

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Geography

Lesotho is a small landlocked country in southern Africa, completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa, with a total area of 30 355 km² and an estimated population of about 2.0 million people in 2012¹. Over 50 percent of the land area is mountainous and only 11 percent suitable for cropping (FAO, 2012). Lesotho's mountainous topology makes its ecology fragile, with limited vegetative cover that exposes the soil to erosion. Agricultural production is predominantly subsistence and rain-fed. The latter makes production susceptible to weather-related hazards, especially drought and floods. A livelihoods zoning and baseline was conducted in 2006, and updated in May 2011 which divides the country into six livelihood zones much along the lines of the agro-ecological zones of the country.

Politics

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with a two-tier legislature comprising a Senate and an elected National Assembly. The plurality of political parties and intense political contestation and constant splits of political parties undermines stability, resulting in elections-related protests during the 2007 elections. The 2012 elections on May 26 ushered in a new Prime Minister, Tom Thabane replacing the previous one who had been in power since 1998. Although, there was civil unrest following the disputed elections in 1998 and in 2007, the May 2012 elections were concluded successfully, indicating a political maturity now existing in Lesotho. It is expected that the new government will follow good governance practices including ensuring rule of law and voice and accountability. However, various unions have expressed high expectations from the new government in response to unemployment, poverty and low government salaries.

Population

The population of Lesotho was approximately 2 million people in 2012. World Bank population estimates are slightly higher than those of the Bureau of Statistics of Lesotho. Lesotho is divided into ten districts, and more than a quarter of the population resides Maseru District, where the capital, Maseru is located. Urbanization is steadily increasing, from 22.5 percent² in 2006 to 27 percent³ in 2010. The annual rate of urbanization is estimated at 3.4 percent⁴. Unemployment rates in urban areas are estimated at 24 percent in (Labor Survey 2008), and about 72 percent of those employed are engaged informally and paid in-kind⁵. However, more than 70 percent of the population still lives in the rural areas, relying on agriculture (crops and livestock) for their livelihoods.

Macro-economy

With a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of USD 1,004⁶, Lesotho is considered a very poor country. The country has an open market economy that is closely linked to the South African economy. More recently between 2009/10 and 2010/11, changes to the revenue-sharing formula within the South Africa Customs Union (SACU) led to a major drop in Lesotho's shares, leading to a drop in SACU revenues of 65 percent⁷ (African Economic Outlook 2012). The South Africa Customs Union (SACU) which is an economic grouping that brings together South Africa and the small neighboring states of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland into an economic zone with duty-free trade and a common external tariff on imports from outside the zone. Since 1969, Lesotho has relied on SACU revenues to fund close to 60 percent of its national budget. An approximately 40 percent budget cut is a significant blow to Lesotho's capacity to deliver minimum services, let alone fight poverty or food insecurity. Private sector participation in the economy is relatively low.

¹ UNDP gives a figure of 2,193,800 million; World Bank – 2,066,000 million and African Development Bank – 2,200,000 million, BoS (2010) -- 1,902,707 million.

² BoS (2006)

³ CIA World FactBook at http://www.theodora.com/wfbcurrent/lesotho/lesotho_people.html

⁴ CIA World FactBook

⁵ National Labor Survey (2008)

⁶ World Bank 2010

Lesotho's economy is progressively recovering from the impact of the global economic crisis. The African Economic Outlook (2012) anticipates that over the medium term, economic growth will remain moderate (2-5 percent), underpinned by the good performance of the mining sector and investment in the Phase II of Lesotho Highland project. However, poverty, which is closely linked to inequality and unemployment, especially among the youth, and HIV/AIDS will remain the main challenge to the country's economic growth.

Human development in Lesotho

Lesotho is classified as a low human development nation⁸. Lesotho's position in the UNDP human development index (HDI) ranking fell from 127 out of 174 countries in 1998 to 160 out of 187 countries in 2011. Life expectancy dropped from 56 years in 1997, to 48.2 years in 2011. Unemployment rates are high, estimated at 25.3 percent⁹ (see also Annex 1: Lesotho Development Indicators).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP's) human development reports indicate that Lesotho's human development indicators have worsened rapidly since the 1990s. In the 1990s, almost half of Lesotho's gross national product (GNP) came from a combination of cash remittances from migrant mine workers in South Africa, the local textile industry, and foreign transfers for investments in the Highlands Water Project which exports water to Gauteng province in South Africa. In recent years, the contribution from the three sources of income has fallen by half. Unskilled labor demand in the mines in South Africa is down over the past 3-5 years mainly due to economic slowdown in the mining sector from the global financial crisis, technological innovations in mining requiring less unskilled and more skilled labor, and South African policy requiring companies to employ locals. As a result, remittances have declined significantly since the 1990s. The number of male migrant workers in the mines declined from about one million in 1990 to 460,000 in 2006¹⁰ due to changes in mining technology (decreased demand for unskilled workers, increased demand for skilled workers). The expiry of trade agreements such as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2005, coupled with reduced demand for garments in the US market following the credit crunch beginning in 2007, led to further job losses in Lesotho's formerly vibrant textile industry. Foreign investment also fell during the global financial crisis (though this is slowly recovering with the start of the new phase of the Highlands Water Project). Also, mortality associated with HIV- and resulting AIDS-related deaths¹¹ is very high¹². Lesotho has an HIV prevalence rate of about 23 percent¹³ amongst the adult population (ages 15-49 years).

Average incomes have also fallen. Around 59 percent¹⁴ of

the population live below the international poverty line¹⁵ of \$1.25 (purchasing power parity terms) per day and over 40 percent¹⁶ live below the national poverty line (set at about LSL 150 (USD 18) per person per month at 2002/2003 prices)¹⁷. In 2006, 55 percent of the populations in the rural and peri-urban areas were estimated to be poor, with 49.3 percent being ultra poor¹⁸.

Table I. Main Characteristics of Agro-Ecological Zones in Lesotho.

Lowlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the west, characterized by relatively high rainfall. Allows cultivation of maize, sorghum, beans, winter wheat and vegetables. The soil is susceptible to erosion especially by wind or flowing water and a cause of concern given the high population density.
Foothills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the center, characterized by lower rainfall compared to the lowland zone. The loose sandy topsoil is easily eroded by wind and rainwater due to over-grazing. Maize, sorghum and summer peas grow in this zone
Senqu River Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a steep valley along Senqu River which runs from east to west across the country. It is characterized by low rainfall, especially in the south-western parts and has rich soils along the banks of the river. Winter wheat and maize grow in this area.
Mountain Range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is characterized by very cold winters. It constitutes the largest portion of the country, covering about 59% of the total land. Wheat and peas grow in this area. Communication facilities are very poor in the mountain areas.

⁸ UNDP (November 2011)

⁹ Lesotho Integrated Labour Force Survey (2008)

¹⁰ Trademark Southern Africa (2012)

¹¹ UNDP Annual Human Development Reports

¹² The population projections for 2012 to 2026 are presented in Annex 2, while the population distribution by district and projections based on the enumerated population in 2006 are shown in Annex 3.

¹³ UNFPA (2011)

¹⁴ UNDP (2011)

¹⁵ This is a reference poverty line calculated by World Bank for the purposes of global comparison of countries and measures the proportion of the population in a country living below \$1.25 per day

¹⁶ UNDP (2011)

¹⁷ BoS 2002/03 Household Budget Survey (2012)

¹⁸ Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC)

A comprehensive mapping and analysis of poverty in Lesotho carried out by Sechaba consultants under a DFID project in the early 1990s highlighted several key dimensions of poverty, including:

- The incidence of poverty is unequally spread across Lesotho - it is greatest in the central Mountains, followed by the more remote areas of the Foothills and Lowlands;
- Poverty is least in the urban areas, but appeared to be increasing in line with population growth rates
- Female-headed households are more prone to poverty than male-headed households
- Without major improvements in agricultural productivity, per capita agricultural production will continue to decline
- Retrenchment from the mines in South Africa seemed set to continue, leaving an impoverished rural population with reduced access to its traditional coping strategy of migrant labor.

These issues have continued to shape livelihoods and have brought about marked changes in the food security context of the country. Whilst people were, in general, able to bounce back from the drought induced acute food insecurity in 1991/92, resilience more than two decades later is much reduced and vulnerability to food insecurity is increasing. The most affected are the poor and very poor households who rely on subsistence agriculture.

Agro-ecology and livelihoods

The country is divided into four agro-ecological zones (Table 1).

The Household Economy Approach (HEA) Livelihoods zoning was first conducted in 2002/03 and last updated (though not validated) in 2011 (Figure 2).¹⁹ The livelihood zones follow more or less the boundaries of the agro-ecological zones. The main difference is that the Lowlands have been subdivided into the northern Lowlands and the southern Lowlands. 70 percent of the population resides in these two zones, with 57 percent in the lowlands, and 13 percent in the Foothills (Annex 4). A sixth livelihood zone, not shown on the map, is peri-urban and covers the peri-urban areas close to main urban areas, stretching from Butha Buthe to Mohale's Hoek.

Climate and meteorology

Temperatures vary dramatically with each season, rising up to 35°C in the midst of summer (November/December) and dropping as low as -12.5 C in the mountain areas in winter (June/July).

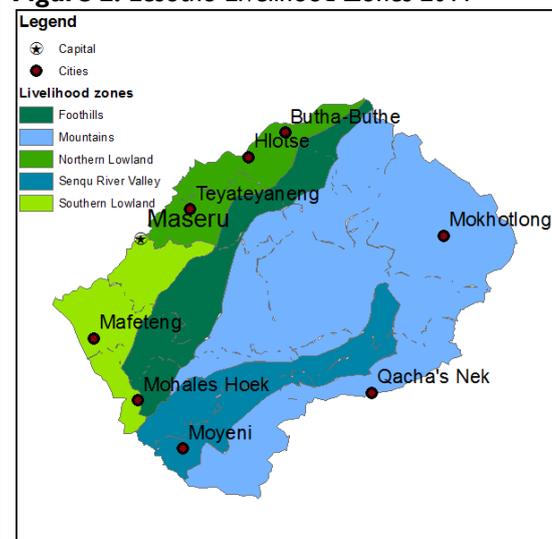
The average rainfall in Lesotho is about 753 mm, 80 percent of which falls during the main growing season between October and March. Rainfall data is collected by the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) from 12 stations every dekad. 1990 – 2010 rainfall data accessed from USGS/FEWS NET shows significant rainfall variability over the years; low rainfall years tend to correspond to years of poor harvest (see Figure 4 below). USGS data is available only up to 2010.

NATIONAL FOOD AVAILABILITY

Lesotho's main food crops produced include maize, sorghum (for food and beer), and wheat. Maize and sorghum are grown throughout the country in summer (October to April), with the most productive areas in the Lowlands and Foothills. Winter wheat is common in the Mountains (May to September) (Figure 3).

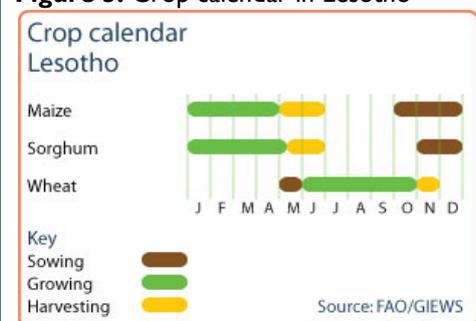
Currently, over 70 percent of the national cereal requirements are imported, mainly from South Africa, and the majority of the population (the poor) purchases more than half of their food in a typical year. As a result, the national strategy for food security is emphasizes ensuring adequate food imports to cover the deficit, measures to increase household incomes to guarantee their access to food, and improvement of agricultural production (Annex 5).

Figure 2. Lesotho Livelihood Zones 2011



Source: LVAC, 2011

Figure 3. Crop calendar in Lesotho



Source: FAO/GIEWS

¹⁹ Updating of the 2006 rural livelihood baselines by the LVAC began in April/May 2011 with facilitation of the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Program (RVAA). A draft report (produced in January 2012) is still under review and still requires verification.

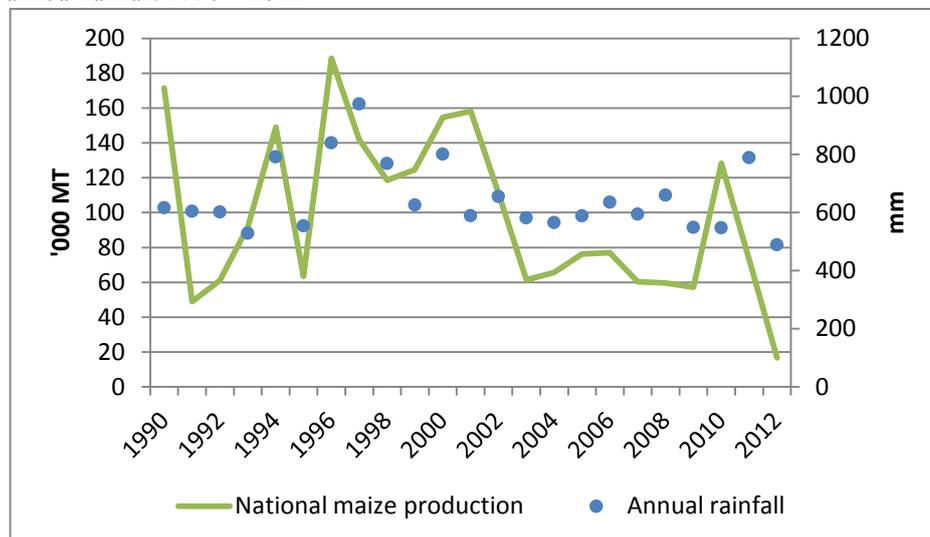
Cereal production trends

National agricultural production and productivity is significantly lower now than it was in the late 1970s with a particularly marked decline since the early 2000s (Figure 4). The literature review reveals that the decline in cereal production is more significant in the formerly high-production areas of Lowlands and Foothills zones of Butha-Buthe, Leribe, Berea and Maseru districts (FAO/WFP, 2005; FAO/WFP, 2007).

There are many reasons for declining production in the agriculture sector, particularly for maize. Maize seed and fertilizer in Lesotho are all imported from South Africa, and therefore significantly more costly locally than in South Africa. This raises relative production costs compared to cheaper South African maize imports. This has been observed as a disincentive to local production, contributing to the decline in production. There are also concerns that the loss of manpower due to HIV/AIDS; population pressure on land size with

ineffective agricultural extension to manage environmental constraints; constraints to input access; and the impact of livestock theft on the availability of draught power also play a role in declining agricultural production, though data demonstrating correlation and significant changes over time are limited and inconclusive.

Figure 4. National maize production compared with estimated average national annual rainfall: 1990 – 2012



Source: BoS, UDel_AirT_ and NOAA/FEWS NET

National agricultural incentive programming

To boost productivity, the government is emphasizing commercializing production and encouraging block farming, a system that merges smaller land holdings to facilitate mechanization and increased economies of scale. Efforts are also underway to reform the land tenure system, which does not give guarantee of ownership to the majority of subsistence farmers. The government has also supported subsidies on agricultural inputs since 2001/02, when a food-security emergency was declared due to poor agricultural production. However, budget allocations reviewed for 2011/12 and 2012/13 fiscal years had no allocations for subsidies (see discussion of budget cuts due to changes in SACU revenue sharing). For the 2012/13 fiscal year, the focus is on promoting household food security through promotion of conservation farming, community gardens, farm-level processing and other traditional systems. The agriculture and food security sector was allocated 1.15 percent of total budget to support the rehabilitation of existing irrigation schemes, farmer training centers, woolsheds and the recapitalization of the Lesotho Agricultural College (Lesotho Budget Speech for 2012/13 Fiscal Year). The desk review has not revealed any significant impacts on production and livelihoods enhancement through these programs.

Note that the estimated 2012 cereal harvest of about 29,000 MT is the worst on record. It is 71 percent below last year's poor harvest of 103,060 MT, and 51 percent below the 1991 drought-affected harvest of 48,918 MT, which had, at that time, been the worst since 1961.

Structure of the maize sector

It is important to note that in terms of purchases, most households prefer milled products as opposed to grain. Consequently, there are few outlets to trade in maize grain. Most producers selling grain from local production tend to sell to neighbors, occasionally millers, and also a few consumers that prefer non-refined grains that are milled in hammer mills. Reports indicate that some locally produced food commodities move from the most productive zones (the Lowlands and Foothills) to the deficit areas and from major urban centers to net-deficit areas. Maize grain tends to be locally produced and tends to be comparatively more expensive than maize meal. As a result, the vast majority of maize in Lesotho is imported.

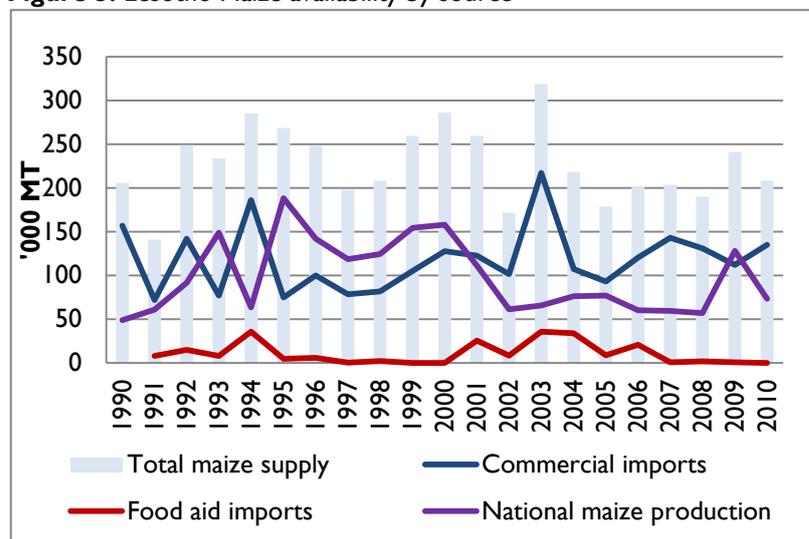
Lesotho's economy is open, and food markets are liberalized. The vast majority of commodity and retail food purchases are formal. Retail purchases are mainly from retail outlets in the urban centers, but also scattered all over the country

to cater for the rural populations/ villages as necessary. An analysis of this data suggests significant price variations between deficit and remote areas and urban and surplus areas, indicating high transportation costs to remote areas.

Maize imports are duty free.²⁰ The country imports an estimated 70 percent of its cereal requirements, mostly maize from the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Maize import consignments to Lesotho originate from the neighboring high maize production areas of RSA situated in the Free State, which lie to the west and north of Lesotho's Lowlands. As most maize grain is sourced from South Africa, Lesotho's prices are heavily influenced by prevailing prices on the South African Futures Exchange (SAFEX), where spot prices are determined.

The grain import industry is dominated by large commercial millers that import maize grain for milling into flour and subsequent resale to wholesale and retail outlets throughout the country. Over 90 percent of the grain milled is imported. The two largest millers, Lesotho Flour Mills and Lesotho Milling Company control 40 and 30 percent respectively of the industry. Maize grain is brought in by the millers (mostly through the Maseru border point) and taken directly to mills which are located in the Capital, Maseru. Maize import price monitoring is possible at the wholesale stores within Maseru; distribution from the central milling facilities to the outlying areas, especially in the mountains, is constrained by transport infrastructure which is not well developed.

Figure 5. Lesotho Maize availability by source



Source: BoS, Lesotho NEWU/DMA

South African milled products are also imported into the country, mainly through the chain supermarkets operated by South African businesses in a number of SADC countries. The large milling companies have a significant influence in the determination of local grain prices because they are able to bring in all their requirements through imports, making it a buyer's market (a further disincentive to production).

However, the importance of rain-fed maize in the diet and the heavy dependence on cereal imports make the national food supply vulnerable to price shocks and climatic shocks in South Africa.

Sources of markets and trade data and information include:

- The BoS produces monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI) reports (www.bos.gov.ls). The raw data used to generate the food inflation indices can be accessed (with permission from BoS) and organized in a manner that enables monthly food price monitoring in the 10 districts. Contacts have been made with BoS and arrangements are being worked out to provide FEWS NET with this data. On review of data provided as an example, prices for the CPI are collected at markets in urban centers, and are then averaged for the district. This may not depict the situation in remote rural area food markets.
- Between 2008 and 2010, WFP was piloting market/prices monitoring and analysis, following the high food prices in 2008 and were producing a monthly report. This initiative however was suspended, and WFP is now getting its price data from the BoS CPI raw data.

No commodity trade flow maps currently exist.

²⁰ In the past, prior to the democratic government now in place in RSA, the smaller neighboring countries within the SACU were considered as a domestic market by RSA. As such, when calculating the RSA domestic requirement, the needs of these countries would be taken into consideration; there are reports of guaranteed import quotas for these markets. However, since 1994, and the liberalization of the grain industry in South Africa, these countries are no longer included in the calculations for the RSA requirement. Their import needs are, however, always within the capacity of RSA (which produces about 50 percent of the region's maize) to fully supply. Contrary to prior agreements, in 2012, there are no special guarantees on the RSA imports, and Lesotho is free to import its grain from any international sources that it identifies.

Total cereal availability

Figure 5 shows that commercial maize imports rise in response to production deficits. Note that the rise in maize imports has not always matched the magnitude of the drop in production. Also, there is a persistent gap between estimated cereal requirements and total cereal availability that implies either an over-estimate of requirements or an under-estimate of production or both.

LIVESTOCK

If only 10 percent of the land in Lesotho is suitable for cropping, about two-thirds of the land is suitable for grazing. In 2004/05 Lesotho estimated the number of animals in the country at 1 million sheep, 680,000 cattle, and 680,000 goats. Horses are also important assets for transportation of goods and people. The Mountains livelihood zone has the highest concentration of livestock, almost entirely sheep and goats.

Livestock is critical to local livelihoods and to Lesotho's economy. In 2003/04 and 2004/05 Lesotho produced 60-80 percent of the milk it consumed. In addition, wool and mohair are key exports for the country.²¹ Finally, though most meat in Lesotho is imported, mutton consumption in Lesotho is the highest in the region, and local production fills a significant portion of that demand. As a result it is not a surprise that though national maize production has been declining in recent years, the national livestock production index has been steadily increasing (Figure 6).

Key constraints in the livestock sector include: over-grazing or poor rangeland management, low levels of education among herders leading to poor hygiene and high rates of disease among animals, and poor market infrastructure for meat production.

FOOD SECURITY

Food consumption

The diet in Lesotho is mainly based on cereals - predominantly maize (75%) with some marginal consumption of wheat and sorghum. Rice is an important component in the diet of the urban middle-income group. These staples are complemented by potatoes and fruits and vegetables, mainly sourced from South Africa.

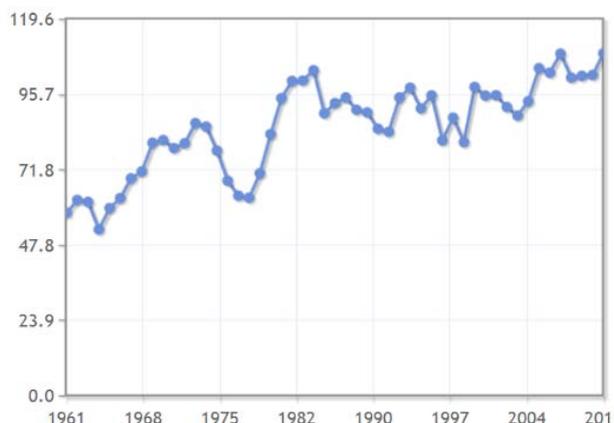
Care should be taken not to assume that a structural decline in national cereal production is necessarily associated with declining food consumption. In fact, FAOSTAT asserts that since the late 1970s, national dietary energy supply (DES) has been relatively steady. In 2003-2005, DES was 2,425 kcal per capita/day, more than sufficient to meet the population energy requirements of 2,137 kcal per capita/day. The share of carbohydrates in the total DES is high compared to needs, estimated at 77 percent and that of protein is 11 percent. The share of lipids is low compared to needs at 12 percent (FAO, Faostat; WHO/FAO, 2003).

Food access

Agricultural production potential has fallen significantly since the 1980s. In recent years, many of the poorer households have only managed to harvest cereals enough to cover requirements for three months, making purchases the largest component of food sources for all households in all livelihood zones. Therefore, incomes and food prices are critical determinants of access to food. Food access is usually lowest in October/November, when cereal prices are high and income-generating opportunities in the agricultural sector are relatively low. Prices tend to peak from the beginning of the lean season, October/November to the period when green harvest begins in February/March.

Source: 2011 LVAC Annual Assessment Report

Figure 6. Livestock production index



Note: The livestock production index includes meat and milk from all sources, dairy products such as cheese, and eggs, honey, raw silk, wool, and hides and skins.

Source: FAO/[index mundi](http://index.mundi)

²¹ Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.bos.gov.ls/>

Table 2: Wealth Groups Demographics in Lesotho Livelihood Zones and Characteristics of Very Poor and Poor Households

Foot Hills Livelihood Zone		Characteristics of very poor and poor households
Total Population	235,106	
% Very Poor	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own crop production contributes about 20 – 25% of annual food energy consumed • Agricultural labor contributes about 15 – 30% of annual food energy consumed • Food purchase contributes about 35 – 45% of annual food energy consumed • Casual labor contributes about 30 – 45% of the annual cash income • Remittances contribute about 20 – 40% of annual cash income
% Poor	36	
% Middle	29	
% Better off	11	
Mountains Livelihood Zone		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own crop production contributes about 10- 20% of annual food energy consumed • Agricultural labor contributes about 35 -40% of annual food energy consumed • Food purchase contributes about 20 – 25% of annual food energy consumed • Casual labor contributes about 15 -20% of the annual cash income • Domestic labor contributes about 35 – 40% of annual cash income
Total Population	417,895	
% Very Poor	15	
% Poor	39	
% Middle	31	
% Better off	15	
Northern Lowlands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own crop production contributes about 42% of annual food energy consumed • Agricultural labor contributes about 22% of annual food energy consumed • Food purchase contributes about 16% of annual food energy consumed • Casual labor contributes about 40 -60% of the annual cash income; labor opportunities are usually severely constrained in times of poor agricultural production.
Total Population	430,658	
% Very Poor	18	
% Poor	40	
% Middle	28	
% Better off	14	
Southern Lowlands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own crop production contributes about 20 - 35% of annual food energy consumed • Agricultural labor contributes about 10 - 15% of annual food energy consumed • Food purchase contributes about 20 – 30% of annual food energy consumed • Casual labor contributes about 15 - 20% of the annual cash income • Self-employment including brewing contributes 20 -30% of annual cash income. • Households may increase sale of goats in a bad year
Total Population	597,175	
% Very Poor	18	
% Poor	34	
% Middle	31	
% Better off	17	
Senqu River Valley		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own crop production contributes about 15 - 20% of annual food energy consumed • Agricultural labor contributes about 15 - 20% of annual food energy consumed • Food purchase contributes about 25 – 30% of annual food energy consumed • Casual labor contributes about 15 - 25% of the annual cash income • Piglet and sheep sales contribute 0 -30% of annual cash income. • Households may increase sale of pigs and sheep in a bad year.
Total Population	122,680	
% Very Poor	26	
% Poor	33	
% Middle	26	
% Better off	15	

The chronic and acute decline in local agricultural production is adversely affecting the poor and very poor households because agricultural labor (as indicated through the profiling) plays a critical role in the livelihoods of these households, both as a source of food and income.

Household coping strategies

During times of low food access, poor households in all livelihood zones first increase the search for casual labor for food and eat lower-cost, less-preferred foods. During recent crisis years, the following coping strategies have been observed: gathering unusual amounts of wild foods, sending household members to beg, skipping entire days without eating, and harvesting immature crops. Households may also prioritize food expenditure over expenditure on other basic needs such as health and education.

NUTRITION TRENDS

The national prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) was 3.8 percent in 2009. The rate of chronic malnutrition (stunting) was approximately 40 percent in 2007 and 2009. A nutrition profiling for Lesotho done by FAO's Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department in 2010 identified key issues related to health and nutrition as summarized below:

- Lesotho is undergoing a nutrition transition, where among adult women, the prevalence of overweight and obesity is very high in urban areas while under-nutrition persists in rural areas, especially among young women;
- Breastfeeding is a common practice, but only about a third of children under 6 months are exclusively breastfed;
- Complementary foods are often introduced too early or too late and are insufficiently diversified;
- Inadequate infant and young child feeding practices, obstacles to food access, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and low access to health services are among the major causes of chronic malnutrition in young children.

Some health and nutrition indicators sourced on the UNICEF website are appended in Annex 6, and those from WHO in Annex 7. While data on health and nutrition is collected by BoS through the DHS, timeliness is a problem (in 2012

available survey data is from the 2009 DHS). Monthly admissions of acutely malnourished children may be available from the Ministry of Health.

RECENT FOOD SECURITY CRISES

The Lesotho vulnerability assessment and analysis (VAA) committee, which coordinates the VAA information system was established in 2001/02 at the height of the southern Africa regional food crisis. This was in order to fill an information need for data on levels, severity, and geographical location of the food insecure. Since then, there have been significant food security crises in Lesotho - in 2002/2003, 2004/2005, and 2007/2008, all of which resulted in emergency food security programs. The VAA estimated the number of food insecure people at almost a million in 2004/2005 consumption period (Figure 7).

*Food Assistance Patterns*²²

Food aid represents a relatively small proportion of total availability. In years of poor domestic cereal production, Government's policy is to bridge the gap that cannot be covered through commercial food imports through food assistance. The management of food aid flows is through the government's Disaster Management Authority, which also coordinates assessments to determine whether food assistance is needed and also recommends the amounts required.

In January 2006 WFP published a report providing an analytical review of food aid, food production and food markets in Lesotho. It found that in 2004, untargeted food aid flows of 74,000 MT (against a requirement of 43,000 MT) influenced the domestic cereal market negatively and provided a disincentive to production. Since the 2002-2007/08 peak assistance period, general and targeted food distributions have been declining. In recent years, WFP has re-oriented its assistance toward development assistance tools like school feeding and nutritional support.

An additional significant finding of the 2006 WFP study mentioned above was that food markets in Lesotho seemed to function reasonably well, and that food insecurity was more linked to inadequate access (lack of purchasing power) than to unavailability.

FOOD SECURITY INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Lesotho's Disaster Management Act (1997) established the National Disaster Management Authority (DMA) under the Prime Minister's Office. The DMA is responsible for providing food security early warning information, as well as for coordinating the disaster management roles of the Food Management Unit (FMU) and the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office (FNCO). As such, the DMA, through its institutions and partners, notably the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC), of which the DMA is the secretariat and the chair, produces and disseminates food security related information and products. The multi-stakeholder LVAC includes various ministries, UN agencies, and NGOs and supports the requirements of an effective and efficient food security information system through its annual assessment and report.

Figure 7. Food Insecurity Trends since 2002/03

Consumption year (1 April-31 March)	Numbers Food Insecure
2002/03	650,000
2003/04	270,000
2004/05	948,300
2005/06	548,800
2006/07	245,739
2007/08	553,000
2008/09	353,000
2009/10	450,000
2010/11	200,000
2011/12	514,000
Average 2007/08-2011/12	414,000

Source: LVAC

²² More insight into perceptions of impact of food aid in Lesotho could be obtained from a report published in 1998, 'Food dependency in Lesotho: Issues and policy implications in Development Southern Africa, Volume 15, Issue 2, 1998', which however cannot be accessed for free. The abstract can be accessed on <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03768359808440009>.

Table 5. Primary food security information products in Lesotho

Institution	Information	Periodicity
Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (coordinated under DMA)	1. Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis report	1. June/July
	2. LVAC report Update	2. Oct (and ad hoc as needed)
Early Warning Unit – Disaster management Authority	3. Early Warning Bulletin (Agro-meteorology, crop development, cereal balance sheet, emergency operations, wildfire, snow, flood)	3. Usually monthly
Disaster Management Authority/ LVAC	4. Community and Household Surveillance	4. October and March
Bureau of Statistics (BoS) - Ministry of Finance and Development Planning -	5. National Population Census	5. Once every 10 years (last census in 2006)
	6. National Agricultural Census	6. Once every 10 years, (last one was in 2009/10)
	7. Annual crop report	7. Annual, May
	8. Annual livestock report	8. Last released in 2008/09
Ministry of Health with BoS	9. Demographic Health Survey	9. Once every 5 years, last one produced in 2009
Lesotho Meteorology Services – Ministry of Natural Resources	10. Agrometeorology bulletins and reports	10. September to April, dekad/monthly
	11. Weekly Weather Brief	11. Weekly
Bureau of Statistics – Ministry of Finance and Development Planning -	12. Consumer Price Index Report	12. Monthly
Ministry of Health	13. Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) to include nutrition information	13. Quarterly

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ACRONYMS

AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
BCG	Bacille Calmette Guerin
BoS	Bureau of Statistics
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DFID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DMA	Disaster Management Authority
DMA	Disaster Management Authority
EC	European Commission
FANR	Food Agriculture and Natural Resources
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FMU	Food Management Unit
FNCO	Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIEWS	Global Information Early Warning System
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HepB	Hepatitis B
Hib	Hemophilic Influenza Type b
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus infection
IDP	Internally Displace Populations
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
LMS	Lesotho Meteorological Services
LSL	Lesotho Loti
LVAC	Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee
MT	Metric Tons
NEWU	National Early Warning Unit
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NOAA/OAR/ESRL PSD	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/ Earth System Research Laboratory/Physical Sciences Division
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
RFE	Rainfall estimates
RM	Remote Monitoring
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RVAA	Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis
SACU	Southern Africa Customs Union
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAFEX	South African Futures Exchange
SOFI	State of Food Insecurity
TB	Tuberculosis
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollars
USGS	United States Geological Survey
V. Poor	Very Poor
VAA	Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organizations