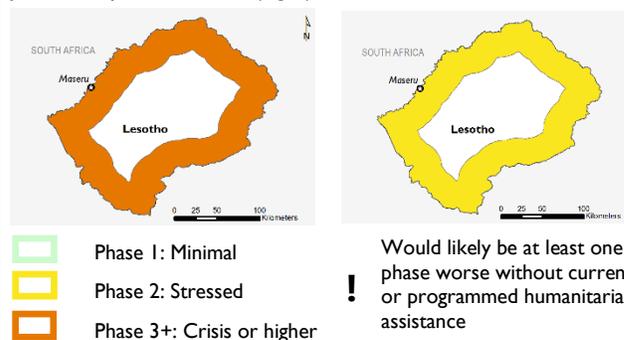


*Harvest likely to improve food access in Lesotho*

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Most of the maize crop has matured and is beginning to dry. Crop conditions are average to good improved by the good rains received in March. Although end of season conditions are favorable, there is a small risk of frost damage. The harvesting of dry maize is expected to begin in May.
- Most households in Lesotho are now consuming green foods indicating the lean season is coming to an end. In areas of concern poor households in Lesotho will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) until June, when food insecurity outcomes are expected to improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) after the harvest.
- To date, Lesotho has not recorded any confirmed cases of COVID-19 although testing has so far been limited. Following the lockdown in South Africa which resulted in the closure of South Africa/Lesotho border posts, the government of Lesotho closed schools and issued stay at home orders except for the purchase of food and essential household shopping or medical services between March 29 and May 5 2020. The South African lockdown is expected to negatively impact seasonal employment and remittances from South Africa. The COVID-19 control measures in Lesotho will primarily impact urban livelihood activities.
- Markets remain functional although the lockdown has resulted in a halt of many businesses as the government enforces measures to control COVID-19. So far, despite the closure of borders, movement of cargo is allowed which is facilitating food supplies and other essentials. Locally, markets are open only for essential services allowing the population to access food and other basics during the lockdown.

Projected food security outcomes, April to May 2020 (left) and June to September 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 more intensity in Leribe, Berea, Quthing and a few areas bordering Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delayed harvest</li> <li>• Restrictions on trade and population movement to prevent spread of COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced remittances due to the lock down in South Africa</li> <li>• Below-average harvest</li> </ul>

## PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2020

The consumption of green maize, beans and peas is improving food access to households that have been under prolonged periods of food insecurity due to an atypically extended lean season following a delayed start to the season. There is a chance that some very poor households may engage in early harvest and drying of maize due to acute food insecurity. Localized frost events have recently been observed in the highlands indicating that frost remains a slight risk to unharvested maize as it begins the dry down stage. Although production is likely to be below average, the harvest is expected to improve food security outcomes between May and August before households become more food insecure. Due to the well distributed rainfall since January, pastures and water for livestock are available and have greatly improved livestock body conditions.

Although no confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Lesotho testing has been limited. Neighboring South Africa has reported more than 4,500 confirmed cases.

On March 31, the government of Lesotho closed schools and issued stay at home orders except for the purchase of food and essential household goods, and access to medical services until May 5 2020. Efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Lesotho are primarily impacting urban livelihood activities since agriculture is considered an essential activity and labor for the ongoing season continues in rural areas.

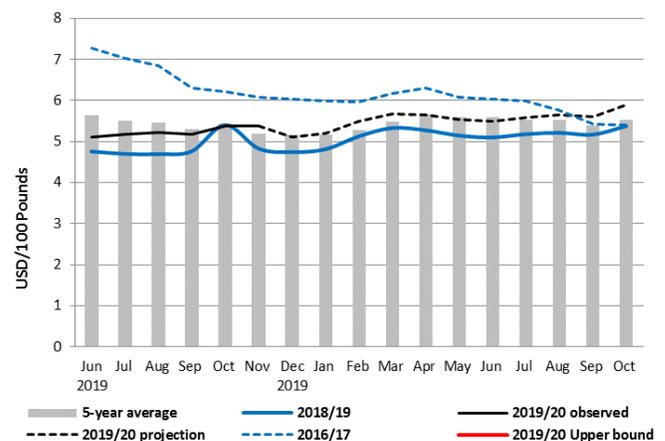
Although both Lesotho and South Africa closed their borders, the transport of goods and cargo is helping to ensure sufficient supplies of staple foods to markets in Lesotho. This, alongside stable fuel prices and transportation costs are helping to ensure limited impacts of COVID-19 control measures on staple food prices. Maize meal prices in Maseru remain near levels observed in February/March 2020 and near the five-year average. FEWS NET expects staple food prices to remain near current levels through September 2020 (Figure 1).

Local livelihood activities are likely to continue slowing down due to lockdown. The border closures and South Africa's lockdown will likely impact seasonal employment opportunities and remittances from South Africa. Approximately ninety-three thousand people were reported to have migrated back to Lesotho during the eve of the pronouncement of South Africa's lock down and border closures. These laborers, and the ones that remained in South Africa, are not expected to earn their typical income until the South African lockdown has been relaxed. Remittances, which contribute roughly 20-40 percent of poor household incomes and arrive every two to four months, are expected to decline in the coming three to six months. The [World Bank](#) estimates that remittance flows in Sub-Saharan Africa are expected to decline by 23.1 percent. In urban areas, where farming is not the main livelihood activity, very poor households are expected to be impacted by the national COVID-19 restrictions and rely on assistance from government, employers, and relatives/neighbors. The government has stated that it will pay the 45,000 textile workers a subsidy of \$430 monthly for three months along with paying business rentals in May and deferring business and employee taxes until September. Currently urban households are in None (IPC Phase 1) as they rely on their savings and assistance from government and relatives/neighbors but will move to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) if the national lockdown continues past May and savings and assistance diminishes.

Very poor and poor households in rural areas are expected to continue having normal access to harvest labor opportunities. However, the lockdown has delayed the start of the mohair shearing season. There is some concern that if the animals are not sheared by the end of May breeding may be impacted and there may be an increase in miscarriages as the animals would be unable to grow new hair in time for the progressing winter.

Areas of concern in Lesotho are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3), which will slowly decline in May as the dry harvest begins and a reliance on market purchases are reduced. From June to August, food security outcomes are expected to improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) but in September outcomes are expected to return to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) as food stocks from harvest diminish and the impact of the decline in remittances becomes more pronounced and begins impacting household purchasing power.

**Figure 1.** Integrated price projection for retail maize meal (LSL/kg), Maseru market



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.](#)