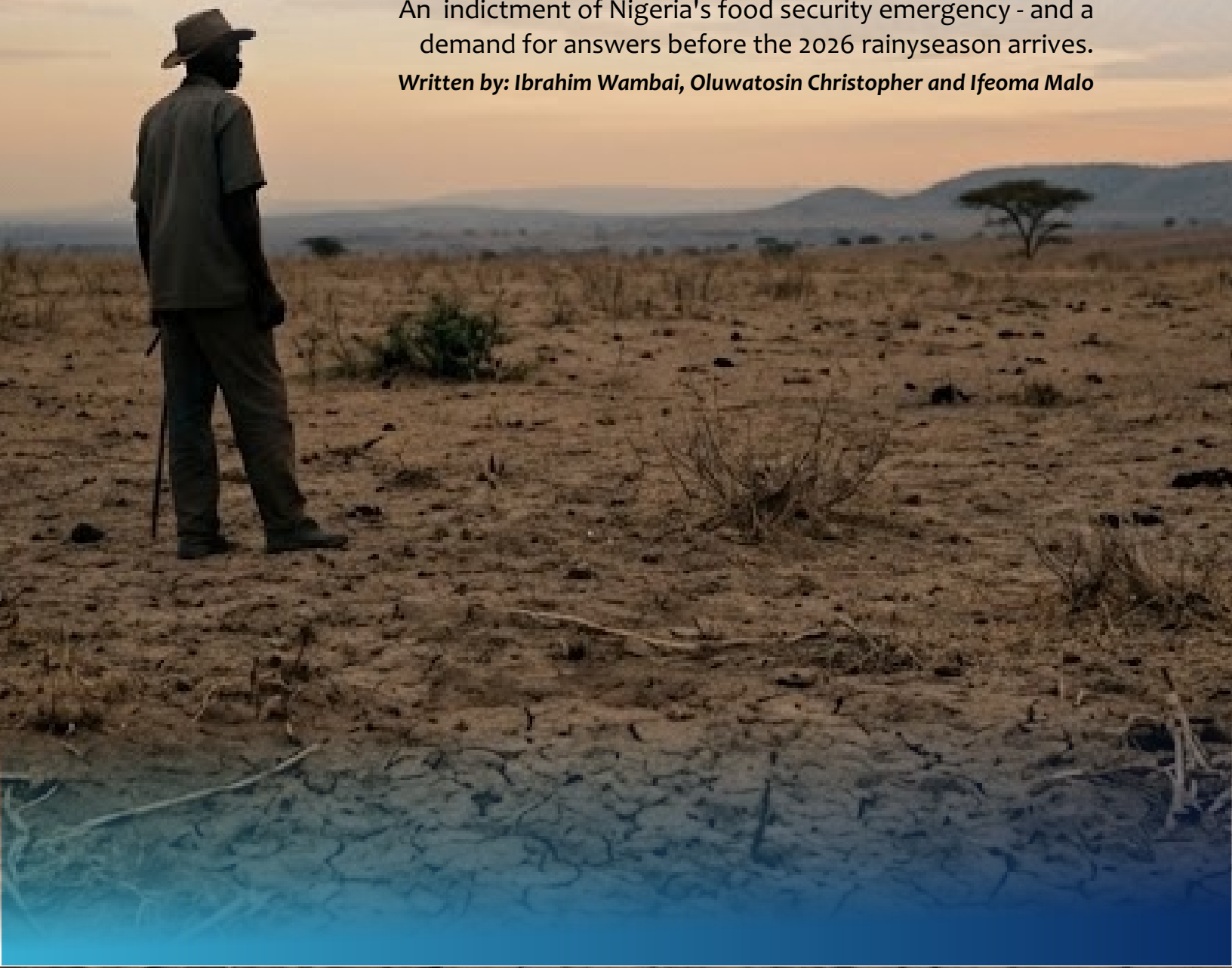
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WAKE-UP CALL · NIGERIA · FOOD SECURITY OUTLOOK 2026

Can We Have a Year of Yield?

An indictment of Nigeria's food security emergency - and a demand for answers before the 2026 rainyseason arrives.

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"Nigeria is not edging toward a food crisis, It is inside one, and with the 2026 rainy season arriving in weeks, the country faces a defining test: whether the institutions, declarations, and frameworks assembled over the past years will translate into food on tables - or remain, as they have too often been, declarations without delivery."

This is not a report that recommends further study, it is a statement of facts - drawn from the most authoritative data available as of early 2026 that demands a response. Every number below is sourced, Every trend below is worsening, the question at the end is not rhetorical.

I THE SCALE OF THE CRISIS: WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

Indicator	The Number (People)	Source
Nigerians in IPC Phase 3-5 acute food insecurity, 2025 lean season	**33.1 million**	*Cadre Harmonisé*
People in Phase 4 Emergency - an 80% increase on the year before (2023)	**1.8 million**	*WFP, Nov 2024*
Children facing acute malnutrition across the 6 worst-affected states	**5.4 million**	*UNICEF/WFP 2024*
Children at risk of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) - requiring clinical treatment	**1.8 million**	*UNICEF 2024*
Rise in lean season food assistance needs each year since 2020	**+ 4 million/year**	*WFP 2024*
People needing humanitarian food aid, October 2025 to May 2026	**14-15 million**	*FEWS NET Oct 2025*
People still internally displaced in Nigeria, January 2026	**1.38 million**	*FEWS NET*
New climate-related displacements recorded in Nigeria during 2024	**1.7 million**	*IDMC 2025*
Food inflation at its peak - June 2024	**40.9%**	*NBS / WFP*
Food inflation when Tinubu declared his first food emergency - April 2023	**24.6%**	*NBS*
Projected number of hungry Nigerians by 2030 if trajectory is unchanged	**82 million**	*UN projection*

Let that last number be read slowly, Eighty-two million people, more than the entire population of Germany, will be hungry in Nigeria by 2030, just four years from now.

> *"The hunger crisis in Nigeria is fueled by the ongoing conflict in the northeast and needs to be urgently addressed. Restoring peace in the northeast is critical for us to build pathways to production." - David Stevenson, WFP Country Representative, Nigeria, 2024*

The IPC 3.1 acute food insecurity projection for **June-September 2026**, the precise window of the rainy season and the lean season overlap shows a country split along a brutal axis. The Northeast and Northwest sit in IPC Phase 3 "Crisis" and Phase 4 "Emergency". Specific Local Government Areas in Borno - Abadam, Bama, Marte, Guzamala are at Phase 4 "Emergency" with zero humanitarian access. The North Central, South West, South East, and South South sit at Phase 2 "Stressed": not catastrophic, but not safe. There is no state in Nigeria classified as Minimal.

No state. Not one. In the sixth most populous country on earth.

II. THE ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE UNFOLDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

The food crisis in northern Nigeria does not begin with policy, It begins with geography - a geography that is being systematically destroyed by forces that have been visible for decades and acted upon with criminal inadequacy.

Indicator	The Number	Source
Lake Chad surface area in the 1960s	**25,000 km²**	*Historical record*
Lake Chad surface area today	**~1,300 km²**	*ScienceDirect 2025*
Total shrinkage of Lake Chad since the 1960s	**~90%**	*FAO / ScienceDirect*
People whose livelihoods depend on Lake Chad across four countries	**50 million+**	*FAO / ICID*
Nigeria's total land area affected by desertification	**~60%**	*FAO / AFRIPOLI 2024*
Cropland under drought stress in northern Nigeria - as of July 2024	**40-85%**	*FAO ASI*
Temperature increase per decade - last 30 years (Nigeria)	**0.19°C**	*ScienceDirect 2025*
Projected temperature rise in Nigeria's north by 2050	**up to 3°C**	*USAID 2024*
Maize and millet yield decline in NW Nigeria recorded in 2022 alone	**~20%**	*FAO 2023*
Projected decline in rain-fed agricultural output in Nigeria by 2080	**up to 50%**	*ActionAid Nigeria*

A lake that once covered 25,000 square kilometres - one of Africa's great inland seas, a source of water, fish, and fertile flood-recession farmland for 50 million people has been reduced to a puddle. Not a metaphor. A literal, measurable, satellite-confirmed puddle: 1,300 square kilometres. Five percent of what it was. And in the four countries that share its basin Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon - the consequences are counted not in statistics but in abandoned villages, children who have never seen the lake their grandparents fished, and farmers now growing security incidents instead of crops.

A 2024 PLOS Climate study documented what farmers in the Lake Chad Basin already know: their three traditional adaptive strategies - rain-fed agriculture, river-irrigated farming, and lake-proximate rice cultivation - used to serve as a resilience buffer because they could not all fail at once. They now fail simultaneously. Erratic rainfall disrupts the first. Insecurity and conflict block the second. Shrinking water and armed group control eliminate the third.

Desertification affects approximately 60% of Nigeria's total land area. The Sahara is advancing southward. The annual rains are arriving later, ending earlier, and falling more erratically. The soil that remains is losing its capacity to hold water and support crops. In eleven northern states, the ground itself is turning against the farmer.

Source: FAO / AFRIPOLI 2024; NIMET; ScienceDirect 2025

This is not climate change as an abstraction, this is climate change as a food weapon pointed at the most vulnerable people in the most vulnerable geography, while the infrastructure that could blunt it sits at less than 8% of its potential.

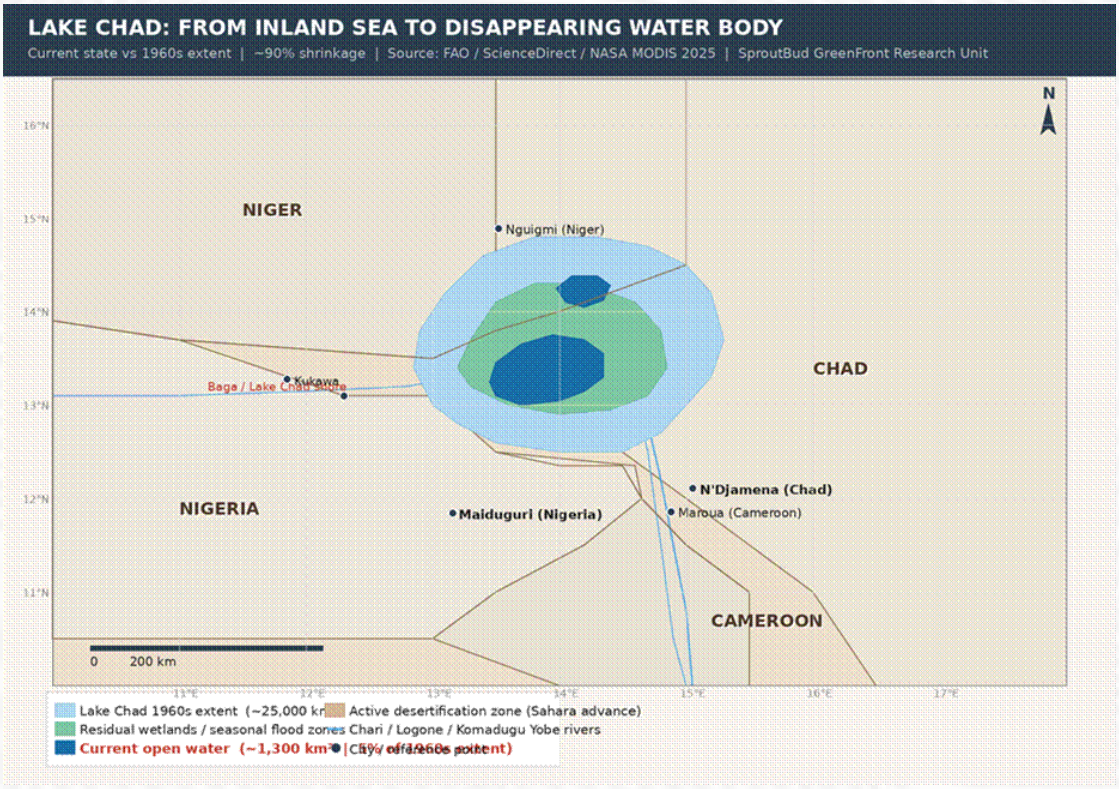


Figure 1: Lake Chad - 1960s extent (~25,000 km²) vs current open water (~1,300 km²). The lake has lost ~90% of its surface area since the 1960s. Source: FAO / ScienceDirect 2025 / NASA MODIS 2025. Cartography: SproutBud GreenFront Research Unit.

III. THE IRRIGATION DISGRACE: 3.1 MILLION HECTARES, 235,000 USED

President Bola Tinubu stated on the stage of the 6th African Regional Conference on Irrigation and Drainage in Abuja, April 14, 2025: Nigeria has more than 3.1 million hectares of irrigable land located around key river basins including the Niger and Benue.

Nigeria currently irrigates 235,000 hectares.

That is 7.6% of what is available. The remaining 92.4% - nearly 2.9 million hectares of land that could grow food year-round, that could sever the deadly dependence on four months of rainfall, that could make the lean season a historical footnote sits idle. Or worse: it sits in conflict zones, washed by floods, baked by drought, and slowly consumed by sand.

> *"We cannot break the cycle of poverty by farming for just four months a year. The only viable solution is to produce food throughout the year - and that requires*

functional irrigation systems." - Engr. Razaq Jimoh, former MD, Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority, at ARCID 2025

The Transforming Irrigation Management in Nigeria (TRIMING) Project, a seven-year, World Bank-funded programme targeting five large-scale irrigation schemes in northern Nigeria has delivered results where it reached. Fertilizer Deep Placement technology increased rice yields by more than 50%, from baseline figures to between 5-8 metric tonnes per hectare. 45,771 farmers were reached across its intervention states, 130,000 farmers were targeted for market access and productivity support.

TRIMING is winding down. Its successor, the Sustainable Power and Irrigation for Nigeria (SPIN) project, announced at ARCID 2025 is not yet operational. The window between TRIMING's completion and SPIN's commencement is a window in which nothing is growing on the irrigation land that should be feeding Nigeria.

The Nigerian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (NINCID), Nigeria's arm of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), a body Nigeria has been a member of since 1970, hosted 512 experts from across Africa at ARCID 2025 under the theme: 'Tackling Irrigation Development and Water Management Crisis in Africa.' The conference produced compelling resolutions. The irrigated area remains at **235,000 hectares**.

Sub-Saharan Africa irrigates approximately 4% of its cultivated land. The global average is 37%. Nigeria is below even the African average. In a country of 220 million people, with 3.1 million hectares of irrigable land, a growing population projected to reach 400 million by 2050, and a food import bill of NGN 1.9 trillion (2022) - this is not a resource constraint. It is a governance failure.

Source: NINCID / ICID Country Profile; FAOSTAT; NBS import data

IV. THE DECLARATIONS THAT DID NOT FEED ANYONE

On July 13, 2023, President Bola Tinubu declared **a state of emergency on food security.** He had been in office for seven weeks, food inflation stood at 24.6%, One year later, food inflation stood at 40.9%. Thirty-three million Nigerians were food insecure - eight million more than when the emergency was declared. The government launched the Home Garden Initiative and Nigerians launched the August 2024 national protests against hunger.

On April 14, 2025, President Tinubu declared a second national emergency on food security - this time from the stage of ARCID 2025. The declaration called for expanded irrigation infrastructure and participatory water resource management. It was his second declaration in less than two years. The first had not yet yielded results. The irrigated area had not changed.

Indicator	The Number	Source
Food inflation when Emergency #1 was declared - April 2023	**24.6%**	*NBS*
Food inflation at its worst - June 2024, one year after Emergency #1	**40.9%**	*NBS / WFP*
Nigerians food insecure when Emergency #1 was declared - 2023	**~25 million**	*FAO/Cadre Harmonisé*
Nigerians food insecure during 2025 lean season (post-emergency)	**33.1 million**	*Cadre Harmonisé*
Agricultural budget as share of federal expenditure (current)	**~2.5%**	*NBS / Budget Office*
CAADP target for agricultural budget share	**10%**	*African Union Malabo*
Agricultural GDP growth rate achieved (Nigeria, recent years)	**~2.8%**	*FAOSTAT*
CAADP target for agricultural GDP growth	**6% per year**	*Malabo Declaration*
Farmers protected from attacks by the security commitments of Emergency #1	**0 - no clear strategy delivered**	*AgroNigeria 2024*
Farmers abducted during the 2025 harvest season (Oct-Dec alone)	**~1,350**	*FEWS NET Dec 2025*

A declaration of emergency that does not shift the budget is not an emergency. It is a press release. Nigeria's agricultural budget sits at 2.5% of federal expenditure - one quarter of what the country committed to under the Malabo Declaration. Two food emergencies have been declared, the budget allocation has not moved to match the declared urgency, the tractors came two years after the promise, the Commodity Board was never constituted, the farmers who needed security never received it.

> *"It is good that the Federal Government is prioritising food security and has rightly positioned it as an enabler of national security. A hungry man is an angry man. The question is, how much progress has been made?" - Jide Ojo, Punch Nigeria, June 24, 2025*

The Anticipatory Action Task Force on Floods - launched in March 2025 under Vice President Shettima represents genuine institutional progress. Its September 2025 activation in Adamawa State reached 83,500 people with cash transfers within 72 hours, protected 288,000 animals, and sent early warning messages to 400,000 households. It proved the model works. Its proposed budget covers 773 communities across 13 states. A United States funding withdrawal has created an immediate gap in the humanitarian financing it depends on. The model works. The money may not be there.

V. THE RAINY SEASON IS COMING. HERE IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITHOUT ACTION.

The 2026 lean season begins in June. In northern Nigeria, this means: food stocks from the 2025 harvest - a harvest disrupted by escalating conflict that saw 1,350 farmers abducted between October-December 2025 alone- will be depleted. Prices will rise, households already at Phase 2 “Stressed” will tip into Phase 3 “Crisis”. The 1.38 million people still displaced will remain displaced, with near-zero own production and humanitarian assistance already scaling down.

The inaccessible zones of Borno - Abadam, Bama, Marte, Guzamala, families will remain in IPC Phase 4 “Emergency”, No food assistance will reach them, No market will serve them, No harvest will come. FEWS NET's most current analysis, dated February 2026, projects

these Emergency outcomes persist through at least September 2026, that is the entire rainy season, The entire planting season, The entire lean season.

> FEWS NET, February 2026:
> "Escalating conflict across northern Nigeria continues to severely undermine food security. By late 2025, an estimated 1.38 million people remained displaced, while persistent attacks, abductions, and restricted mobility in inaccessible areas have resulted in acute food insecurity, particularly where markets remain cut off."
> "Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are expected to persist through at least September 2026 in inaccessible areas of the Northeast."

The 2024 floods destroyed 1.6 million hectares of farmland in a single fortnight in October, erasing 1.1 million tonnes of cereal production, enough to feed 13 million people for one year at a cost of USD 1 billion. The 2025 floods affected 315,700 people across 25 states and destroyed 46,000 hectares before October. Climate science projects floods of this magnitude will occur every 2-5 years by mid-century. The Anticipatory Action Task Force exists precisely for this. It reached 4 LGAs in its pilot. Nigeria has 774.

And the desert keeps advancing. At approximately 0.6 kilometres per year. Silently, Consistently. Regardless of declarations.

So the question stands - and it demands a real answer:

Can We Have a Year of Yield?

Not as a slogan, not as a theme for a conference, not as the title of a declaration that will be measured against itself in twelve months and found wanting again.

As a commitment: to fund the Anticipatory Action Task Force at the scale the crisis demands. To move the agricultural budget from 2.5% toward the 10% promise Nigeria already made. To operationalise SPIN before the planting window closes. To create and enforce security for

farmers in the north - because without it, every other commitment is theoretical. To treat the 33 million food insecure Nigerians not as a humanitarian statistic but as a national emergency that requires the coordination, the resourcing, and the accountability of one.

The season does not wait for consensus. June is coming.

FEWS NET · IPC 3.1 · Cadre Harmonisé · WFP · OCHA · FAO · UNICEF · ACLED · NBS · NINCID / ICID · AATF · TRIMING / SPIN

Data sourced from: FEWS NET Nigeria Outlook February 2026 & October 2025; IPC 3.1 June-September 2026 projection; WFP Nigeria November 2024; Cadre Harmonisé Nigeria 2025; OCHA AATF Framework July 2025; Food Security Cluster AAFRF August 2025; Anticipation Hub AAR December 2025; ICID/NINCID Country Profile; ARCID 2025 Highlights; FAO ASI July 2024; IDMC Nigeria 2025; ScienceDirect 2025; PLOS Climate 2024; ActionAid Nigeria 2022; AgroNigeria November 2024; Guardian Nigeria August 2024; Punch Nigeria June 2025; AFRIPOLI December 2025; NBS CPI Reports 2023-2025