



Facts about Uranium, Uranium Mining in NIGER and the EU

In view of the coup situation in Niger, different media report about uranium mining in Niger, France's dependence on Niger's uranium etc. The numbers partly mentioned also in big media (German Tagesschau ...), are not always comprehensible. Therefore briefly some facts (comprehensible).

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1./ **Niger is by no means** - as claimed here and there - **one of the world's major uranium producers.**

Niger produces (2022) with 2020 t U of 48,888 t U world production **a little more than 4%** and stands with it on 7th place of the world uranium production – a rather modest importance.

In earlier years, Niger's uranium production was higher, and accounted for up to 8% of world uranium production – but even this does not mean a place among the largest uranium producers¹.

Niger does not have the largest uranium resources in the world, either, they are located in Australia².

2./ **The EU imports, on a 12-year average (2010 - 2021) about 17% of the EU's uranium requirements from Niger.**

In 2022, the amount of uranium imported from Niger increased to almost 24%, but is expected to drop again due to closure of one of the two uranium mines in Niger (Akokan of COMINAK, closed since 2021).

There is no official information about which EU country purchases how much uranium from which country outside the EU.

However, it is obvious – due to the ownership of the one still operating uranium mine in Niger (Arlit; Akokan closed since 2021), owned by ORANO (ex-AREVA) – that all or most of the uranium from Niger is destined for French nuclear power plants.

3./ **France requires between 9900 t U per year (2014) and 8700 t U (2020)** ³.

Niger is producing decreasing amounts of uranium, partly due to the closure of one of ORANO's (ex-AREVA) two uranium mines in Niger, Akokan. Uranium production fell from 4057 t U in 2014 to 2020 t U in 2021 ⁴.

¹ see: www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/nuclear-fuel-cycle/mining-of-uranium/world-uranium-mining-production.aspx

² see: www.wise-uranium.org/umaps.html, click on "Identified Uranium Resources, RAR + Inferred, -260US\$/kg U" this is the most comprehensive category of uranium resources worldwide

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1143479/uranium-consumption-in-france/>

With the 2022 uranium production of 2020 t U, uranium from Niger covers about 23% of France's uranium requirements (in 2014 it was about 40%).

Thus, **2022 is an exceptional situation; in the long term, about 17% of EU imports came from Niger.**

In the long-term average (12 years, 2010 - 2021), the share of uranium from Niger imported to the EU (and most likely going to French nuclear power plants, see above) was only 17%.

France's dependence on uranium from Niger is much lower than currently stated in some media.

4./ Should the current **stop of uranium supplies from Niger** become permanent – which is by no means clear at present (3.8.2023) – it would certainly be unpleasant for the French nuclear power plant operator EdF, but not 'life-threatening'. Both France and the EU hold larger uranium stocks.

The 2021 Annual Report of the EURATOM Supply Agency (ESA) states:

"Uranium inventories can fuel EU utilities' nuclear power reactors for 3 years on average."

(Euratom Supply Agency Annual Report 2021⁵, p. 25)

(ESA's 2022 Annual Report is not yet public, presumably inventories have decreased somewhat and last less than 3 years, but in any case there is a good 'buffer'.)

There is no EU uranium embargo on Russia; France, after all, maintains good nuclear relations with Russia despite the Ukraine war, and could buy uranium there, for example.

Comment:

Whether statements that the EU could run out of uranium are intended as preparation to justify an intervention in Niger or are simply the result of a lack of information or weak research remains to be seen.

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⁴ <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/nuclear-fuel-cycle/mining-of-uranium/world-uranium-mining-production.aspx>

⁵ https://euratom-supply.ec.europa.eu/document/download/96aa8afa-cdb9-41e0-a8c1-a1958d7afe1d_en?filename=Euratom%20Supply%20Agency%20-%20Annual%20report%202021%20-%20Corrected%20edition.pdf