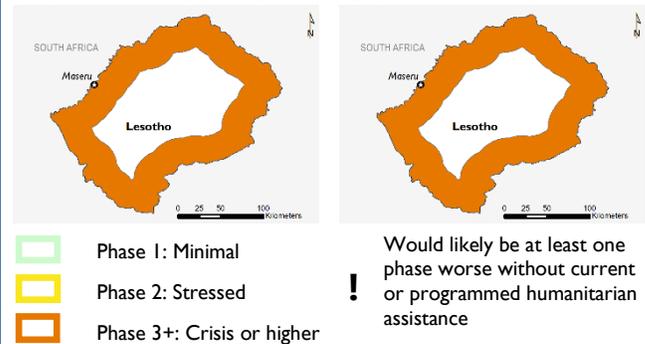


Limited access to income affects food security in Lesotho

KEY MESSAGES

- A majority of households in Lesotho are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes, even in the traditionally high-producing areas of the Southern Lowlands which are the breadbasket of Lesotho. An increase in consumption-based coping strategies have been reported, such as skipping meals and reducing portion. The World Food Program has begun distributing cash and vouchers to affected households.
- Seasonal forecasts indicate that parts of Southern Africa, including Lesotho will likely receive below-average rainfall between October 2019 and March 2020 with a potentially late and erratic onset. Depending on rainfall distribution, there is a chance that the 2019/20 cropping season will be affected for the third consecutive year. Lesotho typically receives first rains as early as October, however the country has only received three days of rain so far. Early season rainfall deficits will likely affect planting and other agriculture activities. As a result, agricultural labor opportunities are limited and are expected to be further affected by poor start of season, thereby affecting income and food access for the poor.
- Reported high temperatures are rapidly drying water reservoirs and depleting pasture. As of the third week of October, vegetation cover for most of Lesotho was 70 – 95 percent below typical levels, as evidenced by the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI). Livestock body conditions continue to deteriorate due to poor pastures and shortage of water. This is affecting prices for livestock as traders prefer healthy animals.

Projected food security outcomes, October to January 2020 (left) and February to May 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
<i>Nationwide but with intensity in the south</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below-average income • Below-average incomes from livestock sales, on and off-farm activities • Low purchasing power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below-average agriculture labor opportunities and wage rates • Below-average cumulative rainfall with an erratic and below average start of season • Below-average income and food access

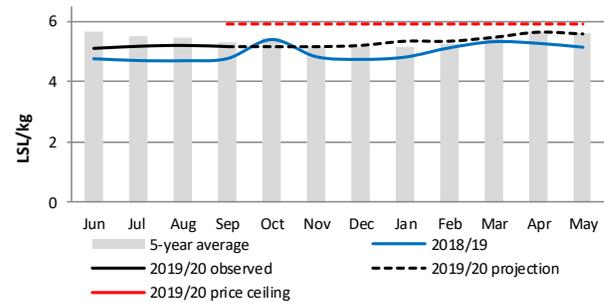
PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2020

The food security situation in Lesotho is worsened by a combination of below-average 2019 harvests and low incomes. Households that typically resort to market purchases when own-food stocks run dry are now relying solely on markets for food and are not meeting minimum food needs. Although field labor, self-employment, and petty trading opportunities are expected to seasonally increase, a poor start of season will negatively affect access to income opportunities by poor households. Some diverse opportunities, such as house smearing, are virtually non-existent due to low effective demand. However, some households still have a few livestock to sell and there is an increasing reliance on remittances from South Africa. Local safety nets, especially by the government, are in place and helping to slightly alleviate the situation. The government continues to implement the traditional cash transfer program, “the public works” locally known as “fato-fato”. The national school feeding program by WFP is also ongoing which to some extent is helping food intake for school children. The start of voucher and cash transfer humanitarian assistance program by WFP is expected to improve incomes and food access only to some households. The program has begun in three districts (Quthing, Mophale’s Hoek and Mafeteng), reaching about 5,500 affected beneficiaries, and is expected to last from October 2019 to March 2020.

The agriculture season is slowly starting with land preparation activities and dry planting underway, although it is still sporadic. Farmers are anticipating rains to recover from poor harvests experienced last season. However, rainfall is forecast to be below average between October 2019 and March 2020, with a potentially late and erratic onset. Below-average rains will affect the cropping season for yet another third consecutive year for Lesotho. In addition, below-average rains during the start of season will likely result in poor regeneration of pastures and availability of water hence livestock body conditions which are currently poor will likely remain the same till peak of rainy season.

There are enough imports from South Africa to cover the cereal deficit of Lesotho and markets are expected to remain well supplied. Maize meal prices from Maseru market in Lesotho have been trending close to the five-year average since June. In September, prices were 2.5 percent below the five-year average. Staple food prices in Maseru have not been increasing, as per initial expectations due to stable prices in South Africa source markets. It is anticipated that prices will closely follow five-year average trends between October 2019 and May 2020. Despite favorable prices so far, a combination of poor harvests and below-average incomes will remain the biggest drivers of food insecurity this year in Lesotho. Below-average incomes will continue to negatively affect household purchasing power leading to large food consumption gaps. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist through beginning of April 2020. Food security outcomes typically begin improving from end of April into July 2020 due to new harvest, however if the forecast for below-average seasonal rainfall comes to fruition, little seasonal improvement in food security outcomes would be expected.

Figure 1: Maseru market maize meal price projection (LSL/kg)



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.](#)