LESOTHO Remote Monitoring Update October 2021

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes emerge and expected to persist during the 2021/22 lean season

KEY MESSAGES

- As the lean season begins, household food stocks from own production are low, with reliance on markets for food increasing. While imports from South Africa are available and support normal market supply, high food prices and lower than average income continues to drive low purchasing power. This is expected to drive Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes through the lean season in southern parts of Lesotho. In the rest of the country, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected.

- Above-average rainfall is expected for the 2021/22 season. As there has been some rainfall in October, farmers are starting land preparation activities, especially in the mountains, where farming activities typically begin around October. Farming activities for the 2021/22 season are expected to be normal, but due to the high cost of inputs, area planted is likely to be lower than last year and below average.

Projected food security outcomes, October 2021 to January 2022 (left) and February to May 2022 (right)

Phase 1: Minimal

Phase 2: Stressed

Phase 3+: Crisis or higher

! It would likely be at least one phase worse without current or programmed humanitarian assistance

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.

- Households typically rely on casual labor opportunities, including farming and labor migration to South Africa. Off-farm labor opportunities remain below average due to the compounding effects of COVID-19 restrictions locally and cross-border travel to labor markets in South Africa. Despite South Africa easing travel restrictions and reopening its economy, the level of remittances to Lesotho remains below average.

ZONE	CURRENT ANOMALIES	PROJECTED ANOMALIES
Mafeteng, Quthing, Maseru, and Qacha's Nek,	• Depletion of own-produced foods and increased reliance on purchased food • Above-average maize grain and meal and fertilizer prices • Non-agricultural casual and migrant employment opportunities are below normal	• Continued high maize grain and meal prices due to price transmission from South Africa, where food prices are high. • Prolonged high levels of unemployment in Lesotho and South Africa due to the economic slowdown associated with the COVID-19 pandemic

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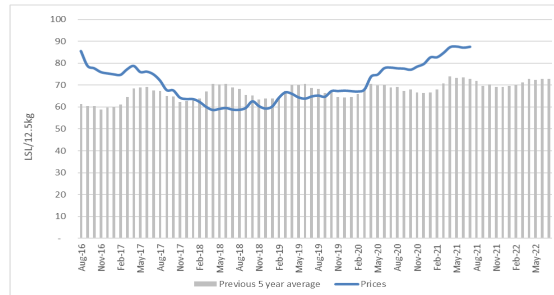
PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2022

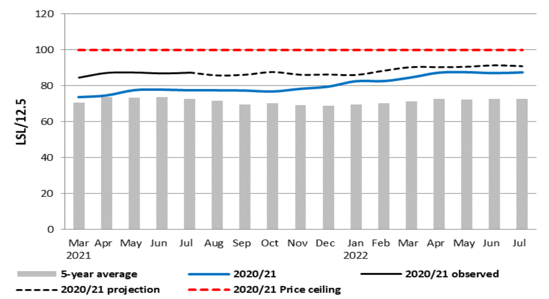
Land preparation activities for the 2021/22 agricultural season are underway and will continue through December. As rainfall is expected to be above average between October 2021 to March 2022, this is expected to facilitate household engagement in the season. This is expected to drive average to above-average area planted and production prospects. This is also likely to drive higher than average access to agriculture-related labor opportunities. However, this year, significant increases in international prices for fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides will restrict engagement in planting. The strong value of the domestic currency and government agricultural input subsidies will likely mitigate significant increases in domestic input prices. COVID-19 related movement restrictions at the border will prohibit farmers from crossing into South Africa, where poor households typically source cheaper inputs. Overall, area planted for the 2021/22 season is expected to be normal.

Figure 1: Retail and average maize meal prices in Maseru



Source: FEWS NET based on BOS data

Figure 2. Price projection for retail maize meal, Maseru market



Source: FEWS NET based on BOS data

Due to the favorable rainfall seen in the 2020/21 season, pasture and water availability for livestock are generally available. These favorable conditions are expected to prevail throughout the projected period. Livestock body conditions and market supply are generally favorable. Although, livestock prices remained at last year levels due to reduced market demand. Farmers are expected to sell fewer animals than normal due to low demand as households do not have sufficient income for livestock purchases.

As of September, maize meal prices in Maseru were 10 percent higher than the same time last year and nearly 20 percent above the five-year average (Figure 1). The current increases are due to the price transmission from the high maize prices in South Africa. Prices in Lesotho are near to prices seen during the 2016/17 drought due to the price transmission from South Africa, where prices are well above average. Maize meal prices are projected to remain above last year and well above the five-year average (Figure 2). While prices will remain elevated, there are not expected to breach prices seen during the 2016/17 drought.

Economic activities in Lesotho contracted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but October marked the end of the 3rd Wave. During the last week of September, the government eased the COVID-19-related restriction measures to level three on the five-tier ranking system. Cross-border travel is permitted for certain classes of travelers, including businesspeople, migrant workers, pensioners, students, and diplomats, but travel for tourism and leisure remains restricted.

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected from October through the next harvest expected in April/May. This is due to above-average food prices, which is driving below-average purchasing power. With the harvest beginning in April, food security is expected to improve with households consuming food from own production. This will drive Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes during the harvest period.

FEWS NET: Lesotho Remote Monitoring Update: Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes emerge and expected to persist during the 2021/22 lean season, October 2021

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.