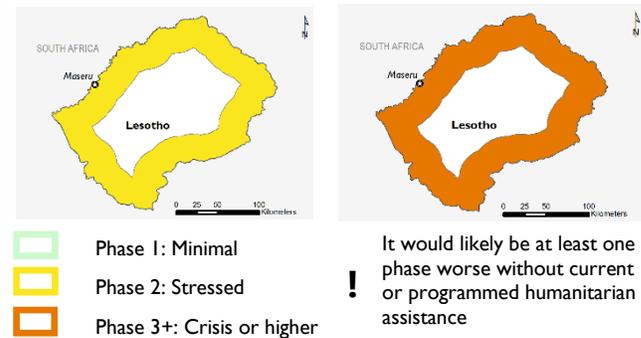


Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes emerge as own produced food stocks deplete

KEY MESSAGES

- After a few months of consuming own produced cereals, very poor households are beginning to deplete their stocks. Typically, very poor households' own produced grains last for about three to four months in an average year. As own stocks deplete, households are slowly beginning to rely on the market. While they can still afford their food needs, some households are diverting some income for other basic non-food needs towards food leading to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes. From October, the number of very poor and poor households who will marginally meet their food needs will increase due to below-average purchasing power, leading to the re-emergence of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in some districts.
- As the 2021/22 rainfall season nears, some farmers are already starting to prepare for the coming cropping season, especially in the mountains, where farming activities typically begin around October. Key informants report that farmers are already engaging in land preparation which is expected to peak in September and October as the planting period approaches. In the mountains, early planting, which typically happens in October, is likely to be timely this year due to availability of residual moisture available from snowfall. Lesotho received typical snowfall this year due to a severe winter experienced.
- Households continue to rely on off-farm labor opportunities as a source of income, including construction, house smearing, domestic work, and beer brewing. However, many of these are below average due to compounding effects of COVID-19 restrictions locally and in the primary labor markets of South Africa. Remittances continue to be one of the perennial income sources; however, despite relative improvements in South Africa, the levels remain below average as the South African economy is still recovering from multiple COVID-19 lockdowns as well as the recent civil unrest.

Projected food security outcomes, August to September 2021 (left) and October 2021 to January 2022 (right)



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

FEWS NET Remote Monitoring countries use a colored outline to represent the highest IPC classification in areas of concern.

ZONE

CURRENT ANOMALIES

PROJECTED ANOMALIES

Mafeteng, Quthing, Maseru, and Qacha's Nek

- Depletion of own-produced foods
- Below average income due to prolonged economic impacts of COVID-19 restrictions

- Above-average maize meal prices
- Below average income from local labor, remittances, and labor migration due to COVID-19 restrictions

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JANUARY 2022

Preparations for the summer cropping season are beginning as the 2021/22 rainfall season nears. Land preparation activities are slowly increasing, although they are expected to peak around September and October as the start of the season draws near. There is generally in anticipation of a good season ahead, with international and local forecasts pointing at a high likelihood of average rainfall during the first half of the season. Key informants report that some farmers' access to inputs,

especially communities living closer to the border, may be constrained by COVID-19 related movement restrictions at the border. These farmers may not be able to cross the border into South Africa, where they typically source cheaper inputs.

Nonetheless, the government is implementing an input subsidy program where farmers can access inputs at 40 percent of the normal price. In the mountains, planting is likely to start around October as typical. This is enhanced by the availability of residual moisture from snowfall, which is typically used for early planting before rainfall begins. This year, the mountains have adequate residual moisture due to average to above-average snow received during winter. In addition, some rainfall in mid-August added to soil moisture requirements both for early planting and winter wheat production. Although the planted area for winter wheat is estimated to be 30 to 40 percent below the five-year average due to lack of inputs, the winter rainfall is expected to boost cropping conditions.

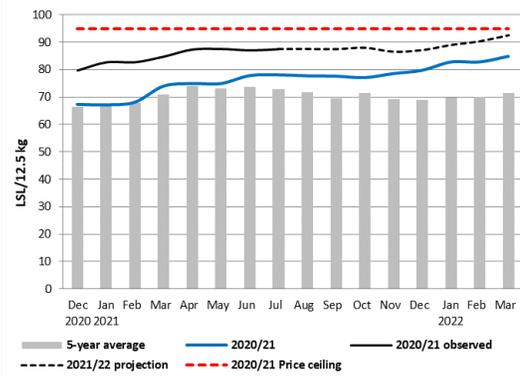
As preparations for the next season increase, it is expected that poor households will begin to access more agriculture-related labor opportunities. Although opportunities are projected to be better than last year, it is unlikely that they will reach typical levels due to indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, while middle and better-off households have slightly recovered from the previous years' droughts, they have not yet fully recovered. In this regard, income from labor is projected to remain below average.

Pastures and water for livestock are in abundance given the good rains received during the previous season. The LVAC reported that most water bodies were recharged by March, with Katse Dam (the largest in Lesotho) estimated to have reached 78 percent capacity in March 2021 compared to 33 percent in March 2020. Access to water for irrigation has therefore improved this year which is supporting gardening activities. Livestock body conditions are good, and prices are the same as last year's levels. While there is an expectation of improvements, income from livestock and livestock products sales is below average due to contracted markets resulting from COVID-19 control measures.

During the last two weeks of August, there was a notable decline in the number of COVID-19 cases, signaling the end of the third wave in Lesotho. While the third wave was less severe with no total lockdown, the economy of Lesotho continues to be affected by the long-term impacts of COVID-19 especially considering its close ties to the South Africa economy, which has also been affected by the pandemic. As a result, labor migration and remittances remain below typical levels, although there are slow notable improvements. In addition, migrants from Lesotho are also affected by the rise in South Africa's unemployment, worsened by the recent civil unrest. South Africa's unemployment has recently increased to a record high of 34.4 percent in the second quarter of 2021, up from 32.6 percent in the first quarter.

Food insecurity in Lesotho is expected to be less severe than last year, with the LVAC projecting around 310,000 people likely to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) during the peak lean season for 2021/22 consumption year. While the projected food insecure population is lower than last year, below-average income is expected to result in some very poor and poor households unable to meet their food needs through January 2022. With above-average maize meal prices projected (Figure 1), a reduced purchasing power will reduce food access. As a result, FEWS NET projects that very poor and poor households will experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes from October through January 2022 in some districts.

Figure 1. Price projection for retail maize meal, Maseru market



Source: FEWS NET based on BOS data

ABOUT REMOTE MONITORING

In remote monitoring, a coordinator typically works from a nearby regional office. Relying on partners for data, the coordinator uses scenario development to conduct analysis and produce monthly reports. As less data may be available, remote monitoring reports may have less detail than those from countries with FEWS NET offices. Learn more here.