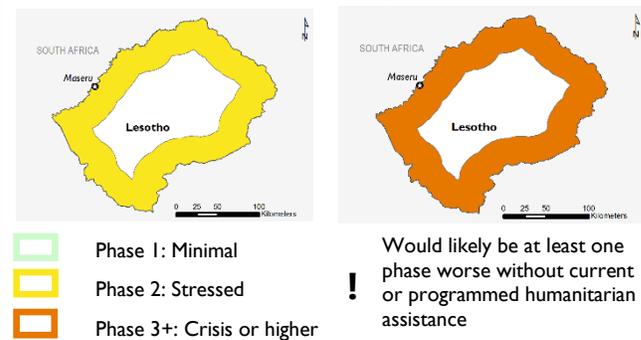


Food Security outcomes are likely to deteriorate earlier than usual due to below-average harvest

KEY MESSAGES

- Most of Lesotho is experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food security outcomes, supported by limited 2019 harvests. However, this status is expected to be short lived and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes will likely re-emerge by September.
- Following a poor 2018/19 rainfall season, the below-average 2019 harvest is one of the main drivers of food insecurity in Lesotho this year. Unofficial estimates suggest that maize production is about 20 to 40 percent below reference year levels and sorghum production, an important cereal crop, is less than last year and significantly below the five-year average.
- Market staple food prices in Maseru are still favorable, however reports indicate a gradual increase. Price projections by FEWS NET (figure 1) show that maize meal prices in Maseru will likely increase to above-average levels during the outlook period. They are expected to fluctuate between 4–12 percent above 5-year average between July 2019 and February 2020, driven by price increases in South African source markets. Market supplies should remain stable across Lesotho.

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2019 (left) and October 2019 to January 2020 (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, Qacha's nek, Quthing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below-average 2019 harvests • Below-average income from crop sales • Below-average opportunities for agricultural labor, affecting income and in-kind food access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above-average staple food prices • Below-average off-farm income sources • Reduced purchasing power

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JANUARY 2020

In most households, food consumption has improved with the harvest, despite a poor 2018/19 rainfall season and reports of sporadic crop failure across Lesotho during the peak growing season. Although official crop estimates are still to be released, unofficial statistics indicate that maize grain production is likely to be below last year's levels and 20 to 40 percent below reference year levels. In addition, wheat and sorghum production are also well below average, at around 10 to 30 percent. Harvested crop stores will deplete earlier than normal

and the number of months of consumption of own food will likely range from zero to about two months for the poorest households. Typically, poor households consume self-produced food through August/September before they start to rely on the market, but they are expected to revert to market purchases earlier than normal this year.

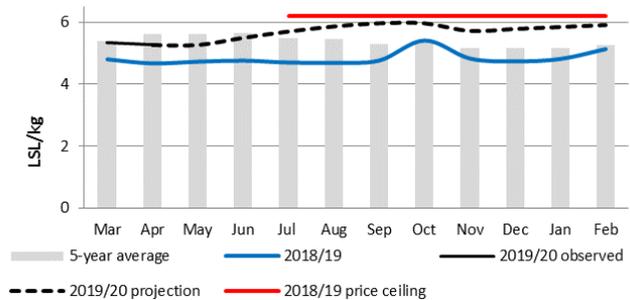
During the period June to October, households will rely on crop sales, harvesting labor, off-farm labor, livestock and livestock products selling, self-employment, and remittances to earn cash income. However, harvesting labor demand is significantly below average, in correlation with the poor harvest. In addition, income earned from crop sales will also be atypically low from June to

September due to limited availability of harvested crops for sale. This will affect both poor and rich households. Households may intensify livestock selling in the next 2 to 3 months as crop stores deplete. Livestock numbers for poorest households remain low due to protracted selling, which will limit further selling capacity. Remittances will continue to be one of the key income sources and coping strategies for many households and possibility of increased labor migration to South Africa, especially during the lean season, is high given the poor harvest experienced this year. Opportunities for employment activities such as beer brewing, construction, and domestic work will likely be below average as expendable income decreases, and employers prioritize food purchases for their household. From October 2019 to January 2020, households will have increased access to income from farm labor as the agriculture season will be starting. Opportunities for labor will likely be average due to anticipated average rainfall during start of 2019/2020 rainfall season. However, lack of income and grain to reinvest due to poor 2018 harvest remains a concern.

Livestock body conditions have improved due to availability of pasture and water and this will help strengthen livestock prices through August. However, body conditions will likely begin to deteriorate after August as water availability decreases. During this period, supply of livestock on the market is expected to increase as households sell livestock for income to purchase food and hence livestock prices will likely be unfavorable especially around November and December.

Maize meal prices are currently around the 5-year average. However, maize meal prices are projected to increase above average levels, fluctuating within 4–12 percent above the 5-year average between July 2019 and February 2020 (Figure 1). The projected increase is due to increased local demand driven by a poor 2019 harvest and increasing maize grain prices in the source markets of South Africa. The SAGIS weekly bulleting for last of May indicated that white maize grain prices in South Africa slightly increased between April and May. It also projects that white maize grain prices will likely increase by seven percent between June 2019 and March 2020. This increase is expected to cascade down to receiving markets in Lesotho. The combined effects of below average harvest, low incomes, and increasing maize meal prices are expected to increase food food insecurity to above last year levels. Therefore, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity outcomes will likely be experienced in Lesotho from September 2019 through January 2020.

Figure 1: Maseru market maize meal price projection



Source: FEWS NET estimates based on WFP/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.](#)