



# GIEWS Country Brief Lesotho

Reference Date: 24-September-2019

### FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Weather forecasts point to mostly favourable conditions for 2020 crops, to be planted from October
- Cereal production in 2019 estimated at well below-average level due to seasonal rainfall deficits
- Cereal import requirement estimated at high level in 2019/20, while prices of cereals strengthening
- Food insecurity worsened and estimated 433 000 people assessed to need assistance for food between April 2019 and March 2020

## Favourable weather forecasts boost production prospects for 2020 cereal crops

Planting of the 2020 cereal crops is expected to start in October, with crops likely to be ready for harvest from April/May next year. According to the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS), below-normal rainfall is expected in September and October 2019, inferring a higher probability of a delayed start of seasonal rains. From November to December, rainfall is forecast to be average and, between January and March 2020, there is a higher likelihood of above-average precipitation, boosting the preliminary production outlook for 2020 crops.

## Cereal production in 2019 estimated at well below-average level

The 2019 maize and sorghum crops were harvested in June and production was severely affected by seasonal rainfall deficits between September 2018 and January 2019, which led to a decrease in both area harvested and yields. Maize production, which accounts for the bulk of the national cereal output, decreased by 62 percent compared to the previous five-year average, while sorghum production is estimated at the negligible level of 1 000 tonnes.

The 2019 winter wheat output, to be harvested in November, is forecast at 2 000 tonnes, about 77 percent below the previous year's near-average level, reflecting a steep decline in both planted area and yields.

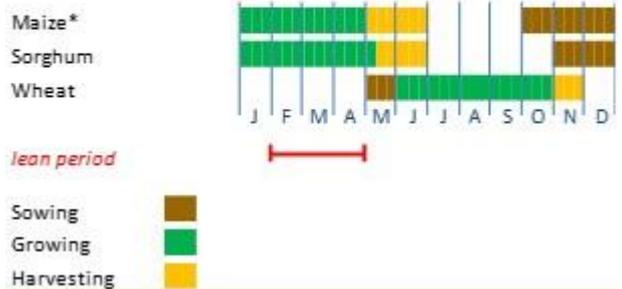
## Imports anticipated to reach high level in 2019/20

In the 2019/20 marketing year (April/March), total cereal import requirements are estimated at 272 000 tonnes, about 30 percent

### Lesotho

Crop Calendar

(\*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

### Lesotho

#### Cereal Production

	2014-2018 average	2018	2019 estimate	change 2019/2018
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	92	110	35	-68.4
Sorghum	18	40	1	-97.5
Wheat	8	9	2	-79.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>-76.4</b>

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

above the five-year average. The import requirement for maize, which accounts for most of the increase, is estimated at an above-average level of 150 000 tonnes, due to the reduced 2019 harvest.

For the other cereals, mainly wheat and rice, import volumes are expected to remain stable and at average levels, at 90 000 and 31 000 tonnes, respectively.

### Uptick in food inflation

According to the latest report of the Bureau of Statistics (BOS), as of July 2019, the annual inflation rate for bread and cereals, key food staples, was estimated at about 10 percent. The increase in prices reflects tighter domestic supplies and higher prices in South Africa, the country's main supplier of cereals. Higher transportation costs have also added pressure to domestic prices.

### Food insecurity situation worsens in 2019/20

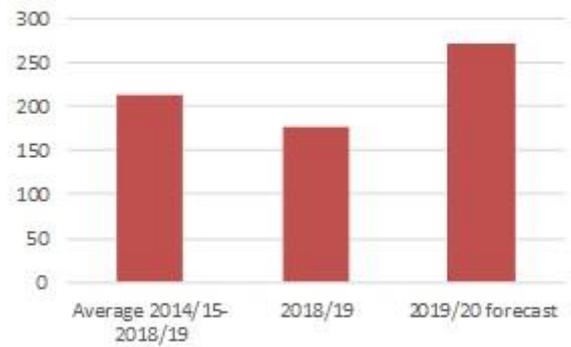
Reflecting the impact of the adverse weather conditions on rural livelihoods and households' food supplies from own production, the number of food insecure people increase significantly in the period April 2019-March 2020. Based on the latest Vulnerability Assessment Committee's (VAC) evaluation, in this period about 433 000 people in the rural areas are estimated to be food insecure and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, compared to nearly 310 000 people in the previous year.

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## Lesotho

### Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.