



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 25-July-2022

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Cereal production in 2022 estimated well below average
- Import requirements for cereals forecast to increase in 2022/23 marketing year
- Elevated global prices contributed to domestic inflationary pressure
- Food insecurity expected to increase in late 2022

Cereal production in 2022 estimated well below average

Harvesting of the 2022 main-season summer cereal crops, mostly maize and sorghum, is complete. Production of maize, the main cereal staple, is about one-third of the average, while the sorghum output is almost negligible.

The poor harvest was primarily due to torrential rainfalls during January and February, which caused localized flooding and resulted in crop losses. The heavy rains were most prominent in the main cereal-producing northwestern areas, with a significant negative impact on yields of the main season summer crops, mostly due to waterlogging that resulted in extensive weed infestations.

Including an average output of 6 000 tonnes of the minor winter wheat crop, to be harvested in November in northern regions, total cereal production in 2022 is forecast at 35 000 tonnes, well below the previous five-year average.

Import requirements for cereals forecast to increase in 2022/23 marketing year

Reflecting the very low production, cereal import requirements in the 2022/23 marketing year (April/March) are forecast at high levels. The total amount of cereal imports needed to maintain stable national consumption levels is 237 000 tonnes, including 146 000 tonnes of maize and 86 000 tonnes of wheat. Most imports are expected to be sourced from South Africa.

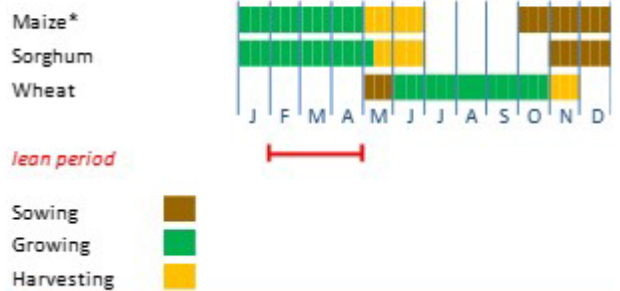
Elevated global prices contribute to domestic inflationary pressure

According to the Consumer price index (CPI), prices of bread and cereals increased by about 4 percent on a yearly basis in May.

Lesotho

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Lesotho

Cereal Production

	2017-2021 average	2021	2022 forecast	change 2022/2021
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	86	90	28	-68.9
Sorghum	21	25	1	-96.3
Wheat	5	6	6	-5.0
Total	112	121	35	-71.4

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

In addition to supply pressure from the poor 2022 harvest, the increase in food inflation is mainly driven by high global prices of food and energy, including in South Africa, the country's main source of cereal imports.

Food insecurity expected to increase in late 2022

According to the latest national food security assessment, 22 percent of the rural population are expected to face IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) acute food insecurity between October 2022 and March 2023, compared to 15 percent between July and September 2022. The forecasted proportion translates into 320 000 people in rural areas, while an additional 201 000 people in urban areas are foreseen to also need assistance.

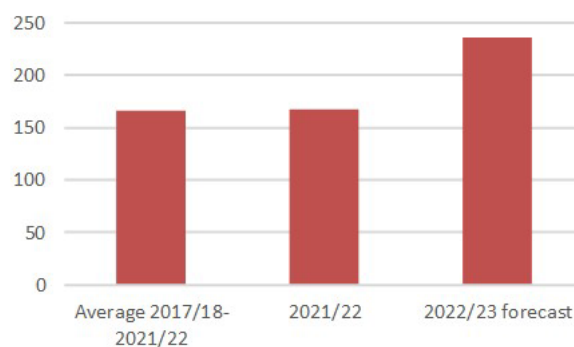
The foreseen increase of acute food insecurity levels is primarily due to the reduced harvest, high food prices in basic food and non-food commodities and a slow recovery of households' income reflecting a downturn in economic growth. This has compromised the purchasing power of very poor and poor households, resulting in some households engaging in negative livelihood coping strategies.

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Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



Notes: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 06-May-2021

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Harvesting of 2021 cereal crops is underway and production is forecast at above-average level, despite localized crop damage due to torrential rains
- Import requirements of cereals anticipated to fall on yearly basis in 2021/22, but remain near average
- Cereal prices increased steeply since late 2020
- High prevalence of food insecurity in early 2021 driven by high food prices and effects of COVID-19 pandemic

Cereal production forecast at above-average level in 2021

Harvesting of the 2021 main cereal crops, mainly maize and sorghum, began recently and an above-average production is expected.

Following a delayed onset, seasonal rainfall has generally been well distributed in spatial terms. Soil moisture levels during the sowing period were mostly conducive for planting operations and early crop development. Despite localized damage to standing crops in southern areas on account of torrential rainfall in late December 2020 and early January 2021, the heavy rains were mostly conducive for crops across the country. As of mid-April 2021, just prior to the harvest period, cumulative rainfall amounts were estimated to be average to above average. Reflecting the conducive rains, vegetation indices in April indicated favourable crop conditions across most of the country, including the main producing areas in the north and west, portending to high crop yields.

Overall, cereal production is forecast at about 120 000 tonnes, nearly 25 percent above the good level in 2020 and about 13 percent more than the previous five-year average.

Import requirements of cereals anticipated to decrease yearly in 2021/22

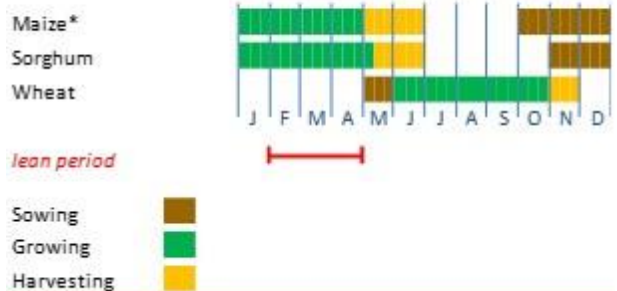
Cereal import requirements in the 2021/22 marketing year (April/March) are estimated at a near-average level of 190 000 tonnes, about 10 percent below the high volume in 2020/21 when the country sought to build up stocks amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Imports of maize are estimated at a near-average level of 76 000 tonnes, reflecting adequate domestic availabilities from the large

Lesotho

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Lesotho

Cereal Production

	2016-2020 average	2020	2021 forecast	change 2021/2020
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	81	70	90	28.6
Sorghum	19	20	25	25.0
Wheat	6	8	6	-25.0
Total	107	98	121	23.5

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

carryover stocks and the foreseen good output in 2021. Import requirements of wheat, which is produced in negligible volumes, are estimated at a near-average level of 80 000 tonnes.

Cereal prices increased steeply since late 2020

Following a hike in the prices of bread and cereals between April and June 2020 amid the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, in part reflecting market disruptions, prices increased thereafter but at more gradual rates and as of March 2021 were about 20 percent higher on a yearly basis. The increased price levels mainly reflect the high cereal prices in South Africa, the country's main supplier of grains, while a slowdown in cross-border trade in January and February 2021, following new COVID-19 containment measures, led to a moderate uptick in food inflation rates.

High prevalence of food insecurity in early 2021

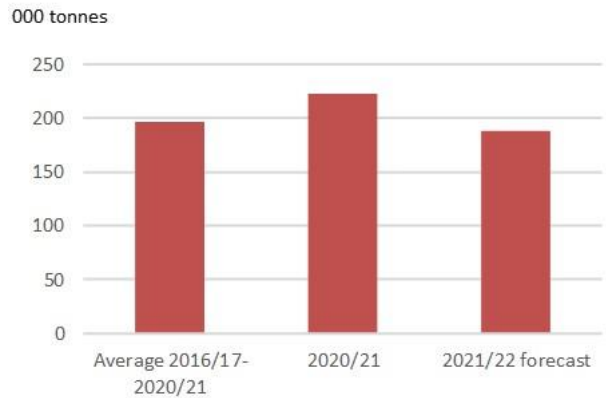
About 580 000 people were estimated to be facing acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3: "Crisis" and above) during the October 2020-March 2021 period. At this level, the number of people in need of food assistance was 35 percent above the corresponding period in 2019/20. The prevalence of food insecurity increased from 30 to 40 percent of the analyzed population and of particular concern was the increase in the number of people in IPC Phase 4: "Emergency", estimated at 100 000 compared to 70 000. Overall, high prices of food and the loss of jobs and incomes associated to the COVID-19 pandemic were the main drivers of the increase in the prevalence and severity of food insecurity.

Acute food insecurity levels are likely to decrease from May onwards with the start of the 2021 cereal harvest which will increase food availability. At the same time, households' access to food is also expected to improve, reflecting increased crop sales. However, a slow economic recovery and the possibility of a third wave of COVID-19 cases in the country and neighbouring South Africa, which increases the risk of the enforcement of new containment measures, could prolong the high levels of unemployment and cause further income losses among the most vulnerable households.

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Lesotho

Cereals Imports



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 22-December-2020

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Early production prospects mostly favourable for 2021 cereal crops
- Cereal production recovered to near-average level in 2020
- Import requirements of cereals estimated at above-average level in 2020/21
- Cereal prices stable but higher year on year
- Effects of COVID-19 pandemic drive up food insecurity

Early production prospects mostly favourable for 2021 cereal crops

Planting of the 2021 cereal crops, primarily maize and sorghum, is almost complete. Weather conditions since the start of the rainy season in October have been generally conducive for plantings and crop emergence, with cumulative rainfall amounts until early December estimated to be slightly above average. For the January-March 2021 period, weather forecasts, which are underpinned by the prevailing La Niña event, indicate a higher-than-normal probability of average to above-average rainfall. This outlook increases the likelihood of an above-average cereal production in 2021. However, the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on households' incomes could reduce the utilization of agricultural inputs, including fertilizers and labour, and would, therefore, likely limit the potential increases in yields.

Production recovered to near-average level in 2020

Cereal production in 2020 increased on a yearly basis and is estimated at a near-average level of 98 000 tonnes. The year-on-year production upturn mostly reflects an increase in yields compared to the reduced levels of 2019, when rainfall deficits had a detrimental impact on crop productivity.

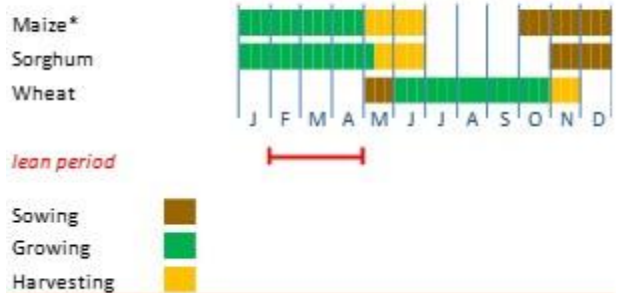
Import requirements of cereals estimated at above-average level in 2020/21

Cereal import requirements in the 2020/21 marketing year (April/March) are estimated at an above-average level of 230 000 tonnes. Imports of maize are expected to exceed more than 100 000 tonnes as the country seeks to increase national inventories following the drawdown in stocks that occurred in 2019/20. Imports of wheat are expected to remain stable at an average level of 80 000 tonnes.

Lesotho

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Lesotho

Cereal Production

	2015-2019	2019	2020	change
	average	000 tonnes		2020/2019
			estimate	percent
Maize	80	35	70	101.5
Sorghum	16	1	20	1874.3
Wheat	6	2	8	348.4
Total	102	38	98	161.1

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Cereal prices stable but higher year on year

Following a spike in the price of bread and cereals in April 2020, partly attributed to an uptick in consumer demand as the effects of the pandemic-related lockdown measures took hold, prices thereafter remained relatively firm until October (latest available information). The stable levels reflected generally adequate domestic supplies, following an increase in production and ample import availabilities from South Africa.

Effects of COVID-19 pandemic drive up food insecurity

Just over 580 000 people are estimated to be food insecure and need assistance for food until March 2021, according to the latest IPC assessment. This estimate is about 35 percent above the number of people that required food assistance between October 2019 and March 2020. In addition to a rise in the overall prevalence of food insecurity, the number of people experiencing a more severe level of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4) has risen to 100 000, up from 70 000 in 2019/20.

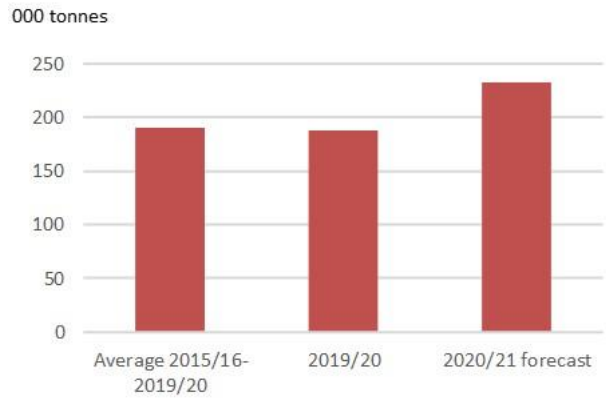
The increase in the prevalence and severity of food insecurity has been predominantly driven by the effects of the lockdown measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions on the movement of people and the closure of non-essential industries resulted in the loss of jobs and incomes, reducing people's capacity to access adequate diets. The restrictions affected the workforce within the country, but also migrant workers in South Africa. According to the IPC report, an estimated 93 000 migrant workers returned from South Africa in 2020, which resulted in a reduction in remittances, an essential source of income for a large proportion of the local population.

In terms of food availability, domestic supplies of cereals are estimated to be sufficient and supply chains between the country and South Africa are generally functioning normally. However, a second wave of COVID-19 cases has affected South Africa since November and the Government of South Africa has imposed localized movement restrictions to contain the spread. If cases continue to rise in South Africa, there is high risk of a second imposition of restrictions that may prolong the high levels of unemployment and cause further income losses in Lesotho.

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Lesotho

Cereals Imports



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 10-July-2020

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Near-average cereal output expected in 2020
- Cereal imports estimated at above-average level in 2020/21
- Prices of bread and cereals increased in April 2020 and were higher year on year
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 433 000 people estimated to be food insecure in early 2020

Near-average cereal output expected in 2020

Harvesting of the 2020 main season cereal crops is virtually complete and production is anticipated to recover from the drought-reduced output in 2019, but remains below the five-year average level. The production upturn mostly reflects an increase in yields compared to the reduced levels of 2019. Despite early rainfall deficits, increased precipitation since December 2019 until May 2020 replenished soil moisture reserves and helped lift yields to near-average levels. However, the late onset of conducive seasonal rains and the constrained access to agricultural inputs limited some farmers' capacity to expand the sown area and, consequently, the area planted to cereals is estimated to be just under the five-year average level. Reports from the country also indicate that farmers in localized areas, on account of the delay in plantings, harvested their crops before they reached full maturity in order to avoid losses to frost.

Regarding winter crops, mainly wheat and pulses, reports from the country indicate that planting operations, which normally take place in May, were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic-induced movement restrictions and stricter sanitary measures that impeded normal access to imported seeds and fertilizers.

Aggregate 2020 cereal production, including an estimated average output of winter crops to be harvested at the end of the year, is forecast at near-average level of 98 000 tonnes. Maize production is forecast at 70 000 tonnes, nearly double the 2019 output, but still slightly below the five-year average, while production of sorghum is anticipated at an above-average level of 20 000 tonnes.

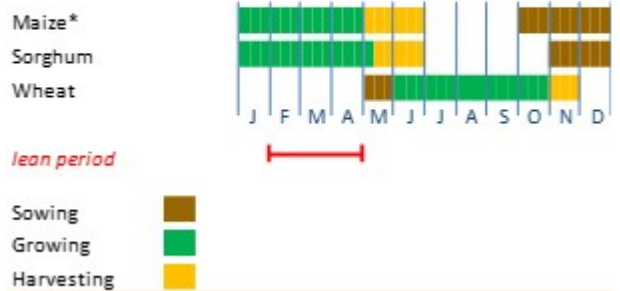
Cereal imports estimated above average in 2020/21

In the 2020/21 marketing year (April/March), cereal import

Lesotho

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Lesotho

Cereal Production

	2015-2019 average	2019	2020 forecast	change 2020/2019
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	80	35	70	101.5
Sorghum	16	1	20	1874.3
Wheat	6	2	8	348.4
Total	102	38	98	161.1

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

requirements are estimated at an above-average level of 230 000 tonnes. The import requirement for maize is estimated at 120 000 tonnes, nearly 40 percent above the previous five-year average. The high volume reflects the country's need to bolster supplies, following the reduced harvest in 2019 and a consequent drawdown in stocks, while also benefiting from lower prices in South Africa, the country's main trading partner. Imports of wheat are expected to remain stable at an average level of 80 000 tonnes.

Prices of bread and cereals increased in April 2020

Prices of bread and cereals were stable between January and March 2020, mainly reflecting an adequate supply situation and generally constant prices in South Africa. In April, prices of bread and cereals started to increase and were about 13 percent higher on a yearly basis. Some of the increase is partly attributed to an uptick in consumer demand as the effects of pandemic-related lockdown measures took hold and consumers sought to purchase in bulk in preparation of the movement restrictions.

Food insecurity expected to worsen in 2020

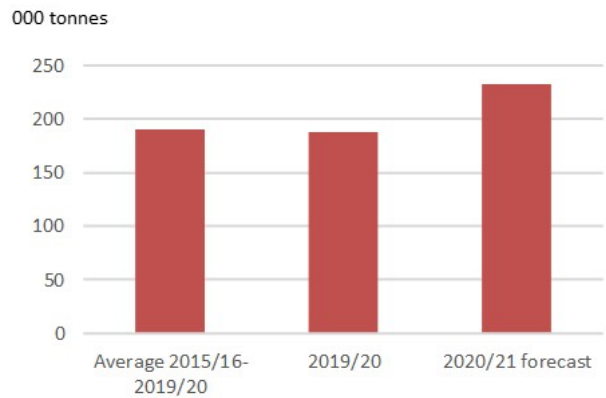
Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, about 433 000 people in rural areas were estimated to be in IPC Phase 3: "Crisis" and Phase 4: "Emergency" in the October 2019-March 2020 period, according to the last IPC acute food insecurity analysis. This figure was nearly 60 percent higher than the number of food insecure in the same period in 2018/19, reflecting the impact of the 2019 reduced cereal harvest and higher food prices.

Notwithstanding the positive effects of the recovery in cereal production in 2020 on rural households' food availability and access, the COVID-19 pandemic is anticipated to trigger an increase in the prevalence of food insecurity from the third quarter of 2020 to early 2021. The effects of the pandemic on rural household's livelihoods, who are heavily dependent on casual labor, remittances and petty trade, are foreseen to be primarily channeled through a reduction in economic activities and associated income losses. As a measure to provide relief to households, the government launched an economic mitigation package, which includes LSL 1.2 billion (about USD 58 million) for emergency assistance and the expansion of social protection programmes, such as the Child Grant Programme.

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Lesotho

Cereals Imports



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 23-March-2020

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Improved rainfall since December 2019 boosted production prospects of 2020 cereal crops, following earlier unfavourable weather conditions
- Cereal imports estimated below-average in 2019/20, as drawdown of stocks limited import needs
- Cereal prices strengthened in 2019, on account of increased import costs
- Food insecurity worsened as result of reduced harvest and estimated 433 410 people need food assistance until end-March 2020

Improved rainfall since December 2019 boosted production prospects of 2020 cereal crops

The 2020 cereal crops, mainly maize and sorghum, will be harvested from April and, based on remote sensing data, vegetation conditions are favourable in most cropped areas.

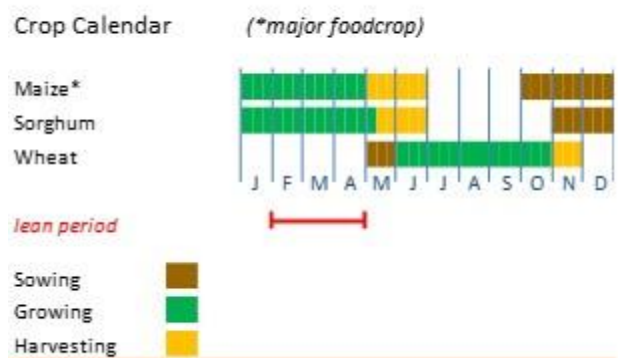
Rainfall deficits were recorded at the start of the season during October and November 2019. The poor rains are expected to have delayed planting operations and spurred a contraction in sowings. As a result, the planted area with cereals is estimated at a level close to the previous five-year average or slightly below. The late-planted crops, which are likely to be harvested from June onwards, face an increased risk of frost damage during the coming winter months, particularly in the mountainous regions.

Increased precipitation since December 2019 boosted soil moisture reserves and resulted in an improvement of vegetation conditions across most of the main producing areas in the west and northwest (see the Agricultural Stress Index map). As a result, the 2020 cereal production is forecast at a near-average level, compared to the sharply reduced output obtained in 2019.

Cereal imports estimated below average in 2019/20

In the 2019/20 marketing year (April/March), cereal import requirements are estimated at 183 000 tonnes. The import requirements for maize are estimated at about 70 000 tonnes, 14 percent above the previous year's volume, reflecting the reduced 2019 harvest. A drawdown of stocks of maize is estimated to have limited a higher requirement of imports.

Lesotho



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Lesotho

Cereal Production

	2014-2018 average	2018	2019 estimate	change 2019/2018
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	92	110	35	-68.4
Sorghum	18	40	1	-97.5
Wheat	8	9	2	-79.0
Total	117	159	38	-76.4

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Imports of wheat are expected to remain stable at an average level of 80 000 tonnes.

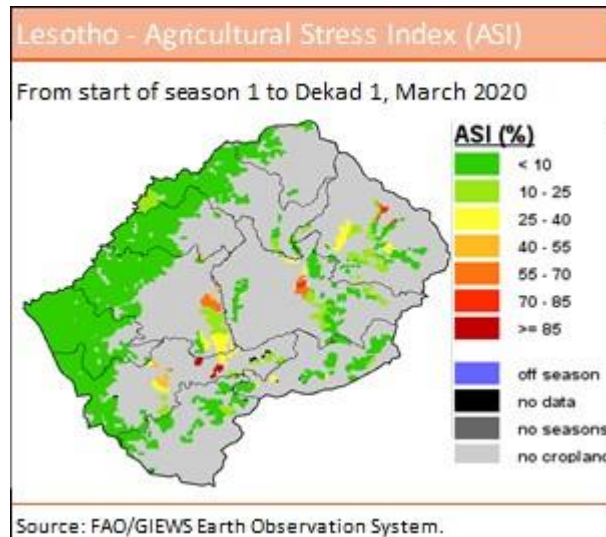
Cereal prices continued to strengthen in January 2020

According to the Bureau of Statistics (BOS), the rising trend of prices of bread and cereals registered throughout 2019, continued in January 2020, with prices standing at levels about 10 percent higher on a yearly basis. The growth in prices reflects the impact of higher year on year prices in South Africa, the country's main supplier of grains, and lower domestic output.

Estimated 433 000 people in need of food assistance until March 2020

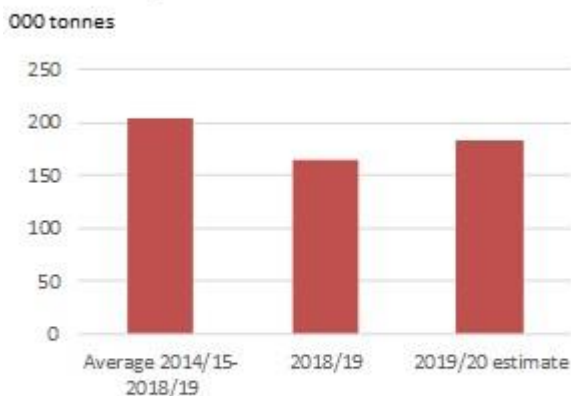
According to the latest IPC acute food insecurity analysis, about 433 000 people in rural areas were estimated to face severe acute food insecurity and were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance between October 2019 and March 2020. This figure was nearly 60 percent higher than the number of food insecure in the same period in 2018/19, reflecting the impact of the low harvest and higher food prices.

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Lesotho

Cereals Imports



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 06-December-2019

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Forecasts of reduced seasonal rainfall dampens production prospects for 2020 cereal crops
- Cereal production in 2019 estimated well below-average due to unfavourable weather conditions
- Cereal import requirements estimated at high level in 2019/20, while prices of cereals strengthened on high import costs and tight domestic supplies
- Food insecurity worsens and 433 410 severely food insecure people (30 percent of rural population) estimated in need of food assistance until March 2020

Unfavourable weather forecast curbs 2020 cereal production prospects

Planting of the 2020 cereal crops, to be harvested from April 2020, is ongoing. Since the start of the rainy season in October, rainfall amounts have been below average and temperatures have been higher-than-normal. As a result, soil moisture levels were at below-normal levels in November, impeding early crop development. For the period December 2019-March 2020, weather forecasts indicate a higher likelihood of below-average rainfall that, together with the already unfavourable early cropping conditions, increase the probability of a second consecutive reduced harvest in 2020.

Cereal production in 2019 estimated well below-average level

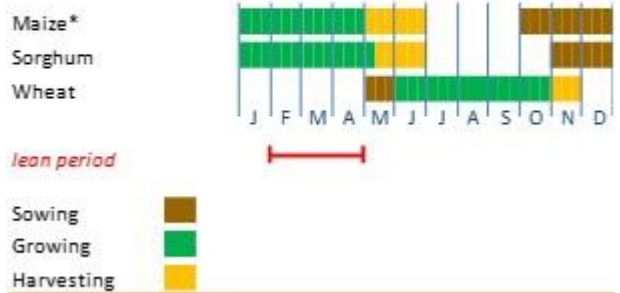
The 2019 maize and sorghum crops were harvested by June and production was severely affected by rainfall deficits between September 2018 and January 2019, which led to a decrease in both the area harvested and yields. Maize production, which accounts for the bulk of the national cereal output, is estimated at about 35 000 tonnes, over 60 percent below the previous five-year average, while sorghum production is estimated at a negligible level of 1 000 tonnes.

The 2019 winter wheat output, which was harvested in November, is estimated at 2 000 tonnes, about 77 percent below the previous year's near-average level, reflecting a decline in both planted area and yields.

Lesotho

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Lesotho

Cereal Production

	2014-2018	2018	2019	change
	average			2019/2018
000 tonnes				
				percent
Maize	92	110	35	-68.4
Sorghum	18	40	1	-97.5
Wheat	8	9	2	-79.0
Total	117	159	38	-76.4

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Imports anticipated at high levels in 2019/20

In the 2019/20 marketing year (April/March), total cereal import requirements are estimated at 272 000 tonnes, about 30 percent above the five-year average. The import requirements for maize, which accounts for most of the increase, are estimated at an above-average level of 150 000 tonnes, reflecting the reduced 2019 harvest.

Import volumes of wheat are expected to remain stable at an average 90 000 tonnes, while imports of rice, which is not produced in the country, are expected at an average 31 000 tonnes.

Cereal prices strengthened

According to the latest report of the Bureau of Statistics (BOS), as of September 2019, prices of bread and cereals increased by an average of 11 percent compared to the levels a year earlier. The growth in prices reflects the tight domestic supply as well as the high prices in South Africa, the country's main supplier of grains.

Food insecurity situation worsens in 2019/20

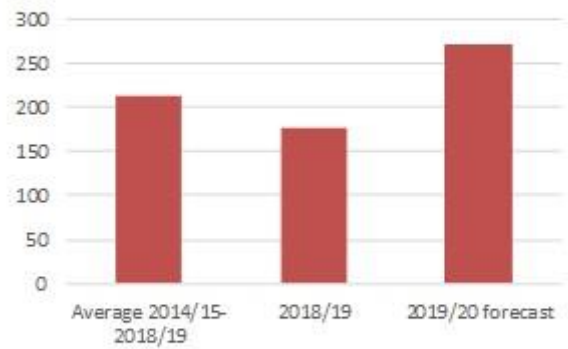
According to the latest Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (VAC) evaluation, about 433 410 people in rural areas are estimated to be food insecure and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance from October 2019 to March 2020. This figure is nearly 60 percent higher than the number of food insecure in the same period in 2018/19, reflecting the impact of the low harvest and high food prices.

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Lesotho

Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 24-September-2019

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Weather forecasts point to mostly favourable conditions for 2020 crops, to be planted from October
- Cereal production in 2019 estimated at well below-average level due to seasonal rainfall deficits
- Cereal import requirement estimated at high level in 2019/20, while prices of cereals strengthening
- Food insecurity worsened and estimated 433 000 people assessed to need assistance for food between April 2019 and March 2020

Favourable weather forecasts boost production prospects for 2020 cereal crops

Planting of the 2020 cereal crops is expected to start in October, with crops likely to be ready for harvest from April/May next year. According to the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS), below-normal rainfall is expected in September and October 2019, inferring a higher probability of a delayed start of seasonal rains. From November to December, rainfall is forecast to be average and, between January and March 2020, there is a higher likelihood of above-average precipitation, boosting the preliminary production outlook for 2020 crops.

Cereal production in 2019 estimated at well below-average level

The 2019 maize and sorghum crops were harvested in June and production was severely affected by seasonal rainfall deficits between September 2018 and January 2019, which led to a decrease in both area harvested and yields. Maize production, which accounts for the bulk of the national cereal output, decreased by 62 percent compared to the previous five-year average, while sorghum production is estimated at the negligible level of 1 000 tonnes.

The 2019 winter wheat output, to be harvested in November, is forecast at 2 000 tonnes, about 77 percent below the previous year's near-average level, reflecting a steep decline in both planted area and yields.

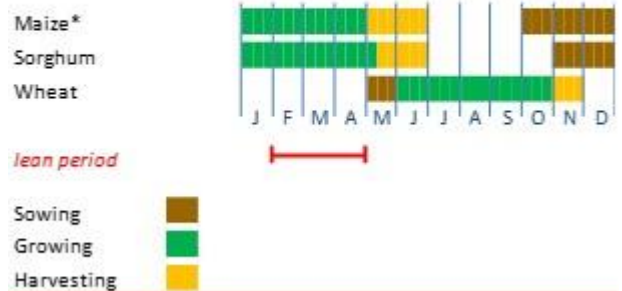
Imports anticipated to reach high level in 2019/20

In the 2019/20 marketing year (April/March), total cereal import requirements are estimated at 272 000 tonnes, about 30 percent

Lesotho

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Lesotho

Cereal Production

	2014-2018	2018	2019	change
	average			2019/2018
000 tonnes				
Maize	92	110	35	-68.4
Sorghum	18	40	1	-97.5
Wheat	8	9	2	-79.0
Total	117	159	38	-76.4

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

above the five-year average. The import requirement for maize, which accounts for most of the increase, is estimated at an above-average level of 150 000 tonnes, due to the reduced 2019 harvest.

For the other cereals, mainly wheat and rice, import volumes are expected to remain stable and at average levels, at 90 000 and 31 000 tonnes, respectively.

Uptick in food inflation

According to the latest report of the Bureau of Statistics (BOS), as of July 2019, the annual inflation rate for bread and cereals, key food staples, was estimated at about 10 percent. The increase in prices reflects tighter domestic supplies and higher prices in South Africa, the country's main supplier of cereals. Higher transportation costs have also added pressure to domestic prices.

Food insecurity situation worsens in 2019/20

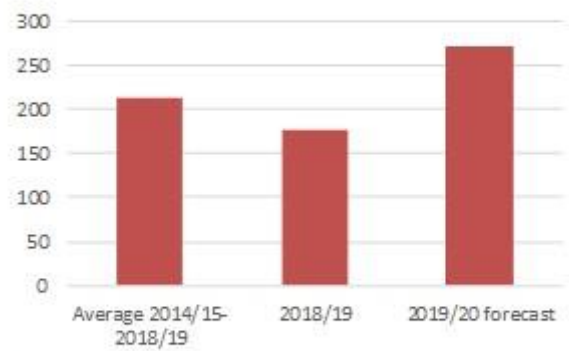
Reflecting the impact of the adverse weather conditions on rural livelihoods and households' food supplies from own production, the number of food insecure people increase significantly in the period April 2019-March 2020. Based on the latest Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (VAC) evaluation, in this period about 433 000 people in the rural areas are estimated to be food insecure and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, compared to nearly 310 000 people in the previous year.

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Lesotho

Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 20-December-2017

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Dry conditions during planting period of 2018 cereal crops
- However, rainfall prospects generally favourable for remainder of current 2017/18 season
- Maize production in 2017 estimated at well above-average level
- Ample cereal supplies result in reduced import requirements for 2017/18 marketing year and increased stock levels
- Food security conditions improved significantly, mostly on account of increased agricultural output

Dry conditions at start of 2017/18 cropping season

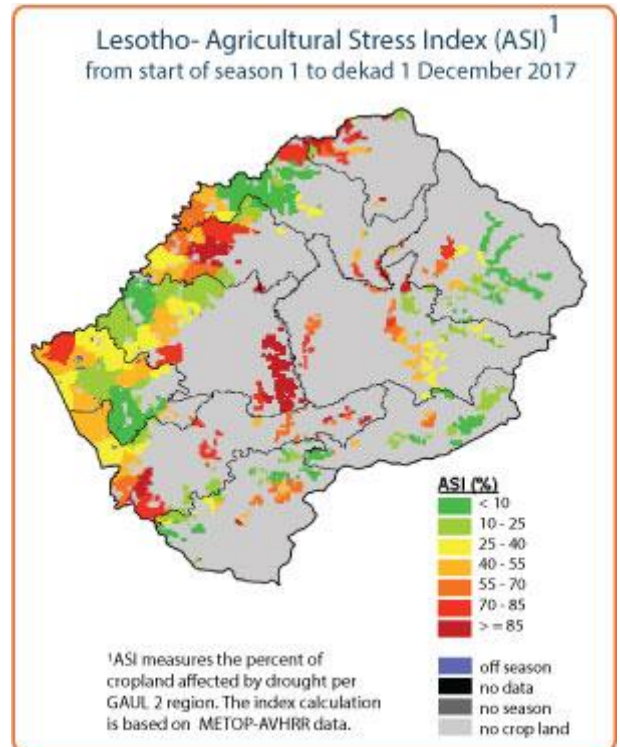
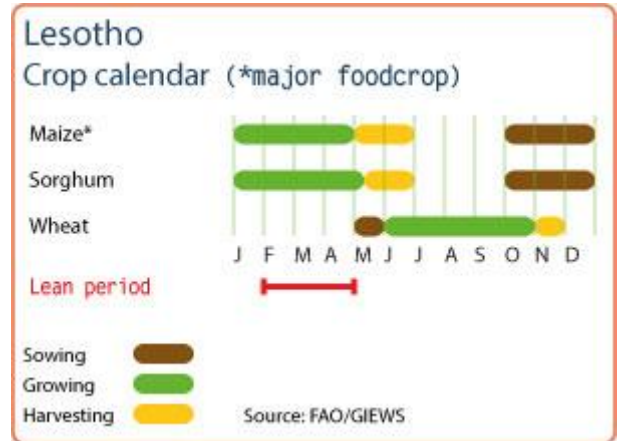
Land preparation and planting for the 2018 cereal crops is underway and is expected to be finalized by the end of the year. Abnormal dry conditions were observed during most of September and November, resulting in below-average vegetation conditions in cropped areas in the main cereal-producing northern regions. However, heavier rains were recorded at the beginning of December and meteorological forecasts point to a higher likelihood of above-average rainfall in the first quarter of 2018. Should the favourable rains materialize, the current moisture deficits are expected to be reversed with a positive effect on 2018 production prospects.

Production rebounded strongly in 2017

Based on the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics' agricultural assessment, cereal production in 2017 is estimated at a well above-average level of 238 000 tonnes, a significant increase compared to the drought-reduced level of 2016. Most of this increase reflects a sharp upturn in maize production, estimated at 200 000 tonnes. In addition, there was a sharp increase for sorghum production, while the wheat output is estimated at an average level, but still well above the previous year's output.

Import requirements drop in 2017/18

As a result of the bumper 2017 output, cereal import requirements are estimated at a well below-average level of 177 000 tonnes in the 2017/18 marketing year (April/March). Of this amount, imports of maize would account for 65 000 tonnes.



In addition, given the favourable supply situation, stock levels are forecast to rise sharply in 2017/18 to near average levels.

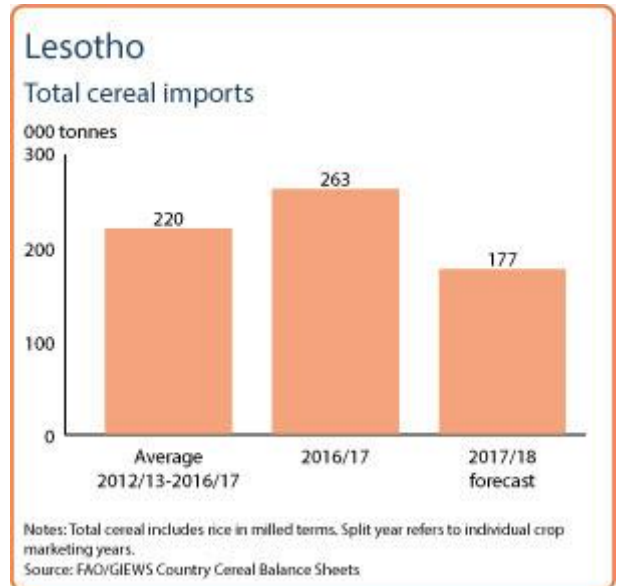
Decreased number of food insecure

The food security situation has improved markedly in 2017/18 compared to the previous year where an estimated 709 000 people required food assistance. Based on the latest 2017 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (LVACs) evaluation, the number of food insecure people in 2017/18 is estimated at about 225 000. The year-on-year decline is mostly attributed to the upturn in this year's agricultural output.

Lesotho
Cereal production

	2012-2016 average	2016	2017 estimate	change 2017/2016
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	65	25	200	700
Wheat	10	4	10	150
Sorghum	8	1	28	2700
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	82	31	238	668

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



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GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 04-July-2017

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Maize production forecast to rebound strongly to well above-average level in 2017
- As a result of production gains in 2017, cereal import forecast for 2017/18 has been reduced to below-average level
- Food security conditions expected to improve in 2017/18 mostly reflecting larger agricultural output

Cereal production in 2017 forecast at bumper level

Harvesting of the 2017 summer cereal crops is nearly complete and production is forecast at a well above-average level of 238 000 tonnes, marking a significant increase compared to the drought-reduced level of 2016. A steep upturn in maize production accounts for the bulk of the rise, forecast at 200 000 tonnes, while there was also a sharp increase, in relative terms, for sorghum production, with production set to reach about 28 000 tonnes. Prospects for the winter wheat crop, to be harvested in the last quarter of 2017, are also favourable, with production forecast at an average level of 10 000 tonnes.

Favourable weather conditions were the main driver behind this year's improved output, which encouraged a large expansion in plantings and are expected to boost maize yields to a well above-average level. Input support programmes by the Government and FAO also helped augment farmers' productive capacity, enabling them to capture the benefits of the favourable seasonal rains.

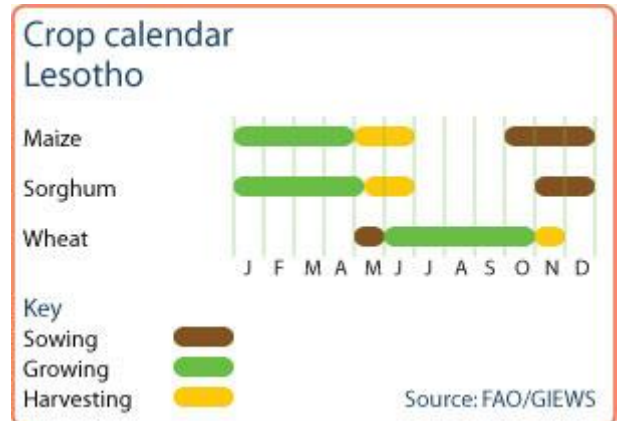
Imports requirements reduced in 2017/18

Imports of maize in the 2017/18 marketing year (April/March) are forecast at approximately 55 000 tonnes, under the assumption that per capita consumption will be sustained.

In the previous marketing year, 135 000 tonnes of maize were imported, nearly one-third above the previous five-year average. The bulk of this volume was imported from South Africa, with just under one-third imported from outside of the subregion.

Prices of maize meal fall moderately

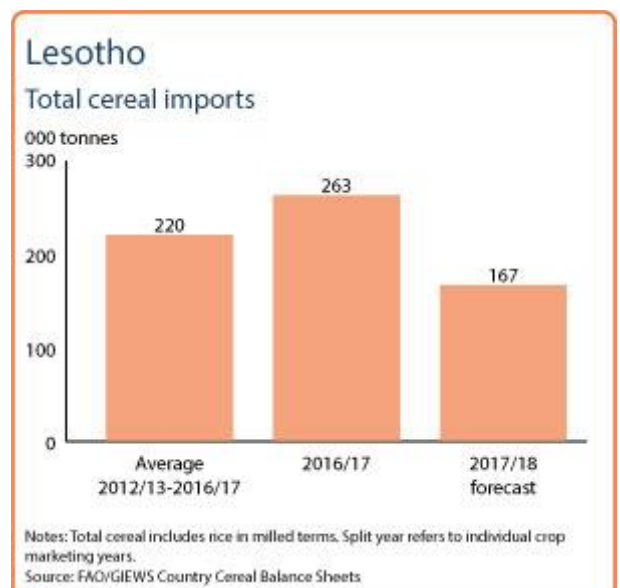
Prices of maize meal have fallen moderately since the start of 2017, mostly on account of the declining prices in South Africa, which supplied about 75 percent of the country's consumption requirements in the 2016/17 marketing year. The implementation



Lesotho Cereal production

	2012-2016 average	2016	2017 forecast	change 2017/2016
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	65	25	200	700
Wheat	10	4	10	150
Sorghum	8	1	28	2700
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	82	31	238	668

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



of the Government price subsidy programme for maize meal, beans and pulses from mid-2016, which aimed to reduce the retail prices for consumers by 30 percent for a period of one year, also contributed to the decreases, while the improved agricultural output in 2017 is expected to help sustain downward price pressure in the immediate period.

Food security conditions expected to improve in 2017/18

The food security situation is expected to improve in 2017/18, which would mostly be the result of the larger agricultural output and lower food prices. In the previous year, the number of food insecure people was estimated at about 709 000, according to the 2016 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (LVACs) evaluation. Of this number, approximately 491 000 people required emergency food assistance, with the remaining households requiring livelihood protection support. The results of the 2017 assessment are expected to be published in July and early indications point to a reduction in the number of food insecure.

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GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 18-November-2016

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Favourable rainfall forecast for 2016/17 cropping season
- Cereal production declined significantly in 2016 on account of El Niño-related drought conditions
- Maize meal retail prices declined, but still remained above their year-earlier levels
- Food security conditions worsen in 2016 reflecting impact of drought, with just under 0.5 million people requiring emergency assistance

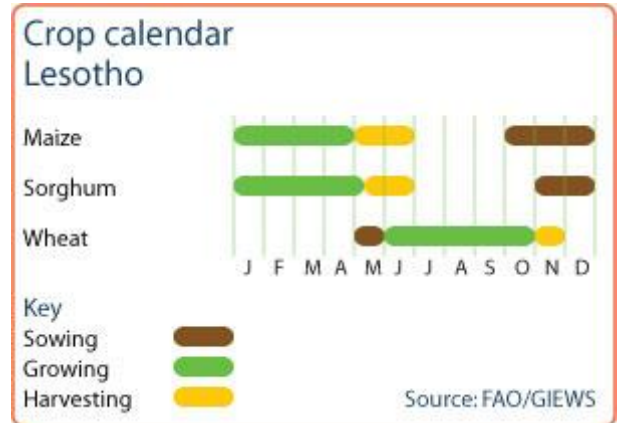
Above-average rainfall conditions forecast for 2016/17 cropping season

Planting of the 2017 summer cereal crops is underway and is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Rainfall forecasts for the 2016/17 main summer cropping season (October-June) point to an increased likelihood of above-average rainfall conditions until early 2017. Heavy rains have already been received in northern parts of the country, including the main cereal-producing regions of Bera and Leribe, which boosted vegetation growth. This follows a season that was severely affected by El Niño-related dryness.

The early production outlook for the 2017 cereal crops are generally favourable. However, following the reduced 2016 harvest that constrained households food supplies and income opportunities, the productive capacities of farming households is expected to be lower than normal, particularly in regard to seed supplies and this may limit plantings; a recent FAO assessment indicated that farming households predominantly use own saved seed or seed from social networks, rather than market supplies. In response, FAO is targeting 25 000 households with agricultural inputs and technical support to improve farming practices and input access, in addition to distributing vegetable production packages to 22 000 households.

Cereal production dropped sharply in 2016

Total cereal production in 2016 is estimated at approximately 30 000 tonnes, two-thirds lower than the previous five-year average. The bulk of this year's decline reflects a sharply lower maize harvest, estimated at 25 000 tonnes, 68 percent down on last year, while sorghum production is estimated to be less than half of last year's output. The steep production decline was mostly driven by the El Niño-induced drought, further compounded by higher-than-normal temperatures.



Lesotho
Cereal production

	2011-2015 average	2015	2016 estimate	change 2016/2015
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	74	78	25	-68
Wheat	13	7	4	-43
Sorghum	10	4	1	-75
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	97	89	30	-66

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



The suppressed rainfall also adversely affected pastures and water availability for animals. This resulted in worsening livestock conditions and caused the loss of cattle; over two-thirds of rural households reported the loss of one head of cattle.

Import needs inflate following drought-reduced harvest

Imports of maize in the 2016/17 marketing year (April/March), are forecast at approximately 160 000 tonnes, under the assumption that per capita consumption will be sustained. As of early November, just over the halfway point of the current marketing year, 75 000 tonnes of maize were imported from South Africa. This volume is about 50 percent more than the quantity imported in the corresponding period of the previous marketing year, reflecting increased import needs this year.

Maize prices declined, but remain higher than previous year's level

The drought has adversely affected domestic and regional food supplies, contributing to inflationary pressure and pushing up food prices in 2016. Imports of maize, on average, satisfy about half of Lesotho's domestic consumption requirement and, therefore, South African price trends tend to have a significant influence on domestic maize meal prices. Following a sharp increase at the start of the year, prices of maize meal in Maseru have fallen since mid-2016, largely mirroring the movement of South African prices. The implementation of the Government price subsidy programme for maize meal, beans and pulses in June, that aims to reduce the retail prices for consumers by 30 percent for a period of one year, is expected to have also contributed to the recent decreases.

As of October 2016, retail prices of maize meal in the capital were, however, still 25 percent higher compared to its year earlier level. The annual inflation rate in September was estimated at 6 percent, mostly driven by higher food prices.

Food security conditions deteriorate in 2016/17

Food security condition worsened in 2016 on account of the reduced agricultural output and higher food prices. As a result, the number of food insecure people in 2016/17 is estimated to have increased by 53 percent to 709 394 persons, according to the latest Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (LVAC) evaluation conducted earlier in the year. Of this number, approximately 491 000 people require emergency food assistance, with the remaining households requiring livelihood protection support. In response, the Government and humanitarian community are providing food assistance, with the current financial contributions covering the needs of about 337 000 people, leaving approximately 154 000 people in need.



GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 25-July-2016

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Production of cereals decreased steeply in 2016 on account of El Niño-related drought conditions
- Food prices continued to rise reflecting impact of drought on domestic and regional food supplies
- Reduced harvest and higher food prices caused 53 percent increase in number of food insecure in 2016/17

Crop production declined significantly in 2016

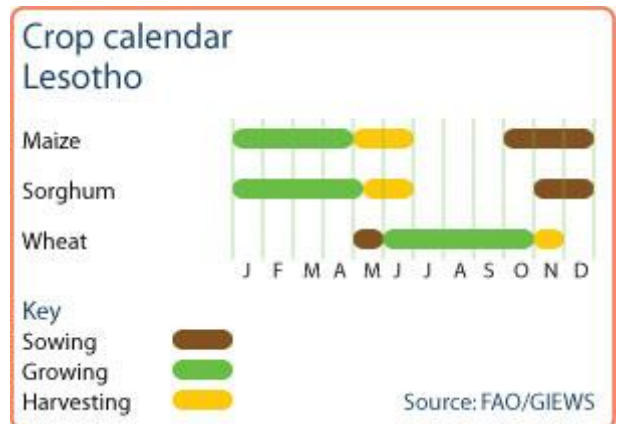
Harvesting of the 2016 cereal crop is complete. Total cereal production in 2016 is estimated at approximately 30 000 tonnes, two-thirds lower than last year's below-average level. The bulk of this year's decline is on account of a sharply lower maize harvest, estimated at 25 000 tonnes, 68 percent down on last year, while sorghum production is estimated to be less than half of last's year output. The 2016 wheat crop, which will be harvested from November, is forecast to decline by over 40 percent to 4 400 tonnes.

The El Niño-induced drought was the main driver behind the steep production decline, with the 2015/16 cropping season primarily characterized by well below-average rainfall and higher-than-normal temperatures resulting in delayed plantings, reduced yields and widespread crop failures. Although heavier rains fell between January and March 2016, the increased moisture levels could not reverse the impact of the severe early seasonal dryness.

The suppressed rainfall also adversely affected pastures and water availability for animals. This resulted in worsening livestock conditions and caused the loss of cattle; about one-third of rural households reported the loss of two to three cattle each.

Import requirements rise in 2016/17 marketing year

To maintain a stable per capita consumption rate, imports of maize in the 2016/17 marketing year (April/March) are forecast at approximately 160 000 tonnes. As of mid-July, about 24 000 tonnes of maize were imported from South Africa since April, slightly below the volume procured in the corresponding period of the previous year. The high maize price in South Africa, Lesotho's main source of cereal grain, is a contributing factor to tempering the importation rate this year.



Lesotho
Cereal production

	2011-2015	2015	2016	change
	average		estimate	2016/2015
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	74	78	25	-68
Wheat	13	7	4	-43
Sorghum	10	4	1	-75
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	97	89	30	-66

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



Maize and food prices continued to rise

The drought has adversely affected domestic and regional food supplies, contributing to inflationary pressure and pushing up food prices. Imports of maize, on average, satisfy about half of Lesotho's domestic consumption requirement and, therefore, South African price trends tend to have a significant influence on domestic maize meal prices. As of April 2016, prices of maize meal were up to 60 percent higher than their year earlier values, mainly reflecting the high prices in South Africa.

Food security worsens in 2016/17

As a result of the reduced crop production and high food prices, the number of food insecure people in 2016/17 has increased by 53 percent to 709 394 persons, according to the latest Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (LVAC) evaluation.

Although markets are expected to bridge the supply shortfall, the higher prices are negatively impacting on households' food access with approximately 40 percent of rural households allocating 50 percent of their expenditure to food purchases. In response, the Government of Lesotho announced the implementation of a subsidy for maize meal, beans and pulses, reducing the retail prices for consumers by 30 percent for a period of one year starting from 1 June 2016.

Reference Date: 16-February-2016

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Poor production prospects for 2016 cereal crops due to El Niño-associated dry conditions
- Maize prices up on year-earlier levels, reflecting higher import costs and reduced 2015 output
- Food security situation expected to worsen in 2015/16, on account of an expected production decline, poor livestock conditions and higher maize prices

Reduced seasonal rains severely weaken 2016 production prospects

Production prospects of the 2016 cereal crops are poor, reflecting the unfavourable weather conditions since the start of the current cropping season in October 2015. This season has been primarily characterized by below-average rains and higher-than-normal temperatures, associated with the prevailing El Niño episode, with some of the main cereal producing districts receiving approximately 50 percent of their normal rainfall volumes between October 2015 and January 2016. The low moisture levels delayed planting and hindered crop development, with most cropped areas exhibiting very poor vegetation conditions at the start of February 2016. In addition, a cold spell in November caused extensive damage to emerging crops in the mountainous areas. Despite some heavier rains in January that provided partial relief to the dryness, forecasts point to a continuation of below-average rains for the remainder of the season. As a result, 2016 cereal production is expected to remain at a below-average level, following last year's reduced output.

Pasture re-growth has also been adversely affected by the poor rains, negatively impacting livestock conditions.

Slower rate of maize imports in 2015/16, partly reflecting higher South African prices

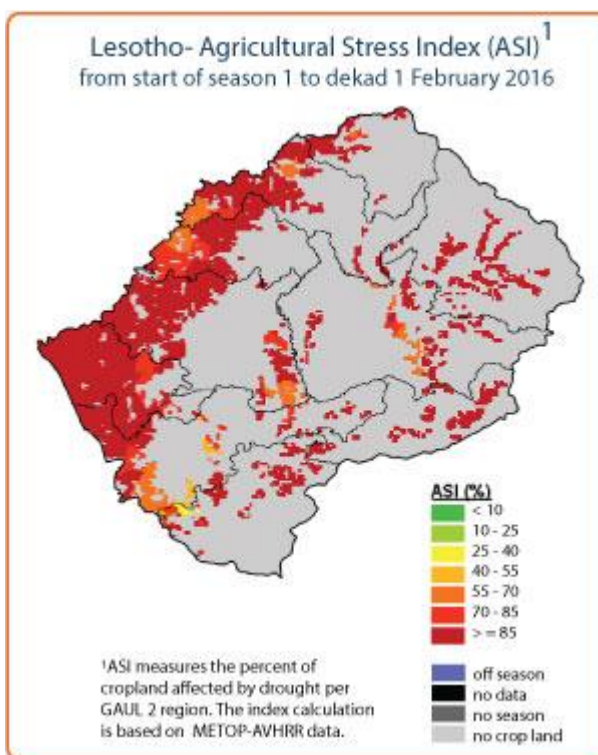
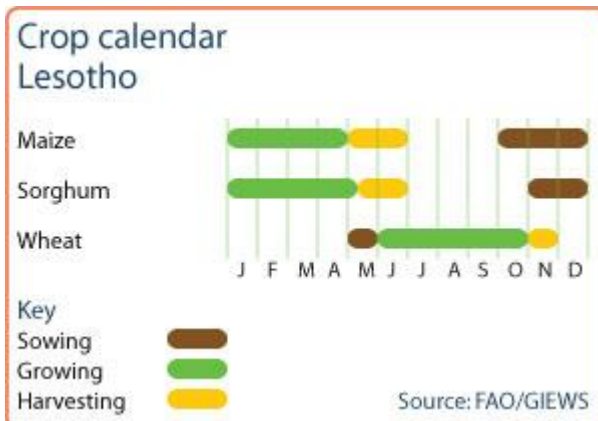
Between April 2015 and January 2016 approximately 65 000 tonnes of maize were imported, below the level of the previous year over the same period, when close to 90 000 tonnes were imported. The slower import rate partly reflects the higher maize prices in South Africa, which reached record levels at the end of 2015.

Prices of maize meal increasing

Prices of maize meal have been generally increasing since mid-2015, largely in response to the steep rises and record high prices in South Africa, the main source of imports. In addition, the reduced 2015 output, the unfavourable prospects for 2016's crop and the depreciation of the Loti has also exerted upward pressure on prices. In December 2015, maize meal prices were 17 percent above their year-earlier values in the capital, Maseru.

Food security situation expected to worsen in 2015/16

Food security conditions are expected to worsen in 2015/16, on account of an expected decline in 2016 cereal production, stressed



Lesotho Cereal production

	2010-2014 average	2014	2015 estimate	change 2015/2014
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	84	91	78	-14
Wheat	15	13	7	-46
Sorghum	14	10	4	-60
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	113	114	89	-22

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

livestock conditions and higher maize prices. In 2015, the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) already estimated that 463 936 people were food insecure, representing about 30 percent of the rural population and slightly higher than the previous year.



Reference Date: 22-January-2015

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Favourable conditions of 2015 cereal crops despite delayed onset of seasonal rains
- Cereal output in 2014 was estimated at an average level
- Maize prices decrease in capital, Maseru, reflecting lower prices in South Africa (main supplier of imports)
- Number of food insecure estimated to have increased in 2014/15

Generally favourable 2015 crop conditions despite delayed onset of seasonal rains

Following a slightly delayed onset of 2014/15 seasonal rains (October-March), which began a month later than normal, weather conditions have since been favourable. As a result, the 2015 cereal crops, to be harvested from May, are reportedly in good condition. An estimated 18 500 people have been targeted to receive agricultural input support in the current cropping season from the Government and FAO.

Average cereal harvest estimated in 2014

The 2014 cereal crop, harvested in June last year, is estimated at 104 000 tonnes, similar to 2013's near-average output. At 86 000 tonnes, maize accounts for almost all of the cereal harvest, while the winter wheat crop largely constitutes the remaining output. Despite a significant 26 percent increase in the area planted to maize, heavy rains and frost damage contributed to a reduction in yields and resulted in a marginally reduced output.

Faster maize import rate in 2014/15

Maize imports from South Africa between April and mid-January 2015, in the 2014/15 marketing year (April/March), have reached about 90 000 tonnes, nearly twice the level of the same period in the previous marketing year, satisfying about 90 percent of the estimated import requirement. The lower prices in South Africa have contributed to the faster import rate.

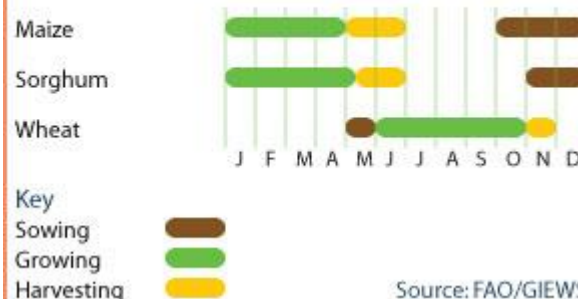
Prices of maize meal decline in Maseru and remain generally stable elsewhere

Prices of maize meal in the capital, Maseru, declined between July and December, and were at similar levels to a year earlier. Lower prices in South Africa contributed to the decreases in 2014. Elsewhere, prices remained generally stable and comparable to the levels of the previous year.

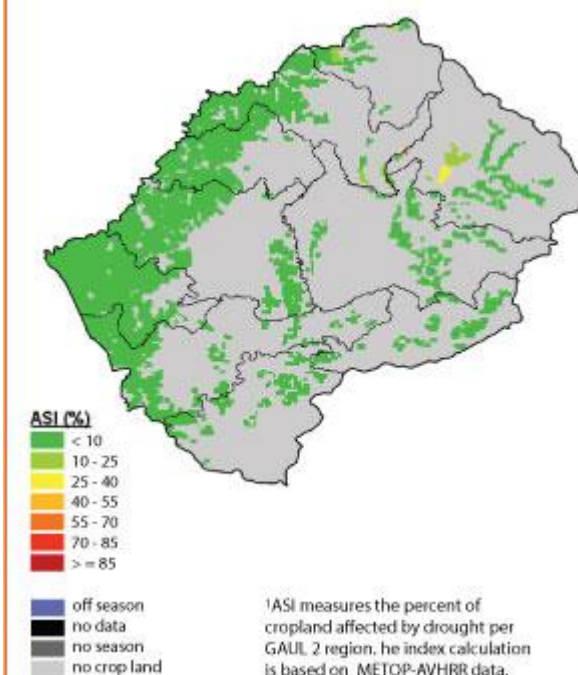
Larger number of food insecure in 2014 compared to 2013

According to the 2014 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) report, released in June, the estimated number of persons requiring food assistance increased to 447 760 from 223 055 in the previous year. The current level, however, still remains below the numbers estimated for 2010/11 and 2011/12. The highest concentration

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho- Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)¹
from start of season 1 to dekad 2 January 2015



Lesotho Cereal production

	2009-2013	2014		change
	average	2013	estimate	
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	77	86	86	0
Wheat	14	13	13	0
Sorghum	11	7	5	-29
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	102	106	104	-2

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

of food insecure persons are located in the western districts of Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek and will require food assistance for an expected four-month period from October/November 2014 to February/March 2015.



Reference Date: 22-December-2014

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Planting of 2015 cereal crops is well underway with below-normal rains at the start causing some delays
- 2014 cereal output was estimated at an average level
- Maize prices decrease in capital Maseru, reflecting lower prices in South Africa (main supplier of imports)
- Number of food insecure estimated to have increased in 2014/15

Below-normal rains at the start of 2014/15 cropping season

Rainfall at the start of the 2014/15 cropping season (October-June) was generally below normal. This has delayed planting activities but subsequent improvement in rainfall has restored some soil moisture. An estimated 18 500 people have been targeted to receive agricultural input support in the current cropping season from the Government and FAO.

Average cereal harvest estimated in 2014

The 2014 cereal crop, harvested in June this year, is estimated at 104 000 tonnes, similar to the previous year's near-average output. At 86 000 tonnes, maize accounts for almost all of the cereal harvest, while the winter wheat crop, currently being harvested and forecast to remain unchanged, largely constitutes the remaining output. Despite a significant 26 percent increase in the area planted to maize, heavy rains and frost damage contributed to a reduction in yields and resulted in a marginally reduced output.

Faster maize import rate in 2014/15

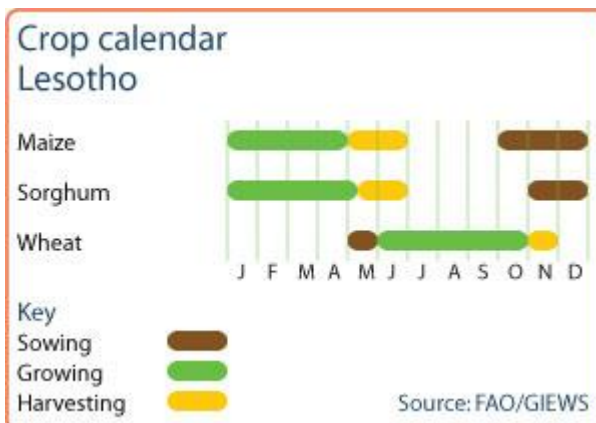
Maize imports from South Africa between April and October 2014, in the 2014/15 marketing year (April/March), have reached about 83 000 tonnes, nearly twice the level of the same period last year, satisfying about 80 percent of the estimated import requirement. The lower prices in South Africa have contributed to the faster import rate.

Prices of maize meal decline in Maseru and remain generally stable elsewhere

Prices of maize meal in the capital, Maseru, declined between July and September, but remained 19 percent higher than last year. The recent decline reflects lower prices in South Africa, which were 20 percent below their year-earlier values in October 2014. Elsewhere, prices remained generally stable and comparable to the levels of the previous year.

Larger number of food insecure in 2014 compared to 2013

According to the 2014 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) report, released in June, the estimated number of persons requiring food assistance increased to 447 760 from 223 055 in the previous year. The current level, however, still remains below the



Lesotho Cereal production

	2009-2013 average	2013	2014 estimate	change 2014/2013
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	77	86	86	0
Wheat	14	13	13	0
Sorghum	11	7	5	-29
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	102	106	104	-2

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
 Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



numbers estimated for 2010/11 and 2011/12. The highest concentration of food insecure persons are located in the western districts of Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek and will require food assistance for an expected four-month period from October/November 2014 to February/March 2015.

Reference Date: 01-August-2014

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Cereal production in 2014 estimated at an average level
- Maize prices increase in Maseru, but remain generally stable elsewhere
- Number of food insecure estimated to have increased in 2014/15

Average cereal harvest estimated in 2014

The 2014 cereal crop, which was harvested in May-June, is estimated at a comparable level to the previous year's near-average output. At 86 000 tonnes, maize accounts for almost all of the cereal harvest (83 percent), while the winter wheat crop, to be harvested in November, largely constitutes the remaining output. Despite a significant 26 percent increase in the area planted to 2013/14 maize this year, heavy rain and frost damage contributed to a reduction in yields and resulted in a stunted output. Similarly, a 29 percent decrease in sorghum production was recorded. Preliminary estimates for the wheat crop indicate an unchanged output compared to last year, with an increase in plantings forecast to compensate for an expected reduction in yields.

Import requirements estimated to remain stable in 2014/15

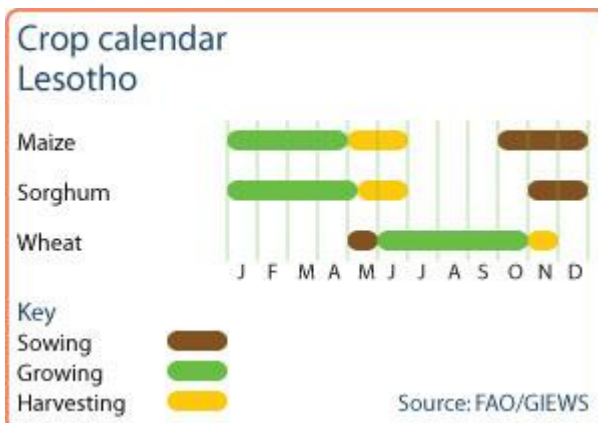
Maize imports, mainly from South Africa, for the 2013/14 marketing year (April/March) were estimated at about 60 000 tonnes, about 60 percent below the previous year's level, on account of the larger 2013 cereal harvest. For the current 2014/15 marketing year, import volumes are expected to remain relatively unchanged. However, the importation rate has increased this year, with approximately 45 000 tonnes of maize imported between April and July 2014, compared to about 20 000 tonnes during the same period last year. The sharp decrease in South African maize prices may have contributed to the faster import rate.

Prices remain generally stable, except in Maseru

Prices of maize meal in the capital, Maseru, continued their upward trend in June 2014, and were about 16 percent up on last year. Elsewhere, prices remained generally stable and comparable to the levels of the previous year. The sharp decrease in South African prices, the country's main supplier of maize, since April is expected to put downward pressure on domestic prices.

Number of food insecure increase in 2014 compared to 2013

According to the latest Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) report for 2014/15, released in June, the estimated number of persons requiring food assistance increased to 447 760 from 223 055 in the previous year. The current level, however, still remains below the numbers estimated in 2010/11 and 2011/12. The highest concentration of food insecure persons are located in the western districts of Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek and will require food assistance for an



Lesotho Cereal production

	2009-2013 average	2013	2014 estimate	change 2014/2013
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	77	86	86	0
Wheat	14	13	13	0
Sorghum	11	7	5	-29
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	102	106	104	-2

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



expected four-month period from October/November 2014 to February/March 2015.

Reference Date: 07-February-2014

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Production prospects are favourable for 2014 cereal crop
- Maize prices increased at the end of 2013
- Food security conditions current stable

Production outlook favourable for 2014 crop

Harvesting of the 2014 cereal crop is expected to begin in April/May. Weather conditions have been generally favourable during the 2013/14 cropping season (October-June) and an above average harvest is expected this year, particularly in the large producing areas of the north-west lowlands. However, in the more marginal producing zones of the centre and south-east, production levels may be negatively affected by delayed planting following a late start of seasonal rains. During the last quarter of 2013 the government distributed agricultural inputs, subsidizing 50 percent of the cost, to all ten districts, assisting in improving input access for farmers.

Reduced imports in 2013/14, following larger domestic harvest

The larger domestic maize harvest in 2013, estimated at about 86 000 tonnes, resulted in a reduced import requirement for the 2013/14 marketing year (April/March), of approximately 100 000 tonnes. As of January, with two months of the marketing year remaining, current estimates indicate that approximately 51 000 tonnes of maize have been imported.

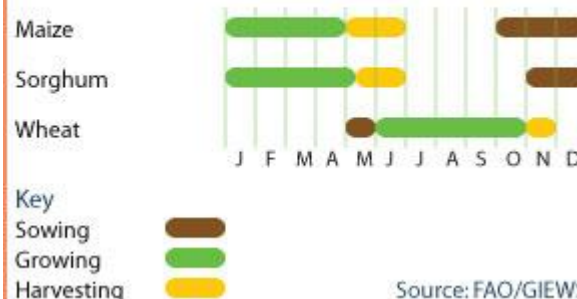
Maize prices rise at the end of 2013

In the capital, Maseru, prices of maize meal, which have been generally stable in 2013, rose in December, reflecting the rising grain prices in neighbouring South Africa, the country's main supplier of maize imports. Prices are likely to come under further pressure if the high prices persist in South Africa. Furthermore, the weakening of the South Africa Rand, which the national currency, Loti, is pegged to, could add inflationary pressure to prices, given the country's overall reliance on imported food goods.

Improved food security conditions in 2013

Overall, food security conditions improved sharply in 2013/14, on account of a rebound in domestic cereal production, and generally stable prices in 2013. The Lesotho Vulnerability Committee (LVAC) estimated that 223 055 persons are food insecure, with the largest proportion (27 percent) located in the western Maseru district. Assistance is currently being provided to bridge food gaps, while the start of the new harvest in April is expected to improve households' supplies and food security conditions.

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho

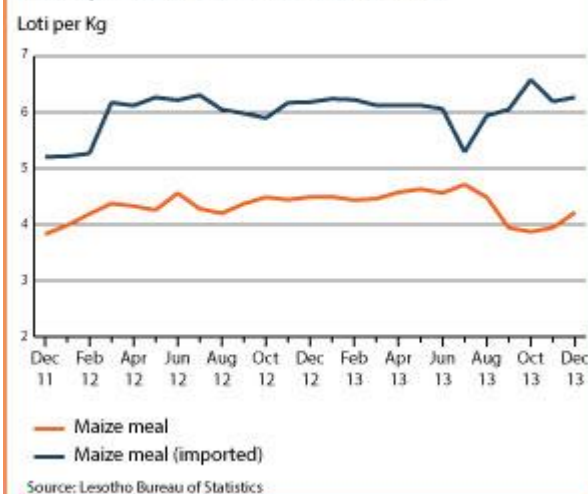
Cereal production

	2008-2012 average	2012	2013 estimate	change 2013/2012
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	72	42	86	105
Sorghum	12	5	7	40
Wheat	12	11	13	18
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	96	58	106	83

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Lesotho

Retail prices of maize meal in Maseru



Reference Date: 05-August-2013

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Significant recovery of cereal production in 2013
- Maize price remain stable
- Food security conditions improve, benefiting from larger maize harvest

Cereal production recovers in 2013

Harvesting of the main 2012/13 season cereal crops was completed in June. Estimates from the Bureau of Statistics' assessment in April, indicate a strong recovery in production from last year's poor output. Estimate puts the maize crop at 86 190 tonnes, more than double the level of the previous year's output, which was revised upwards to approximately 42 000 tonnes. Both an increase in the area planted and better yields, on account of generally favourable weather conditions and the Government's input subsidy programmes, contributed to the production gains. In regard to other crops, sorghum production is estimated to have increased, owing to larger plantings that more than compensated for an estimated drop in yields. While improved wheat yields, despite a reduced area planted, increased production to just above average levels. Some crop losses were also recorded due to an outbreak of army worms.

Overall, cereal production is estimated at 106 000 tonnes in 2013.

Larger domestic harvest reduces import requirements in 2013/14

Imports of maize for the 2012/13 marketing year (April/March) were recorded at 140 000 tonnes, compared to the 125 000 tonnes imported in the previous year. The increase is on account of a reduced domestic production in 2012, while a draw-down of stocks also helped to bridge the larger cereal deficit. In the current 2013/14 marketing year, import requirements are estimated at about 110 000 tonnes, reflecting a vastly improved harvest in 2013, while it is also expected that national stocks will be replenished. With a comparatively small change in domestic wheat production in 2013, imports of wheat are expected to remain stable.

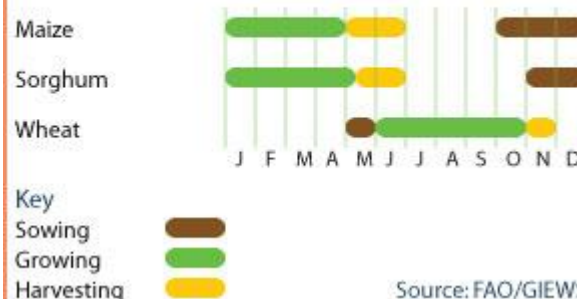
Stable maize meal prices observed across the country

Prices of maize meal in June 2013 were slightly below their levels of one year earlier. The larger 2013 harvest and lower prices in neighbouring South Africa, the main source of country's maize supply exerted downward pressure that contributed to the lower prices. However, a continuing weakening of the South Africa Rand, which the national currency, Loti, is pegged to, could add inflationary pressure to prices, given the country's reliance on imported food goods.

Improved food security conditions in 2013

Recently released results from the 2013 national vulnerability assessment (LVAC) in July, indicate a sharp improvement in food security conditions, compared to the previous year. The rebound in

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho

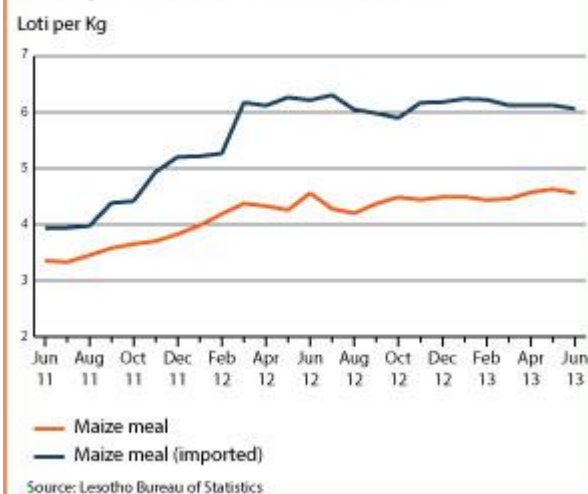
Cereal production

	2008-2012	2012	2013	change
	average		forecast	2013/2012
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	72	42	86	105
Sorghum	12	5	7	40
Wheat	12	11	13	18
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	96	58	106	83

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data. Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Lesotho

Retail prices of maize meal in Maseru



crop production to above average levels, generally stable food prices and humanitarian assistance have contributed to the more favourable conditions this year. An estimated 223 055 persons were assessed to be food insecure, with the largest proportion (27 percent) located in western Maseru district, representing a 70 percent decline relative to 2012. The report recommends that food assistance, approximately 1 500 tonnes of maize, is distributed to the affected population for four months between October/November 2013 and January/February 2014. Although the assessment points to a more positive outcome in 2013/14, stunting levels, an indicator for chronic malnutrition, are estimated at about 44 percent, which is considered at a critical level.

Reference Date: 10-June-2013

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Significant recovery of cereal production in 2013
- Maize price remain generally high but stable
- Food security conditions improve as the new 2013 harvest increase food availability

Cereal production recover in 2013

Harvesting of the main 2012/13 season cereal crops is nearing completion. Early estimates, based on the Bureau of Statistics assessment in April, indicate a strong recovery in production from last year's poor output. The early estimate puts the maize crop at 86 190 tonnes, more than double the level of the previous year's output, which was revised upwards to approximately 42 000 tonnes. Both an increase in the area planted and better yields, on account of generally favourable weather conditions and the Government's input subsidy programmes, contributed to the production gains. In regard to other crops, sorghum production is estimated to have increased, owing to larger plantings that more than compensated for an estimated drop in yields. While improved wheat yields, despite a reduced area planted, increased production to just above average levels. Some crop losses were also recorded due to an outbreak of army worms.

Overall, cereal production is estimated at 106 000 tonnes in 2013.

Larger domestic harvest reduces import requirements in 2013/14

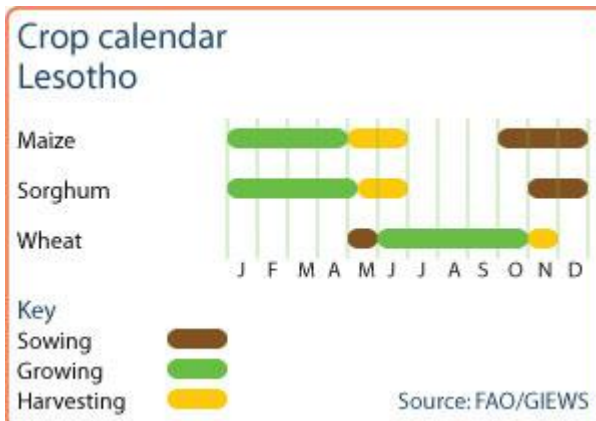
Imports of maize for the 2012/13 marketing year (April/March) were recorded at 140 000 tonnes, compared to the 125 000 tonnes imported in the previous year. The increase is on account of a reduced domestic production in 2012, while a draw-down of stocks also helped to bridge the larger cereal deficit. In the current 2013/14 marketing year, import requirements are estimated at about 110 000 tonnes, reflecting a vastly improved harvest in 2013, while it is also expected that national stocks will be replenished. With a comparatively small change in domestic wheat production in 2013, imports of wheat are expected to remain stable.

Maize prices remain high, but stable

Overall, prices of maize meal strengthened slightly in April, following relatively stable trends over the last year, and were generally above their levels of a year earlier. In April, the price of maize meal in Maseru, for example, was Loti 4.6 per kg, 6 percent up on the previous year. The higher prices reflect the increased export prices in South Africa, as the domestic maize meal is produced with grain imported from that country.

Overall favourable food security conditions

Following the sharp deterioration in food security conditions in 2012 on account of the poor domestic cereal production, new supplies from the ongoing harvest is improving food availability and contributing to stabilising food security conditions. The increased 2013 cereal



Lesotho Cereal production

	2008-2012 average	2012	2013 forecast	change 2013/2012
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	72	42	86	105
Sorghum	12	5	7	40
Wheat	12	11	13	18
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	96	58	106	83

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



production is expected to result in larger household stocks, satisfying between two to three months of their requirements. In addition, food aid distributions are also helping to bridge households' supply gaps. The results from the national vulnerability assessment (LVAC), expected in July, will provide details on the prevailing conditions and number of food insecure persons.

Reference Date: 27-November-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Generally favourable start to the 2012/13 cropping season
- Erratic rains during the previous 2011/12 season resulted in a significant drop in the national cereal output
- High maize meal prices persist
- Low cereal stocks and high food prices contribute to the deterioration in household food security

Favourable weather at the start of the 2012/13 cropping season

Planting for the 2012/13 cropping season (October-June) is well underway, with crops in the southern mountainous districts having already reached the vegetative stage. Cumulative rains since October have generally been satisfactory compared to the average. Last year, a dry spell early in the season contributed to a sharp contraction in plantings.

Following the poor crop in 2012 (harvested last summer), the government extended the input subsidy programme to include mechanical inputs, such as ploughs and tractors, in an effort to increase the area planted. Early indications for the 2013 crop point to an increase in plantings although area estimates will only be available early next year.

Sharp drop in 2012 cereal harvest

In 2012, the cereal output declined sharply following poor rainfall. The maize crop was estimated at about 17 000 tonnes, representing a considerable 77 percent decrease compared to the 2011 average harvest. Similarly, the sorghum crop is estimated at just under 2 000 tonnes, well below the 10 000 tonnes harvested in 2011. Overall, aggregate cereal production in 2012 is put at 31 000 tonnes, 70 percent lower than the previous year.

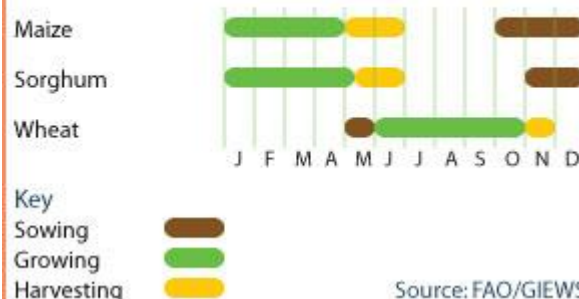
Imports of maize expected to rise

Import requirements in the 2012/13 marketing year (April/March) are anticipated to rise to compensate for the low domestic harvest. Maize imports are forecast to reach 150 000 tonnes, compared to 130 000 tonnes in the previous year. Between April and November 2013, maize imports have already reached 100 000 tonnes, compared to about 83 000 tonnes during the same period in 2011. Wheat and rice imports are expected to remain stable, given that only a minor amount is produced domestically and virtually all of the country's requirements are satisfied with imports.

Maize prices remain high

In the first quarter of 2012, retail prices of maize meal have exhibited generally stable trends, but still remained up to one third higher than their levels of 2011. Tight local supplies and an expected increase in demand for maize are anticipated to maintain an upward pressure on prices in the near term. However, maize prices in South Africa have decreased in recent months and Lesotho's price levels may follow suit

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho

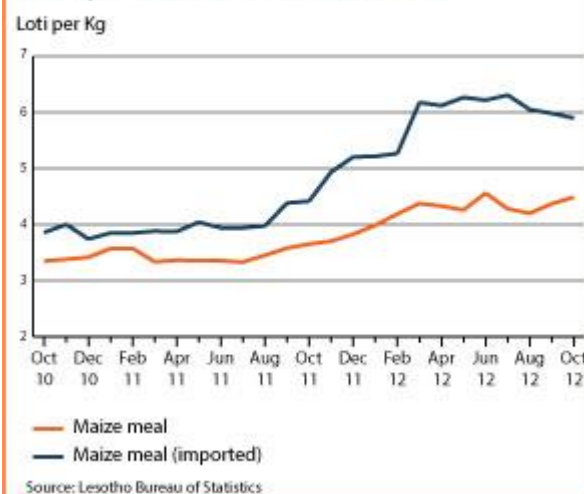
Cereal production

	2007-2011	2011	2012	change
	average		forecast	2012/2011
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	76	73	17	-77
Sorghum	13	10	2	-80
Wheat	10	20	12	-40
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	98	103	31	-70

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Lesotho

Retail prices of maize meal in Maseru



in early 2013.

Sharp increase in food insecurity following decimated harvest

The food security situation has seen a sharp deterioration in 2012 following the poor cereal harvest. The results from the national vulnerability assessment (LVAC) earlier in the year, indicate that about 726 000 persons (39 percent of the population) will need humanitarian assistance during 2012/13, up from 514 000 last year and the highest number of food insecure persons since 2004/05.

Dwindling household cereal stocks have necessitated households to access market supplies earlier than normal while prevailing high food prices limit food access, particularly for the low-income urban poor. In response to the current situation, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has allocated USD 6.2 million to support the Government of Lesotho and partners with their relief programmes and longer term interventions. Programmes under this funding mechanism will also support the agricultural sector, through the promotion of climate smart agriculture and provision of agricultural inputs to the most vulnerable farming households.

Reference Date: 27-August-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Maize harvest decimated in 2012 following poor rains
- High maize meal prices persist
- Food situation worsens with 39 percent of population estimated to be food insecure

Severely reduced cereal crop in 2011/12

Harvesting of the maize crop in the 2011/12 cropping season was concluded in June. Preliminary assessments from the Bureau of Statistics indicate a maize crop of about 17 000 tonnes, representing a significant 77 percent decrease compared to last year's average harvest. Erratic rains at the start of the cropping season (October-December 2011) delayed planting activities and consequently resulted in less area planted to maize. An estimated 98 000 hectares, some 56 000 hectares lower than in the 2010/11 season, were put under maize. In addition, a dry spell during the second half of the rainy season (January-March) negatively impacted on yields, further limiting production.

Similarly sorghum plantings registered a substantial decrease, estimated at just over 14 000 hectares, roughly half the area of the previous season. In addition, lower yields were estimated due to insufficient moisture levels. Consequently sorghum production in 2012 is provisionally estimated at just under 2 000 tonnes, well below the 10 000 tonnes harvested in 2011.

Overall, the early estimate of total cereal production in 2011/12 is put at 31 000 tonnes, a significant 70 percent below last year.

Imports of maize forecast to rise to bridge the larger supply gap

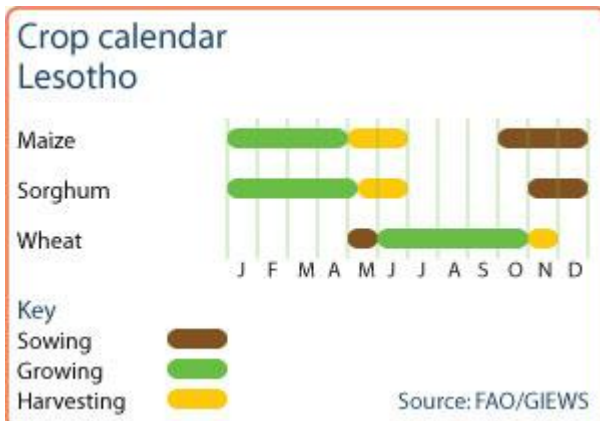
Given the preliminary production estimates, the commercial maize import requirement is forecast to rise to approximately 160 000 tonnes in the 2012/13 marketing year (April/March), compared to 130 000 tonnes the previous year. Favourable stocks from the bumper harvest two years ago will also help meet some of the deficit. Since the start of the 2012/13 marketing year, between April and July, monthly imports have averaged at 10 000 tonnes, compared to approximately 7 000 tonnes in the previous year over the same period. Wheat imports are expected to remain relatively stable, on account of an expected average 2012 wheat harvest and favourable national stocks.

Maize prices remain high

Prices of maize meal were approximately 33 percent higher in July 2012 compared to their levels of one year earlier, reflecting increasing prices in South Africa, which supply virtually all of the country's import requirements. The low domestic cereal harvest in 2012 is expected to maintain the high upward pressure on prices.

Food security conditions deteriorate in 2012

The food security situation has seen a sharp deterioration in 2012



Lesotho				
Cereal production				
	2007-2011 average	2011	2012 forecast	change 2012/2011
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	76	73	17	-77
Sorghum	13	10	2	-80
Wheat	10	20	12	-40
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	98	103	31	-70

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

following the poor cereal harvest. The results from the national vulnerability assessment (LVAC), carried out in June and July, indicate that about 726 000 persons (39 percent of the population) will need humanitarian assistance during 2012/13, up from 514 000 last year and the highest number of food insecure persons since 2004/05. Following the release of the LVAC report, the government declared a food security emergency.

This year's cereal output marks the second consecutive decrease in production and although the bulk of the country's consumption needs are satisfied with imports, production short-falls will weigh heavily on farming households' coping capacity. A large number of households are expected to exhaust their own production supplies earlier than normal, compelling households to seek supplies from the market. Furthermore, the higher maize prices recorded this year will place an additional burden on households' resources. An anticipated reduction in casual farm employment opportunities, due to a reduced need for seasonal work following the poor cereal production, is likely to worsen further the food security situation for resource poor households. In response, USD 6.2 million has been allocated from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to support the Government of Lesotho and the UN with immediate relief programmes and longer term interventions. Programmes under this funding mechanism will also support the agricultural sector, through the promotion of climate smart agriculture and provision of inputs to the most vulnerable farming households.

Reference Date: 04-July-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Preliminary estimates indicate a severely reduced maize harvest for the 2011/12 cropping season
- High maize meal prices persist
- Food insecurity expected to worsen following below average cereal production

Severely reduced cereal crop in 2011/12

Harvesting of the maize crop in the 2011/12 cropping season is almost complete. Preliminary assessments from the Bureau of Statistics indicate a maize crop of about 17 000 tonnes, representing a significant 77 percent decrease compared to last year's average harvest. Unfavourable and erratic rains at the start of the cropping season (October-December 2011) delayed planting activities and consequently resulted in a contraction in the area planted to maize, estimated at 97 711 hectares, some 56 000 hectares lower than in the 2010/11 season. In addition, a dry spell during the second half of the rainy season (January-March) negatively impacted on yields, further limiting production. Similarly sorghum plantings registered a substantial decrease, estimated at just over 14 000 hectares, roughly half the area of the previous season. In addition, lower yields are estimated due to insufficient moisture levels. Consequently sorghum production in 2012 is provisionally estimated at just under 2 000 tonnes, well below the 10 000 tonnes harvested in 2011.

Overall, total cereal production in 2011/12 is provisionally estimated at 31 000 tonnes, a significant 70 percent below last year.

Imports of maize forecast to rise to bridge larger supply gap

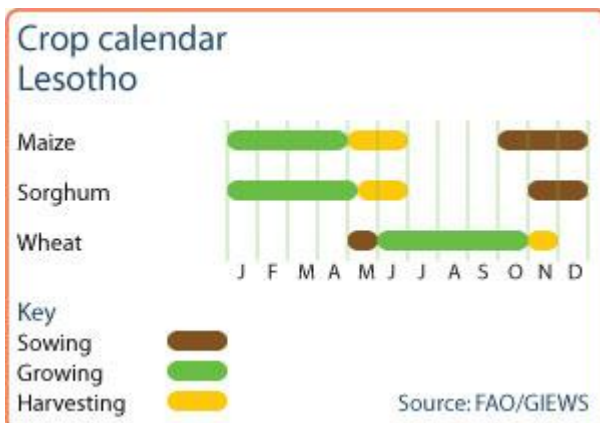
Given the preliminary production estimates, the commercial maize import requirement is forecast to rise to approximately 160 000 tonnes in the 2012/13 marketing year (April/March), compared to 130 000 tonnes the previous year. However, favourable stocks, built-up from the bumper harvest two years ago, will help meet some of the deficit. Since the start of the 2012/13 marketing year (April-June) monthly imports have averaged 9 000 tonnes, compared to approximately 5 000 tonnes in the previous year over the same period. Wheat imports are expected to remain relatively stable, on account of an expected average 2012 wheat harvest and favourable national stocks.

High maize meal prices continue

Prices of maize meal, increasing since the last quarter of 2011, eased marginally in recent months, but still remain at high levels. In May 2012, prices were approximately 26 percent higher than their levels of one year earlier. The higher prices reflect increased prices in South Africa, which supply the bulk of the country's consumption requirements, as well as the anticipated poor national harvest.

Food insecurity conditions expected to deteriorate

The second consecutive decrease in cereal production will weigh



Lesotho Cereal production

	2007-2011 average	2011	2012 forecast	change 2012/2011
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	76	73	17	-77
Sorghum	13	10	2	-80
Wheat	10	20	12	-40
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	98	103	31	-70

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

heavily on subsistence farming households, negatively impacting food security conditions. Large number of households are expected to exhaust their supplies from their own production earlier than normal, compelling households to seek supplies from the market too soon. Given the higher maize prices and anticipated reduction in seasonal/casual farm employment opportunities, this is likely to further worsen the food security situation for resource poor households. Results from the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC), for release in July, are expected to provide more details on the number of food insecure people and the possible interventions required. The number of food insecure in 2011 was estimated at 514 000 persons.

Reference Date: 23-March-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Following an erratic start, rains improved in 2012, but maize production anticipated to drop
- Maize prices increase in late 2011
- Number of persons in need of food assistance estimated at 514 000

Erratic rains at the start of 2011/12 season contributed to reduced plantings

Following average rains at the very start of the 2011/12 agricultural season (October-June), a prolonged dry spell set in from mid-October stretching for four dekads, resulting in delayed planting activities. Although above normal rains were recorded at the end of November and December, allowing planting to take place, cumulative rainfall levels were still below the long-term average for the first three months of the rainy season (October-December). As a result, maize plantings are expected to be down on last season's level. Rainfall improved in January and February, but heavy rains also caused some water-logging in south-western lowlands. Current remotely sensed data points to adequate vegetation conditions; however, despite an expectation of better yields this year compared to last season, production is anticipated to be poor, due to the smaller plantings.

Imports of wheat and maize satisfy national requirements

Total commercial wheat and maize import requirements are estimated at 238 000 for the nearly concluded 2011/12 marketing year (April/March), compared to an average of 205 000 tonnes in previous five years. Despite a sluggish rate at the start of the year, maize imports from South Africa, Lesotho's main trading partner, accelerated from July. Monthly imports in 2011/12 averaged 11 700 tonnes, about 1 300 tonnes higher than in the previous marketing year. Total maize and wheat imports for all but two weeks of the 2011/12 marketing year have reached approximately 210 000 tonnes, covering about 87 percent of the cereal import requirements.

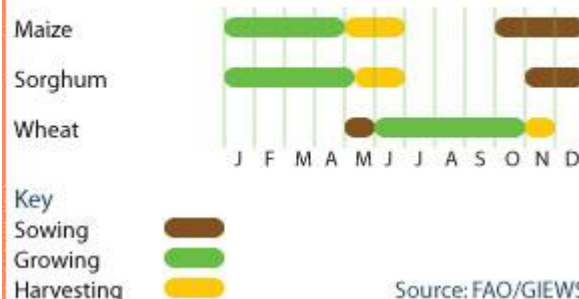
Maize meal prices up on last year

Following relatively stable levels during most of 2011, prices of maize meal increased since the last quarter of 2011. By February 2012, average national maize meal prices were about 25 percent higher than their levels in 2011 for the same month. The higher levels reflect the increased prices recorded in South Africa, which supply the bulk of the country's consumption requirements.

Large number of food insecure due to low cereal production in 2011

Current indications point to stable food security conditions. However, the reduced cereal production in 2011 negatively impacted food security conditions, through both a reduction in households' food supplies and resulting loss of income from the limited seasonal/casual farm employment. The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho

Cereal production

	2006-2010 average	2010	2011 forecast	change 2011/2010
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	76	128	52	-59
Sorghum	14	24	5	-79
Wheat	8	20	16	-20
Others	0	0	0	0
Total	98	172	73	-58

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

(LVAC) indicated that 514 000 people require food assistance during the 2011/12 marketing year, with the majority located in the southern lowlands. Approximately 20 000 persons in Senqu River Valley continue to receive support from WFP, while FAO assisted about 21 000 farmers, through the provision of inputs, at the start of the 2011/12 season in September/October.

Reference Date: 06-January-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Insufficient rains during the first half of the 2011/12 agricultural season
- Maize meal prices spiked in September and October, but declined sharply in November
- Number of persons in need of food assistance estimated at 514 000, as a result of the poor 2011 cereal harvest

Water deficits recorded during the first half of the 2011/12 agricultural season

Following average rains at the very start of the 2011/12 agricultural season (October-June), a prolonged dry spell set in from mid-October stretching for four dekads, which hindered and delayed plantings activities. Although above normal rains were recorded at the end of November and December, allowing planting to take place, cumulative rainfall levels are still about half of the long-term average. Maize however, is relatively tolerant to water deficits during the initial stages of development and therefore an improvement in rains (as is forecast for January-March) could offset the negative effects emanating from poor moisture levels. Although no official estimates of the area planted are available, preliminary indications point to smaller plantings compared to the same time last year. Planting is expected to continue until early January. The dry spell also came at an important stage for the 2011 winter wheat crop, which could impede the crop's yield.

Excessive rains reduce 2011 cereal crop

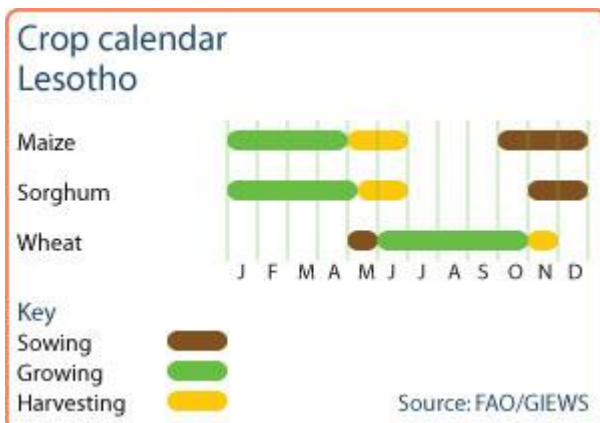
In contrast to the current situation, a period of abundant rains and flooding during December 2010 and January 2011, caused a 60 percent drop in maize production compared to 2010's harvest, and at an estimated 51 507 tonnes is about one-third lower than the previous five-year average (2005/06-2009/10). Similarly, sorghum production, estimated at 4 838 tonnes, is nearly 80 percent below 2010's output. Aggregate national cereal production is put at about 73 000 tonnes for the 2010/11 agricultural campaign, including 16 000 tonnes of wheat.

Increased import requirements for maize estimated in 2011/12 marketing year

To compensate for the reduced harvest earlier in 2011, maize import requirements are estimated at 140 000 for current 2011/12 marketing year (April/March), compared to an average of 100 000 tonnes in previous five years. Despite a sluggish rate at the start of the year, maize imports from South Africa, Lesotho's main trading partner, have accelerated since July and total imports between April and November 2011 are comparable to the previous year. If the current monthly rate continues, the country is on target to meet the estimated import requirement by the end of the marketing year.

Maize meal prices spiked in September

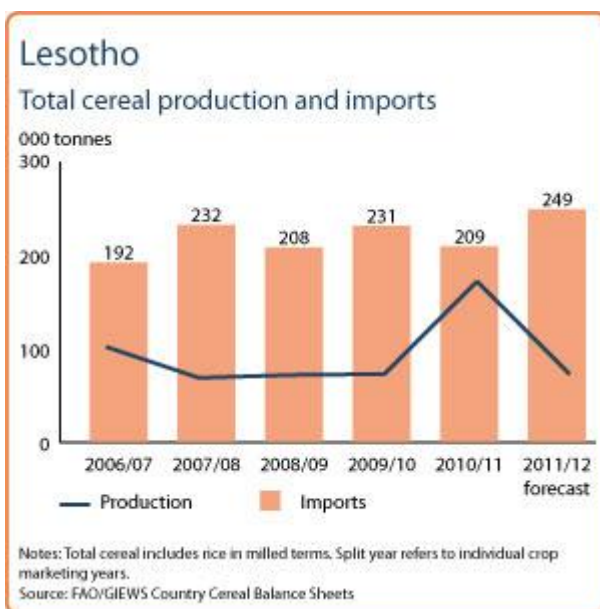
Following relatively constant levels during most of 2011, prices of maize meal increased rapidly, by almost 60 percent, in September mirroring high prices in South Africa. Prices however, dropped by the same



Lesotho Cereal production

	2006-2010 average	2010	2011 forecast	change 2011/2010
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	76	128	52	-59
Sorghum	14	24	5	-79
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Others	0	0	0	0
Total	98	172	73	-58

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



proportion in November to LSL 5 per kg.

Large number of food insecure due to low cereal production

Reduced cereal production in 2011 negatively impacted food security conditions, through both a reduction in households' food supplies and resulting loss of income from the limited seasonal/causal farm employment; approximately one quarter of the national population derive their income from the agriculture sector (Household Budget Survey 2002/03). Results from the 2011 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) indicated that 514 000 people require food assistance during the 2011/12 marketing year, with the majority located in the southern lowlands.



Reference Date: 01-August-2011

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Flooding and prolonged water logging severely impacts cereal production for the 2011 crops
- Infrastructure and livestock sector also affected by torrential rains
- Maize meal prices remain at stable levels, but imports of maize slows
- Number of persons in need of food assistance estimated at 514 000 people, nearly double the level of last year

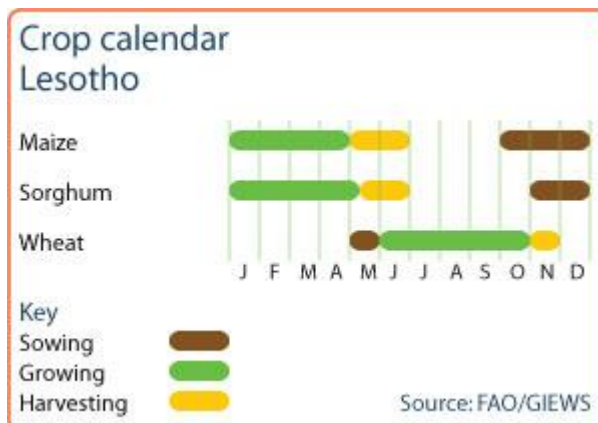
Heavy rains reduce significantly the 2011 cereal harvest

Following a period of favourable rainfall during the start of the 2010/11 agricultural season (October-November), precipitation levels increased significantly from mid-December through to January, causing prolonged water logging and flooding. The torrential rains had a severe impact on the growing conditions for cereals, particularly maize, which constitutes a main food staple in the country. Leribe and Maseru districts, which contribute approximately one third to total national maize output, experienced an intense period of heavy rains towards the end of the planting period (click [here](#) to view seasonal rainfall graphs) when maize crops are particularly susceptible to effects of excess soil moisture. Consequently, this caused a sharp decline in yields, estimated at 0.33 tonnes per hectare, significantly below the level achieved last year, limiting the output of the harvested crop. In addition, rains hindered ground preparation and planting activities, resulting in a contraction in the cultivated area, as many farmers failed to plant.

The combination of a smaller planted area and low yields resulted in a 60 percent drop in maize production compared to last year's harvest, estimated at 51 507 tonnes, about one-third lower than the previous five-year average (2005/06-2009/10). Similarly, despite an average area planted to sorghum, a significant decline in yields (0.14 tonnes per hectare, compared to 0.72 tonnes recorded last agricultural campaign) caused a large drop in production, estimated at 4 838 tonnes. This marks an 80 percent decrease over last year's output. However, wheat production in 2010/11 was favourable, continuing the short-term positive trend during the previous five years and is estimated at 16 302 tonnes. Aggregate national cereal production is put at about 73 000 tonnes for the 2010/11 agricultural campaign.

Damage to the livestock sector and agriculture infrastructure also occurred, with the number of deaths estimated at just over 44 000, representing approximately 2 percent of the total national livestock population. In addition, there were reports of higher than normal incidences of vector-borne diseases and conditions caused by excessive moisture such as babesiosis, blue tongue, lumpy skin disease and foot rot. These conditions result in decreased productivity of the affected animals, and have the potential to be fatal.

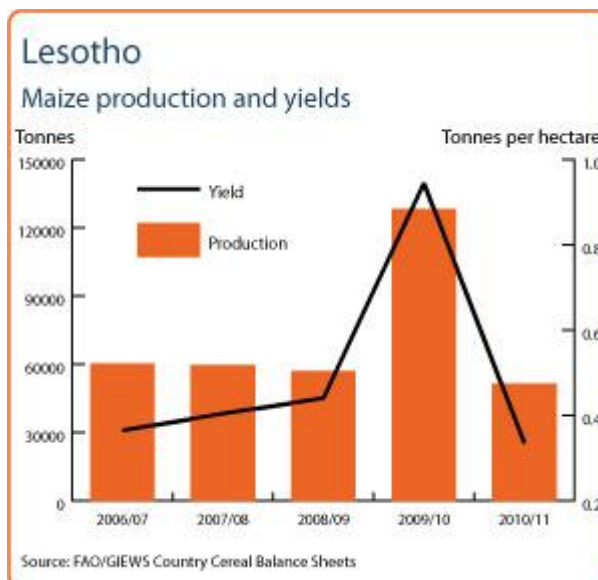
This year's poor cereal harvest is set against a backdrop of a long-term decline in agriculture performance, predominantly attributed to diminishing productivity and increasing areas of fallow land. The slow-



Lesotho Cereal production

	2006-2010 average	2010	2011 forecast	change 2011/2010
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	76	128	52	-59
Sorghum	14	24	5	-79
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Others	14	24	5	-79
Total	98	172	73	-58

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets



down in production is mirrored in agriculture's contribution to GDP, which has fallen over the last decade to under 10 percent, supported by the decline in crop production that accounted for 1.8 percent of GDP in 2009/10, compared to 4.8 percent in 2000/01. However, the government has sought to address the limited agricultural capacity through the provision of subsidised inputs, as well as tackling the prevailing structural constraints guided by the Food Security Policy and Strategic Plan and National Plan of Action for Food Security (2007-2017). In efforts to provide short-term relief in the immediate period, the government has allocated USD 2.6 million for the provision of input support for the winter cropping season (May-August) and the subsequent 2011/12 main summer season, in addition to veterinary drugs and products. FAO is supporting the government's actions, through capacity building and direct input support, in the form of fertiliser and seed, as well as supporting livestock disease management.

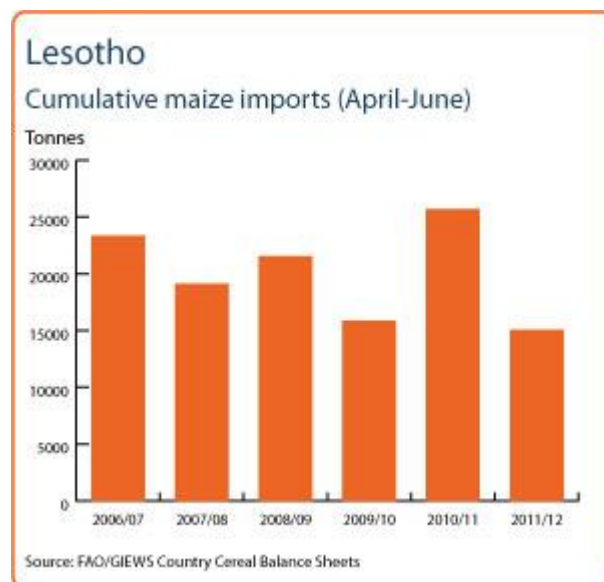
Increased import requirements for maize forecast in 2011/12 marketing year

Aggregate national cereal production for the current 2011/12 (April/March) marketing year is estimated to satisfy approximately one quarter of the country's cereal food requirements. To compensate for the reduced harvest, import requirements are forecast to expand and current estimates indicate that maize imports will need to reach 140 000 tonnes to meet total national utilization. However, the current rate of imports from South Africa, Lesotho's main trading partner, has remained at a slow pace between April and June 2011 when compared to the same period over the previous five years, with cumulative maize imports estimated at some 15 000 tonnes. This marks a 40 percent drop relative to the average (2006-2009). The increasing prices in South Africa can be partly attributed to the sluggish rate; following low prices in 2010 prices of white maize on SAFEX have risen steadily since July 2010. White maize prices between April and June 2011 averaged Rand 1 708 per tonne, considerably higher than the levels observed in the previous years over the same period.

However, domestic retail prices of maize meal have remained stable during the first half of 2011, particularly to the benefit of net-purchasing urban households, who produce limited food quantities.

Food insecurity concerns rise due to low cereal production

The reduced cereal harvest is expected to have a significant impact on food insecurity conditions of the affected population, through both a reduction in households' food supplies and resulting loss of income from the limited seasonal/causal farm employment. Approximately one quarter of the national population derive their income from the agriculture sector (Household Budget Survey 2002/03). The impact to the livestock sector will also affect production of dairy products and income opportunities from livestock sales. Results from the 2011 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) indicate that 514 000 people will require food assistance during the 2011/12 marketing year, with the majority located in the southern lowlands. Despite the relatively stable cereal prices during the first half of 2011, lower production levels and therefore limited capacity to restock household supplies, will result in increasing expenditure on food items, with over 40 percent of the households' budget allocated to food (and beverages) purchases. As a consequence, any increase in food prices, in combination with constrained incomes, may act to further aggravate the food insecurity situation of vulnerable households. The prevailing food insecurity conditions are particularly worrisome for rural



households who do not produce sufficient quantities of food to sustain themselves, even in good years.

Reference Date: 23-May-2011

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Heavy rains and flooding severely impact the 2011 cereal harvest
- Infrastructure and livestock sector affected by torrential rains
- Number of persons in need of food assistance is expected to rise as a result of reduced cereal harvest

Heavy rains significantly reduce the 2011 cereal harvest

Following moderate rainfall at the start of the 2010/11 cropping season (October to June), precipitation levels increased significantly from the end of November through to January, causing prolonged water-logging and flooding. As a result there have been large losses of the 2010/11 cereal crop, particularly in northern districts that constitute the main growing regions of the country. Preliminary reports also point to a reduction in the area planted with large areas of arable land left fallow on account of late seasonal rains that delayed planting activities, further contributing to the low output. In addition to the impact on the current season's crop, the heavy rains are reported to have affected harvesting of the 2010 winter wheat crop at the end of last year. Damage to the livestock sector, with the number of deaths estimated at just over 44 000 representing approximately 2 percent of the total national livestock population, and agriculture infrastructure have also occurred. In March/April 2011, the World Bank, United Nations and European Union supported the Government to undertake a more comprehensive Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA). The report is currently being finalised and will provide further details on the impact of the heavy rains.

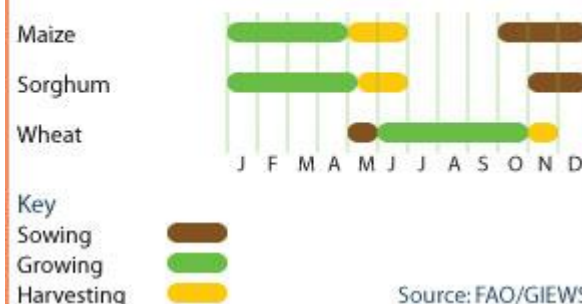
Significant production gains in 2010

In spite of a reduced 2010 cropped area, compared to the previous year, favourable rainfall and improved access to inputs contributed to an increase in yields and production of maize, estimated at 98 035 tonnes. Total cereal production increased to about 137 000 tonnes, and consequently the import requirements were lowered for the just ended 2010/11 marketing year. However, given the expected low harvest of the 2011 crop, import requirements for the current 2011/12 (April/March) marketing year are anticipated to increase to compensate for the reduced cereal output.

Food insecurity concerns rise following flood affected agricultural season

The reduced cereal harvest is expected to have a significant impact on food insecurity conditions of the affected population, through both a reduction in households' food supplies and potential loss of income from seasonal/causal farm employment and the sale of livestock and livestock products. Despite the improved food security conditions observed in 2010, the number of people requiring food assistance is anticipated to increase above the 200 000 people estimated last year. Furthermore, the rising cereal prices, which were 2 percent higher in February 2011, compared to the same month last year, will contribute to further aggravating the situation of vulnerable and low-income

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho

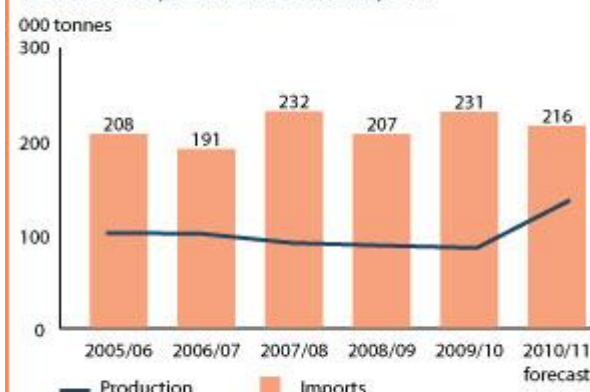
Cereal production

	2005-2009	2009	2010	change
	average		forecast	2010/2009
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	73	62	98	58
Sorghum	11	13	28	115
Wheat	11	10	11	10
Total	94	86	137	59

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Lesotho

Total cereal production and imports



Notes: Total cereal includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

households. Efforts to increase production of the winter season crops (May to August), through the provision of subsidised seeds and fertiliser, could help to provide some short-term relief.

Reference Date: 15-January-2011

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Uncertain prospects for 2011 crops due to heavy rains
- Favourable weather conditions and improved access to agricultural inputs contributed to an increased harvest in 2010
- Decline in the number of persons in need of food assistance due to improved domestic supply situation

Prospects for 2011 crops uncertain due to heavy rains and water-logging

Following moderate rainfall at the start of the 2010/11 season in October 2010, precipitation levels increased in November and December, leading to some water-logging. Abundant rainfall continued into January and reports indicate poor crop conditions in localised areas as a result of the heavily saturated ground. Government subsidy schemes and assistance provided by FAO, through Input Trade Fairs, continued for the current season, contributing to improving access to seeds, fertilisers and agricultural hardware.

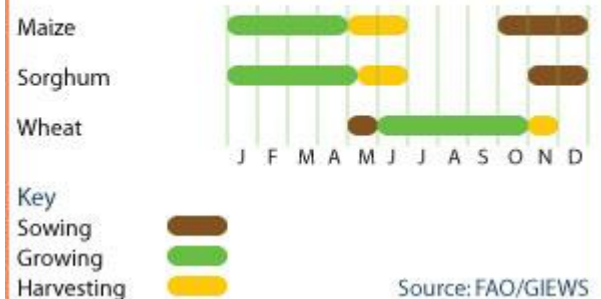
Significant production gains in 2010

In spite of a reduction in the area planted with maize – the main cereal crop accounting for about 60-65 percent of the area planted – compared to the previous year, favourable rainfall and improved access to inputs contributed to an increase in yields and production in 2010, estimated at 98 035 tonnes. Similarly, production of sorghum increased substantially to 28 000 tonnes, on account of an increase in both the area planted and productivity. In 2010 sorghum output rose for the fourth consecutive year, reflecting the larger farmers' use of this crop owing to its resistant characteristic to severe weather conditions. Total 2010 national cereal production for the 2009/10 season is estimated at approximately 137 000 tonnes, some 59 percent above the previous year.

Fall in the number of food insecure in 2010

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) assessment estimated that 200 000 people would require food assistance for the 2010/11 marketing year (April/March), a sizeable decline from the 400 000 people estimated in 2009. This is mainly on account of the rise in national cereal production. However, poverty levels in Lesotho are very closely associated with the absence of wage employment and income, with reduced opportunities for cash income due to the economic downturn. In addition, the government's budget has been negatively impacted by the reduction in revenue from the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), which is now only expected to represent 17 percent of the 2010/11 budget, compared to 35 percent in the previous year. Given the current resource constraints, WFP, at the request of the government, has extended its school feeding programme for a further two years, from January 2011 to December 2012.

Crop calendar Lesotho

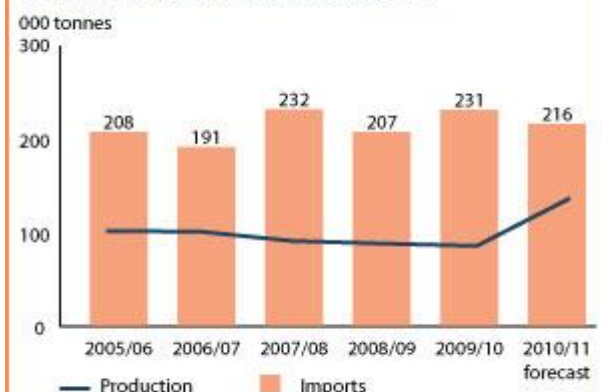


Lesotho Cereal production

	2005-2009 average	2009	2010 forecast	change 2010/2009
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	73	62	98	58
Sorghum	11	13	28	115
Wheat	11	10	11	10
Total	94	86	137	59

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Lesotho Total cereal production and imports



Notes: Total cereal includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Reference Date: 15-September-2010

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Large increase in maize and sorghum production this year, attributed to favourable rainfall and improved access to agricultural inputs
- Cereal prices have remained stable during the first half of 2010
- Higher cereal production lowers number of persons in need of food assistance

Maize and sorghum production surge in 2009/10 season

In spite of a reduction in the area planted with maize – the main cereal crop accounting for about 60-65 percent of the area planted – compared to last year, favourable rainfall and improved access to inputs contributed to an increase in yields and production, estimated at 98 035 tonnes for the 2009/10 season. Cumulative rainfall levels were sufficient throughout the growing period, despite a dry spell recorded in December, with Semonkong and Butha Buthe regions receiving the highest rainfall amounts. Government subsidy schemes and assistance provided by FAO, through Input Trade Fairs improved access to seeds, fertilisers and agricultural hardware.

Similarly, production of sorghum increased substantially to 28 000 tonnes, on account of an increase in both the area planted and productivity. The 2009/10 sorghum harvest represents the fourth consecutive rise in production, as farmers use of the crop has been increasing owing to the resistant characteristic to severe weather conditions. The 2010 winter wheat crop is forecast at 10 640 tonnes, with harvesting expected to begin in November. Total national cereal production for the 2009/10 season is estimated at approximately 137 000 tonnes, some 59 percent above the previous year.

Stable cereal prices during the first half of 2010

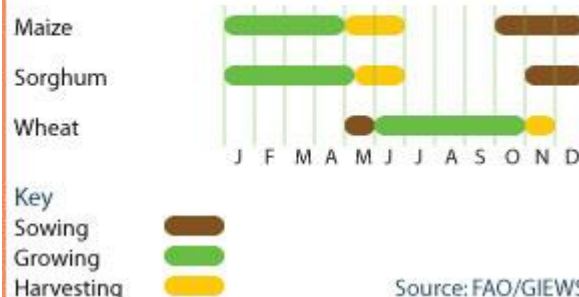
The bread and cereal sub-index of the national CPI has moved very slightly between June 2009 and June 2010, decreasing by 1 percent. Maize price have also remained relatively stable since the beginning of the year, in line with those in the South Africa market which supplies the bulk of maize imported by Lesotho. However, petrol and diesel prices rose by 4 and 9 percent, respectively, over the same period, which could have a negative impact on poor households' purchasing power.

Import requirements are lower than last year, due to the larger cereal domestic output.

Decrease in persons requiring food assistance

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) assessment estimated that 200 000 people would require food assistance for the 2010/11 marketing year (April/March), a sizeable decline from the 400 000 people estimated last year. This is mainly on account of the rise in national cereal production. However, poverty levels in Lesotho are very closely associated with the absence of wage employment and income, with reduced opportunities for cash income due to the economic

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho

Cereal production

	2005-2009 average	2009	2010 forecast	change 2010/2009
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	73	62	98	58
Sorghum	11	13	28	115
Wheat	11	10	11	10
Total	94	86	137	59

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

downturn. In addition, the Government's budget has been negatively impacted by the reduction in revenue from the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), which is now only expected to represent 17 percent of the 2010/11 budget, compared to 35 percent in the previous year.

Reference Date: 3-March-2010

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Prospects for 2010 crops favourable, with increased production expected in spite of lower plantings.
- Cereal prices still remain higher than pre-crisis period, despite falling South African export prices.
- Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimates that about 450 000 people are food insecure and require assistance. Situation is exacerbated by a poor overall economic situation.

Larger 2010 crop production anticipated

Overall the rainy season has been quite favourable this year for planting and development of the 2010 maize and sorghum crops to be harvested from May.. There were exceptions in the mountain areas where crops were affected by late onset of the rains and by a dry spell in December. First preliminary forecast indicated an about normal size cereal crop this year, up from the below average level harvested last year. For maize, the main crop, an increase of about 16 percent is currently anticipated in spite of a reduction in planted area. A crop assessment is currently under way and more complete data is expected shortly.

Cereal production in 2009 was below normal for second consecutive year

The total 2009 cereal production, including the wheat crop harvested in November, is estimated at 86 099 tonnes, slightly lower than the below average 2008 cereal output. The low production mainly reflects a contraction in the area planted (mostly of maize) because of high input prices. The maize crop, harvested in June, fell by about 10 percent in 2009, to 62 528 tonnes, relative to the previous season's output. By contrast, sorghum production increased to 13 241 tonnes, representing an increase of 57 percent compared to a year earlier. Due to the resistant characteristic of sorghum crops to severe weather condition its use by farmers has been increasing over the past three years. Wheat production is estimated at an average level of around 10 000 tonnes. Total cereal import requirements (food aid and commercial) in the 2009/10 marketing year (April/March) about to end are estimated to have increase by some 9 percent.

Cereal prices stable but higher than normal

Cereal prices have been stable in the last six months in line with those in the South Africa market which supplies the bulk of maize and wheat imported by Lesotho, but they have remained considerably above average.

Economic slump exacerbate food security conditions

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) assessment estimated in June 2009 that about 450 000 people would require food assistance for the 2009/10 marketing year (April/March), an increase from 353 000 people in the previous year. Populations affected are being assisted by WFP, but the food aid pipeline is short of

Crop calendar Lesotho



Lesotho

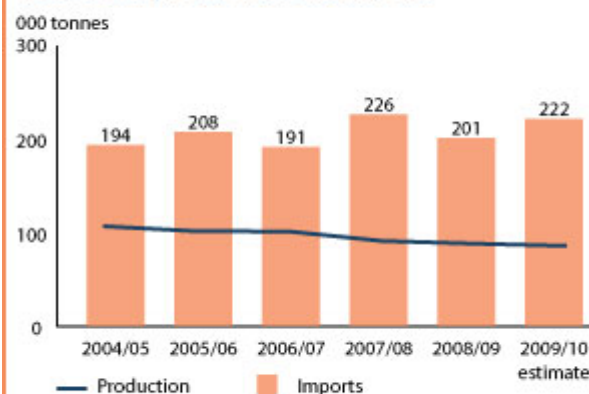
Cereal production

	2004-2008 average	2008	2009 estimate	change 2009/2008
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	76	69	62	-10
Wheat	11	11	10	-9
Sorghum	10	8	13	62
Total	98	88	86	-2

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Lesotho

Total cereal production and imports



Notes: Total cereal includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

requirements. The poverty in Lesotho is very closely associated with the absence of wage employment and income, with reduced opportunities for cash income due to the economic downturn. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is increasingly undermining the economic resource base, especially of those affected. In addition, the Government's budget has been negatively impacted by the reduction in the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) revenue which in 2009/10 represented 35 percent of the budget compared to 65 percent in earlier years. A further reduction to 17 percent is expected for 2010/11. The growth of the economy has slowed down to 2.1 percent in 2009 compared to 4.4 percent in 2008.

Reference Date: 21-January-2010

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Overall conditions of 2010 crops reported to be satisfactory, but plantings reduced.
- 2009 total cereal harvest was lower than the previous year as well as below the five-year average
- Cereal prices still remain higher than pre-crisis period, despite falling South African export prices
- Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimates that about 450 000 people are food insecure and require assistance

Prospects for 2010 crops mixed

A good start of the rainy season up to the last decade of November favoured land preparation and planting of the 2010 maize and sorghum crops. However, official information indicates that the area planted as of end December was some 25 percent below the previous year. Rainfall was below normal in December with the last two decades particularly dry which has had a negative impact on crop development in some areas. Rains resumed in the first half of January and overall crop conditions were reported to be generally satisfactory, although in the north east crops remained under stress.

Cereal production below normal for second consecutive year in 2009

The total 2009 cereal production, including the wheat crop harvested in November, is estimated at 86 099 tonnes, slightly lower than the below average 2008 cereal output. The low production mainly reflects a contraction in the area planted (mostly of maize) because of high input prices. The maize crop, harvested in June, fell by about 10 percent, to 62 528 tonnes, relative to the previous season's output. By contrast, sorghum production increased to 13 241 tonnes, representing an increase of 57 percent compared to a year earlier. Due to the resistant characteristic of sorghum crops to severe weather condition its use by farmers has been increasing over the past three years. Wheat production is estimated at an average level of around 10 000 tonnes. Total cereal import requirements (food aid and commercial) in the 2009/10 marketing year (April/March) are estimated to increase by some 9 percent to 222 000 tonnes.

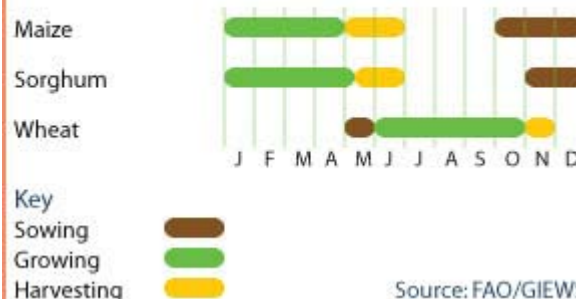
Cereal prices stable but higher than normal

Cereal prices have stabilized in 2009 in line with those in the South Africa market which supplies the bulk of maize and wheat imported by Lesotho, but have remained considerably above average.

Economic slump and high prices exacerbate food security conditions

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) assessment has estimate that about 450 000 people require food assistance for the 2009/10 marketing year (April/March), an increase from 353 000 people in the previous year. The poverty in Lesotho is very closely associated with the absence of wage employment and income, with reduced opportunities for cash income due to the economic downturn. The

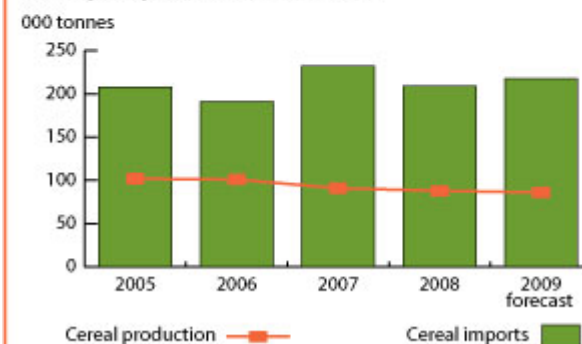
Crop calendar Lesotho



Cereal production and imports Lesotho

Cereal production	2004-2008	2008	2009	change*
	average		forecast	2009/2008
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	76	69	63	-9.3%
Wheat	11	11	10	-6.1%
Sorghum	10	8	13	56.8%
Total Cereals	98	88	86	-2.6%

* Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.



Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

HIV/AIDS pandemic is increasingly undermining the economic resource base, especially of those affected. In addition, the Government's budget has been negatively impacted by the reduction in the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) revenue which in 2009/10 represented 35 percent of the budget compared to 65 percent in earlier years. A further reduction to 17 percent is expected for 2010/11.

Reference Date: 10-September-2009

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- 2009 total cereal harvest is estimated to be lower than the previous year as well as below the five-year average
- Cereal prices still remain higher than pre-crisis period, despite falling South African export prices
- Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimates that about 450 000 people are food insecure and require assistance

Overall decrease in 2009 cereal production, but sorghum output rises

The total 2009 cereal production, including the wheat crop to be harvested from November, is forecast at 86 099 tonnes, marginally below the 2007/08 cereal output. The overall decline in production mainly reflects a contraction in the area planted by 16 percent compared to 2008. The maize crop, harvested in June, decreased by approximately 10 percent, to 62 528 tonnes, relative to the previous season's output. However, maize production in Thaba-Tseka, which is normally a minor producing region, recorded the highest production levels, on account of higher yields. Sorghum production increased to 13 241 tonnes, representing an increase of 57 percent compared to a year earlier. Due to the resistant characteristic of sorghum crops to severe weather condition its use by farmers has been increasing over the past three years. Wheat production is forecast at an average of 10 330 tonnes. Import requirements (food aid and commercial) are expected to remain just above the short-term average of 205 000 tonnes for the 2009/10 marketing year (April/March).

Planting of the 2009/10 season's cereal crops begins in November

Prices of seeds and fertilizers have increased by 20 and 50 percent respectively since May 2008. The higher input prices could contribute to constraining production for the forthcoming season. Seasonal rainfall forecasts indicate normal to below normal rainfall, with the main cereal crops scheduled to be planted in November.

Cereal prices remain higher than 2008

The bread and cereal component of the national CPI (with a weight of 22 percent) increased by 11.5 percent in June 2009 compared to the same month in 2008, despite the falling prices in the South Africa market, which supplies the bulk of maize in Lesotho.

Economic slump and high prices exacerbate food security conditions

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) assessment estimates that about 450 000 people will require food assistance for the 2009/10 marketing year (April/March). While poverty in Lesotho is very closely associated with the absence of wage employment and income, with reduced opportunities for cash income due to the current economic downturn, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is increasingly undermining the economic resource base, especially of those affected.

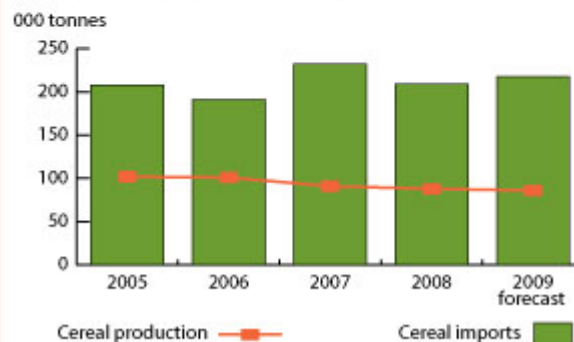
Crop calendar Lesotho



Cereal production and imports Lesotho

Cereal production	2004-2008	2008	2009	change* 2009/2008
	average		forecast	
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	76	69	63	-9.3%
Wheat	11	11	10	-6.1%
Sorghum	10	8	13	56.8%
Total Cereals	98	88	86	-2.6%

* Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.



Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets