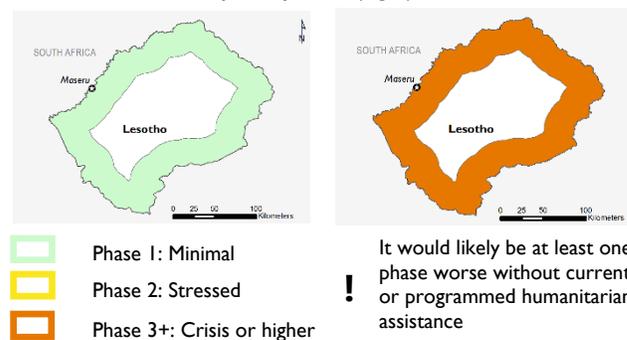


*Completed harvest drives Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes through August*

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Most of Lesotho is expected to face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes between June and August as the recent above-average harvest significantly improves household food and income access. However, as own-produced food stocks of very poor households deplete through August, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are likely to return around September as households become increasingly market-dependent despite limited incomes. From October 2021 through January 2022, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected for very poor households as demand for market purchases and staple food prices seasonally increase through the lean season.
- Since April, the COVID-19 incidence rate has been stable with very low to no new confirmed cases. Currently, there are minimal COVID-19-related restrictions in Lesotho. Many livelihood activities have improved since the lockdown was lifted in March. However, the seven-day rolling average of confirmed COVID-19 cases has increased from one in early June to 16 by June 16, 2021. Additionally, the rapid increase of confirmed cases in South Africa since May 1 poses a risk of another outbreak in Lesotho given the volume of people travelling to and from South Africa. A return of lockdown restrictions will slow economic activity and impact household access to income.
- Between December 2020 and April 2021, maize meal prices in Maseru have been gradually increasing, likely driven by high demand during the lean season and a 19 percent increase in maize meal prices in South Africa around January. However, between June and September 2021, maize meal prices in Maseru are expected to stabilize as the local harvest increases and reduces household dependence on market purchases. Additionally, a good harvest in South Africa will maintain the market supply of grains at reasonable prices for local millers in Lesotho.
- With the ongoing peak of the winter season, sporadic snowfall has been reported across the country. While near freezing to freezing temperatures can negatively impact pasture and vegetable conditions, the residual moisture from the snow is likely to benefit the start of 2021/2022 agricultural activities in November, particularly for households in the mountains who typically rely on residual snow melt at the start of the agricultural season.

Projected food security outcomes, June 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, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing.*

- Below average income due to prolonged economic impacts of COVID-19 restrictions

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

**PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JANUARY 2022**

According to [FAO](#), the forecast 2020/2021 cereal harvest was 13 percent greater than the 2016-2020 average, and 23.5 percent greater than last year. As the above-average harvest concludes, most households are engaging in off-season activities for cash and in-kind payments. The main income sources through September will include remittances, crop sales, off-farm casual labor, petty trade, construction, traditional beer brewing, and other self-employment activities.

Currently, crop sales are largely benefiting middle and better off households as very poor households typically have smaller yields and tend to keep their harvest for self-consumption. However, very poor households are benefiting from in-kind payments of grain for labor. Since the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, income from petty trade activities is increasing, particularly for households near urban areas where the market is more accessible. However, petty trade and market activity have not yet returned to typical levels, and incomes are still below average for most households.

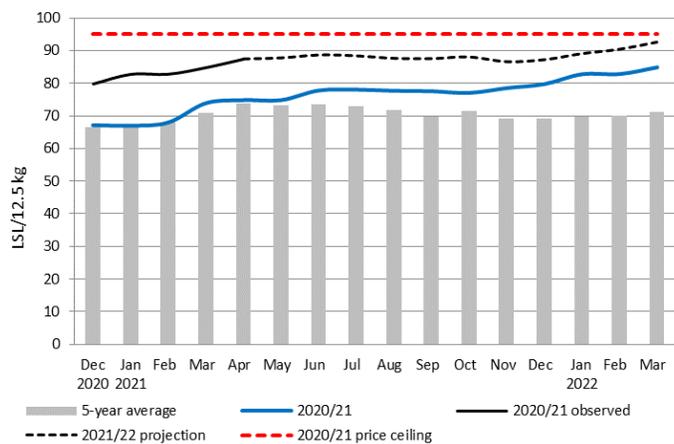
Following the end of the rainy season in March, the reconstruction of damaged housing and infrastructure from flash floods and heavy rainfall is likely to improve construction-related labor opportunities. However, wage rates are likely to be below average as poor households will likely not have the capacity to pay normal wage rates. Typical of most dry seasons, some households are earning income through traditional beer brewing. According to key informants, this activity is slightly above last year's levels, but households are reportedly hesitant to use their harvest for brewing following three previous poor harvests.

Remittances to Lesotho have been gradually improving since April as the South African economy reopened. According to key informants, many migrants are reportedly traveling back to South Africa for seasonal and permanent employment. However, the flow of remittances remains below average as the economy is yet to return to pre-COVID-19 levels. Additionally, the need for a valid COVID-19 test to cross the border is limiting many informal migrants and resulting in illegal border crossings.

As of June 22, the seven-day average for confirmed COVID-19 cases is around 30 after ranging between zero and six since April. Although monitoring is still needed, there is a possibility of a new wave of COVID-19 infections, as evidenced by trends in other countries in the region. However, another COVID-19 wave in Lesotho is likely given the sharp increase of confirmed COVID-19 cases in South Africa. In mid-June, South Africa moved into lockdown Level 3 as the seven-day rolling average of COVID-19 cases increased from around 1,200 cases in early May to around 11,800 by June 22. However, medical analysts are recommending more restrictions to better control the rise in confirmed cases. Given the dependence on cross-border trade and travel between Lesotho and South Africa, a rise in COVID-19 cases is likely. If Lesotho undertakes another lockdown, it will likely negatively impact the economy and general livelihoods, particularly in urban areas. Additionally, the increase in COVID-19 control measures in South Africa is expected to impact Basotho migrant workers and remittances negatively.

Overall, household food consumption has improved following the 2020/2021 harvest. Very poor households are expected to be consuming their own harvest until August. Although off-farm income is likely to be below average, very poor households will be able to meet their basic non-food needs through August as they are less reliant on markets for staple purchases. Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are therefore expected between June and August though some worst-affected households are still expected to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). In September, as own stocks deplete, households will prioritize purchasing staple foods, driving area-level Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes. Although maize meal prices are expected to stabilize, prices will likely begin increasing from October as the lean season approaches, reducing household purchasing power. As a result, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely in Lesotho between October and January 2022.

**Figure 1.** Integrated 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.](#)