. BIA's market strategy is focused on its larger clients. BIA is the local powerhouse with 45% of the banking market and a large, stable clientele.

SONIBANK (Societe Nigerienne de Banque) has a large international network (Natix Bank Paris, BNP, Credit Lyonnais, Credit Suisse, NWB London, DG Bank Frankfurt, Bank of Montreal, Brussels Bank, Union Tunisienne de Banque) with a share capital of 2 billion CFA francs. It has offices based throughout Niger with a very broad clientele in all sectors. Its main customers are small enterprises, distributors, insurance companies, manufacturing and mining industries, water, electricity and petroleum companies, transportation companies, all construction and agriculture companies, NGOs, and donor-funded development projects. Sonibank's market strategy of cash availability focuses on its network of smaller clients. By creating a loan guarantee development program for micro enterprises, Sonibank has discovered a lucrative position within the banking sector.

Ecobank bases its marketing strategy on a Citibank model, so its business management style and attitude toward computer technology reflects American rather than French norms. Ecobank has an impressive network spread throughout West and part of Central Africa. Its' main customers include business people, NGOs, International Organizations, development projects, some local companies, and households. It attempts to attract regional tradesmen who benefit from electronic money transfers as opposed to more risky cross-border courier serves.

BOA (Bank of Africa) has a large international network in Africa and Europe. Its initial market strategy attempted to gain the trust of large organizations and enterprises. This plan failed, because Niamey had too small of a client base to support another bank. Therefore, it broadened its strategy to include small and medium sized companies, projects, NGOs, International Organizations, businesses, and private individuals.

BINCI (Banque Islamique du Niger pour le Commerce et l'Investissement), established in Niger in 1997, is a member of Daral Maal Islammi (DMI) Group. The bank's share capital is us USD 2.6 millions (1 810 000 000 f cfa). The shareholders are DMI with

33.15%, Islamic Development Bank with 33.15% and OSEM Niger with 34.70%. The bank's major correspondents are Trust Bank, Citibank, ABN AMRO and UBAF. Its main customers include industries and commercial businesses, but it does not have a clearly defined marketing strategy.

Banque Atlantique, established in June, 2006, is a member of the Atlantique Group based in Côte d'Ivoire. The bank capital share is USD 3 million (1 500 000 000 Fcfa). Their main correspondents are UBAF (Union des Banques Arabes et Françaises) BNP France and London Charter Bank. Its main customers are Commercial businesses and Industries.

## **Project Financing**

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The World Bank finances public projects dealing with infrastructure. UNDP (United Nation Development Program) is currently putting a great emphasis on private sector financing.

The International Development Agency (IDA) offers funds for feasibility studies, and financed several studies in recent years regarding water issues and in the agriculture sector.

## **Web Resources**

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Export-Import Bank of the United States: <http://www.exim.gov>

Export-Import Bank Country Limitation Schedule:  
[http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country\\_limits.html](http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country_limits.html)

OPIC: <http://www.opic.gov>

U.S. Trade and Development Agency: <http://www.tda.gov/>

U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of International Trade:  
<http://www.sba.gov/oit/>

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Commodity Credit Corporation:  
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/cc/default.htm>

U.S. Agency for International Development: <http://www.usaid.gov>

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### Business Customs

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Nigerien culture is largely traditional, and most potential business partners are practicing Muslims. Getting to know individuals is very important and taking time for visits and meals together is recommended. Rushing matters is unseemly and may only serve to destroy confidence in a foreigner's good intentions. Nigerien business people also like to be able to see and feel merchandise before entering into any agreements, no matter how basic the product.

### Travel Advisory

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As of May 17, 2007, the U.S. Embassy in Niamey prohibits official personnel from traveling into areas of Niger to the north of Abalak. All American citizens are strongly urged to follow the same guidelines due to the escalation of violence by the local rebel group, Movement for Justice in Niger (MNJ). Northern Niger, particularly in and around the cities of Iferouane, Arlit, and Agadez, is affected by MNJ activities. In July 2007, MNJ ambushed a convoy in the Agadez region, kidnapping a Chinese citizen and holding him for ten days. Furthermore, landmines have been placed in the region and several have exploded killing military and civilian personnel. There were several landmine incidents in the south of Niger with the most recent on January 9, 2008 in Niamey. Most recently, MNJ attacked the town of Tanout, killing several troops and capturing arms and several people, including the prefect. Several international organizations, including private and nongovernmental groups, have temporarily relocated personnel from these areas. On August 27, 2007, the President of Niger declared a State of Alert for the region of Agadez, to include the cities of Agadez, Arlit, and Iferouane. This State of Alert means that all travelers in and around these cities are liable to be stopped and held for questioning. Moreover, the Nigerien military now has the authority to hold individuals for questioning, without cause, for more than the standard 48-hours.

Foreigners who elect to travel in northern Niger despite the current security situation must submit an approved travel plan through the office of the Governor of Agadez. Travelers should first contact the Syndicat de Tourisme in Agadez (telephone: 96 98 78 81) to enlist the services of a registered tour operator, who will formally coordinate with Nigerien government and security officials on tourist safety and security in the North and

who can facilitate the submission of the required itinerary and intended route.

For travel in any remote area of the country, the Department of State urges U.S. citizens to use registered guides, to travel with a minimum of two vehicles equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) and satellite phones. Travelers are advised to avoid restricted military areas and to consult local police authorities regarding their itinerary and security arrangements.

Crime is at a critical level due primarily to thefts, robberies, and residential break-ins. Foreigners are vulnerable to attempts of bribery and extortion by law enforcement authorities. Theft and petty crimes are common day or night. However, armed attacks are normally committed at night by groups of two to four persons, with one assailant confronting the victim with a knife while the others provide surveillance or a show of force. Tourists should not walk alone around the Gawaye Hotel, National Museum, and on or near the Kennedy Bridge at any time, or the Petit Marche after dark. These areas are especially prone to muggings and should be avoided. Walking at night is not recommended as streetlights are scarce and criminals have the protection of darkness to commit their crimes. Recent criminal incidents in Niger have included carjackings, sexual assaults, home invasions, and muggings. In December 2000, an American was killed in a carjacking incident in Niamey, and another American was gravely wounded in a carjacking incident outside of Niamey in 2004. In 2007, two American citizens were raped and two others attacked with a machete. Travelers should always keep their doors locked and windows rolled up when stopped at stoplights.

In August 2004, an attack against 2 buses on the Agadez-Arlit road left 3 dead and numerous persons wounded. A French tourist was murdered by bandits in the Agadez region in December 2005 during a robbery attempt. In August 2006, several Italian tourists were abducted near the Niger-Chad border. They were robbed of some of their possessions and later released. Due to continued sporadic incidents of violence and banditry and other security concerns, the Department of State urges U.S. citizens visiting or residing in Niger to exercise caution when traveling within the northern and eastern parts of the country, especially along the borders of Mali, Libya, Algeria and Chad. Given the insecurity along these border regions, the Department of State recommends that American citizens in Niger avoid traveling overland to Algeria and Libya.

In previous attacks, groups of foreign travelers, including Americans, have been robbed of vehicles, cash and belongings. The government of Niger is taking steps to address crime/banditry but operates under severe resource constraints. Use caution and common sense at all times to avoid thieves and pickpockets.

For further information please visit the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Niger at:

[http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_986.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_986.html)

**Visa Requirements**

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Niger visas may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Niger in Washington, D.C., or from another Nigerien diplomatic mission. The cost of the Niger visa is approximately USD 100. A residence permit valid for one year and renewable for a further period of one year can be obtained after arrival in Niger. All visitors must also have proof of yellow fever vaccination. Information on visas to Niger may be found at the following link.

Embassy of the Republic of Niger in Washington, DC:  
<http://www.nigerembassyusa.org/embassy.html>

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should advise the business people to inform themselves of U.S. visa procedures. Information can be obtained at the following Web links.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

United States Visa : <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

Embassy of the United States Niamey, Niger: <http://niamey.usembassy.gov/>

## **Telecommunications**

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In Niger, international calls to most countries can be dialed directly. The country code for Niger is 227. Cable, telex, fax, paging and Internet services are available. A number of cyber cafés are located in Niamey and increasingly in secondary cities. Cellular phones are very popular and they operate on the GSM standard. Niger is on Greenwich Meridian Time plus one.

## **Transportation**

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Niamey has a small, modern airport. Air Algerie and Afriqya Airlines offer weekly flights. Air Burkina and Air Senegal International have flights twice each week. Air France and Royal Air Maroc have flights three times a week. Most sizable towns within Niger have small airports, but domestic service is limited. Niger is served by a network of paved roadways stretching across the populated southern region from Burkina Faso to Chad, and north to the Malian border. Branch highways extend north to Tahoua, Agadez, and Arlit. Other good roads connect with Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Benin.

Road safety throughout Niger is a concern, and visitors are strongly urged to avoid driving at night outside of major cities. The public transportation system, urban and rural road conditions, and the availability of roadside assistance are all poor. Travelers should exercise caution on Niger's roads, as traffic accidents are frequent. The main causes of accidents are driver carelessness, excessive speed, poorly maintained vehicles, and poor to non-existent road surfaces. Other factors include the hazardous mix of bicycles, mopeds, unwary pedestrians, donkey carts, farm animals, and buses on roads that are generally unpaved and poorly lighted. Overloaded tractor-trailers, "bush taxis," and disabled vehicles are additional dangers on rural roads, where speeds are generally higher. Travel outside Niamey and other cities often requires four-wheel-drive vehicles, which creates an additional security risk since these vehicles -- especially Toyota Land Cruisers — are high-theft items. Driving at night is always hazardous and should be

avoided. Banditry is a continuing problem in northern and eastern Niger. There have been occasional carjackings and highway robberies throughout the country.

While taxis are available at a fixed fare in Niamey, most are in poor condition, and do not meet basic U.S. road safety standards. Inter-city "bush-taxis" are available at negotiable fares, but these vehicles (minibuses, station wagons, and sedans) are generally older, unsafe models that are overloaded, poorly maintained, and driven by reckless operators seeking to save time and money.

A national bus company (SNTV) operates coaches on inter-city routes and, since being reorganized in 2001, has provided reliable service and experienced no major accidents. Air Transport, Rimbo and Garba Messagé are private bus companies operating in Niger. There is some concern regarding the youth of drivers and the speed with which the private bus companies travel the Nigerien roads.

## Language

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The official language of Niger is French, which most potential business partners and government officials speak. The two most important local languages are Hausa and Djarma.

A few Nigerien business people can conduct basic business in English but most are not comfortable with extended or technical conversations.

High-level professional interpretation is available at USD 300-400 per day for business meetings.

## Health

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Health facilities are extremely limited in Niamey and urban centers, and completely inadequate outside the capital. Although physicians are generally well trained, even the best hospitals in Niamey suffer from inadequate facilities, antiquated equipment and shortages of supplies (particularly medicine). Emergency assistance is limited. Travelers must carry their own properly labeled supply of prescription drugs and preventative medicines.

Malaria is prevalent in Niger. Plasmodium falciparum malaria, the serious and sometimes fatal strain in Niger, is resistant to the anti-malarial drug chloroquine. Because travelers to Niger are at high risk for contracting malaria, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam -tm), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone -tm). The CDC has determined that a traveler who is on an appropriate antimalarial drug has a greatly reduced chance of contracting the disease. Other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, also help to reduce malaria risk. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and antimalarial drugs, please visit the CDC Travelers' Health web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/>.

Tap water is unsafe to drink throughout Niger and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe, although visitors should be aware that many restaurants and hotels serve tap water. Ice made from tap water is also unsafe to consume.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect-bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (877-394-8747); or via CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. In general, hepatitis A and rabies vaccinations are strongly advised. Travelers should also make sure they have had a tetanus vaccination within the last ten years. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's website at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>.

**MEDICAL INSURANCE:** The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Please see our information on [medical insurance overseas](#) .

#### **Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays**

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National holidays (including Muslim holidays with variable dates dependent on the lunar calendar) include: January 1, Tabaski (Muslim celebration), Muharam, Mouloud (Mohammed's birthday), Easter Monday, April 24 (Concord Day), May 1 (Labor Day), August 3 (Independence Day), Ramadan Eid (Muslim holiday), December 18 (Republic Day), and Christmas, December 25.

#### **Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings**

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Goods imported for re-export are subject to a temporary admission system and are not assessed customs duties. This system has been abused in the past, and customs officials may be particularly demanding in enforcing regulations.

Several types of items -- including computers and computer parts, video cameras and players, stereo equipment, tape players, auto parts, and various tools and spare parts -- cannot be brought into Niger without clearance by Nigerien customs officials. Airport customs officials may hold such items if brought in as baggage or carry-on luggage.

#### **Web Resources**

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Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, [Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad](#), available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page.

[Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection](#), may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747), fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the Cud's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For [information about outbreaks of infectious diseases](#)

[abroad](http://www.who.int/en) consult the World Health Organization's website at <http://www.who.int/en>. [Further health information for travelers](http://www.who.int/ith) is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites and anti-malarial, visit the CDC Travelers' Health website at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/malinfo.htm>.

For further information on Niger, visit the following sites:

### **Media, News, and Information**

[www.izf.net](http://www.izf.net) (news updates from CFA zone countries)

[www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) (news updates from Africa)

[www.republicain-niger.com](http://www.republicain-niger.com) (weekly independent paper)

[www.friendsofniger.org](http://www.friendsofniger.org) (news from Niger in English)

### **Others**

<http://www.cilssnet.org/> (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel)

[www.microcreditin africa.org](http://www.microcreditin africa.org) (Micro Credit in Africa, an NGO for women and children)

[www.ird.ne](http://www.ird.ne) (Research Institute for Development)

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## **Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research, and Trade Events**

- [Contacts](#)
- [Market Research](#)
- [Trade Events](#)

### **Contacts**

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#### **U.S. Embassy Niamey**

Richard Roberts, Economic/Commercial/Consular Officer (through July, 2008)  
Karan Swaner, Economic/Commercial/Consular Officer (beginning August, 2008)  
Address: Department of State-Niamey, Washington, DC 20521-2420 or  
BP 11201 Rue des ambassades, Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 72-26-61/ 20 62/63/64

Fax: (227) 20 73-31-67  
E-mail: RobertsRM@state.gov or SwanerKE@state.gov  
Web page: <http://usembassy.state.gov/niamey>

**Chambre de Commerce, d'Agriculture, d'Industrie et d'Artisanat de la République du Niger**

Mr. Ibrahim Idi Ango, President  
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Phone: (227) 20 73-22-88  
Fax: (227) 20 73-46-68

Mr. Laouali Chaibou,  
Secretary General  
Address: Place de la Concertation  
P.O. Box: 209, Niamey  
Phone: (227) 20 73-22-10 / 20 73-35-63 / 20 73-51-55  
Fax: (227) 20 73-46-68  
E-mail: [cham209n@intnet.ne](mailto:cham209n@intnet.ne) or [ccaian@intnet.ne](mailto:ccaian@intnet.ne)  
Site Web : [www.ccaian.org](http://www.ccaian.org)

**African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Resource Center**

Mr. Laminou Amani  
Coordinator  
Place de la Concertation  
P.O. Box : 209 Niamey  
Phone : (227) 20 73 44 77

**Cellule de Coordination du Programme de Privatisation**

Mrs. Amina Bah, Coordinator  
Address: B.P. 602  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73-29-58  
Fax: (227) 20 73-59-91  
E-mail: [ccpp@intnet.ne](mailto:ccpp@intnet.ne)

**Ministry of Commerce**

Mrs. Mamadou Aichatou Sakko,  
Director of Foreign Trade  
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Phone: (227) 20 73-58-67  
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Amadou Gouro,  
Secretary General  
Address: B.P. 480  
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### **Ministry of Finance and Economic Reform**

Mr. Abdou Soumana,  
Secretary General  
Address: B.P. 862  
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Phone: (227) 20 72-20-37  
Fax: (227) 20 72-33-71

Mr. Saidou Gambo,  
Director of Public Debt  
Address: B. P. 233,  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 72-26-36

Mrs. Ramatou Diambala  
Director of Investments and Funding of the Debt  
Address: B.P. 862  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 72-32-49

Issaka Assoumane  
Director of Customs  
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Niamey, Niger  
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### **Ministry of Mines**

Mr. Abdoul-Razak Amadou,  
Secretary General  
Address: B.P. 117  
Niamey, Niger  
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Fax: (227) 20 73-27-59

Mr. Oumarou Massalabi,  
Director of Mines  
Address: B.P. 117  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 75-38-47

Mr. Youssouf Mazou  
Director of Geology and Mining Research  
Phone: (227) 20 73 65 27  
Fax: (227) 20 73 27 59  
Niamey, Niger

### **BIA Bank**

Mr. Kone Alhassane,  
Deputy Director General  
Address: B.P. 10350,  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73-31-01  
Fax: (227) 20 73-35-95

**Sonibank**

Mr. Moussa Haitou,  
Director General  
Address: B.P. 891,  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73-46-43/47-40  
Fax: (227) 20 73-46-93

**Ecobank**

Mr. Charles Daboiko  
Address: B.P. 13804,  
Niamey, Niger  
Phone: (227) 20 73-71-81  
Fax: (227) 20 73-72-03

**U.S. Department of State**

Office of Business Affairs  
Phone: (202) 746-1625  
Fax: (202) 647-3953

**U.S. Department of Commerce**

Multilateral Development Bank Office  
14th and Constitution, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Phone: (202) 482-3399  
Fax: (202) 482-5179

**TPCC Trade Information Center in Washington**

Phone: 1-800-USA-TRADE

**U.S. Department. Of Agriculture**

Foreign Agricultural Service  
Trade Assistance and Promotion Office  
Washington, DC  
Phone: (202) 720-7420

**Overseas Private Investment Corporation**

Information Officer  
1100 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20527

### **Export-Import Bank of the United States**

Business Development  
Africa Group – 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
811 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20571

#### **Market Research**

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To view market research reports produced by the U.S. Commercial Service please go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov/marketresearch.html> and click on Country and Industry Market Reports.

Please note that these reports are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. Registration to the site is required, but free of charge.

#### **Trade Events**

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Please click on the link below for information on upcoming trade events.

<http://www.export.gov/tradeevents.html>

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## Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services

The U.S. Commercial Service offers customized solutions to help your business enter and succeed in markets worldwide. Our global network of trade specialists will work one-on-one with you through every step of the exporting process, helping you to:

- Target the best markets with our world-class research
- Promote your products and services to qualified buyers
- Meet the best distributors and agents for your products and services
- Overcome potential challenges or trade barriers

For more information on the services the U.S. Commercial Service offers U.S. businesses, please click on the link below.

(Insert link to Products and Services section of local buyusa.gov website here.)

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U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information should consult with their nearest **Export Assistance Center** or the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center** at **(800) USA-TRADE**, or go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov>

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate as of the date published. However, **The Department of Commerce** does not take responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information contained herein. Readers should always conduct their own due diligence before entering into business ventures or other commercial arrangements. **The Department of Commerce** can assist companies in these endeavors.