



# FAO IN LESOTHO COUNTRY BRIEF

September 2012

## HIGHLIGHTS

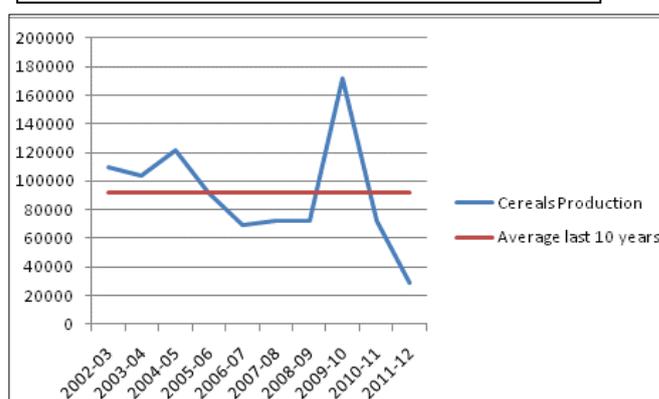
- Lesotho's food security has declined alarmingly for the second year in a row. The combined production of cereals in Lesotho represents only about 23 percent of the average harvest of the past 10 years - a decade already impacted by climate change-induced shocks.
- Preliminary Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) results indicate that 725 000 people are food insecure (some 40 percent of the population).
- A food insecurity crisis was declared on 9 August 2012 by the Right Honorable Prime Minister. The Government of Lesotho subsequently launched a Humanitarian Appeal on 13 September 2012 for USD 170 million, with a funding gap of USD 147 million.

## COUNTRY SITUATION OVERVIEW

Numbers at a glance		Source
<b>Total population</b>	1 876 633	2006 Population and Housing Census
<b>Population in need of food assistance</b>	725 000 people are food insecure (40% of the population)	2012 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee
<b>Rural population</b>	77%	2006 Population and Housing Census
<b>Inflation (April)</b>	7.2%	2012 World Bank
<b>GDP growth</b>	5.8% in 2011	2012 Ministry of Finance
<b>Contribution of agriculture to GDP</b>	8.6%	2012 African Development Bank

- Lesotho's food security has declined alarmingly for the second year in a row. The consecutive impact of drought and late rains in the 2011/12 cropping season adds to the increasingly vulnerable situation of rural Lesotho. Lowland areas that typically have higher production have also performed poorly this season. The combined production of cereals in Lesotho represents only about 23 percent of the average harvest of the past 10 years<sup>1</sup> – a decade already impacted by climate change-induced shocks.
- Preliminary LVAC results indicate that 725 000 people are food insecure (40 percent of the population).
- In addition to the poor harvest in 2010/11, a reduction in remittances and other non-agriculture sources of income (owing to reduced labour opportunities as a result of economic downturn) have depleted the Basotho's resilience. Increases in food prices and cost of living are intensifying the impact of the poor harvest. In Maseru, prices of maize meal in July 2012 had increase by 29 percent compared to one year earlier.
- In the Lesotho context, the following vulnerabilities also contribute to a decline in food security:
  - 39 percent of Basotho children under 5 were stunted in 2009;
  - approximately 8 600 children are acutely or severely malnourished and require therapeutic nutrition through inpatient care; and
  - the country has the world's third highest prevalence rate of HIV, with 23.5 percent of the population affected in 2009.
- Traditionally vulnerable areas of the country (Mountains and Senqu Valley) are characterized by the highest percentage of food-insecure households, when compared with total population.

**Cereal production per year in Lesotho**



<sup>1</sup> Indicated by data obtained from the Global Information and Early Warning System.

- The impact of this season's failed crop has also extended to the lowlands, with the breadbasket districts in the country (northern lowlands) presenting negligible production rates. This has increased the food-insecure population beyond previously recorded humanitarian crises in the country.

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## AGRICULTURE SITUATION OVERVIEW

- The three main food crops grown are: maize, wheat and sorghum. With on average 70–80 percent of total production, maize is the major cereal cultivated and preferred staple food, but not well suited to all the agro-ecological zones prevailing in Lesotho. Most maize is produced in the Lowlands (although planted all over the country), whereas wheat is mainly produced in the mountain areas.
- Agricultural production is hampered by:
  - Lack of arable land: the proportion of arable land in Lesotho has declined from 13 percent to below 10 percent, as a result of urban encroachment, soil erosion and other forms of environmental degradation. In spite of this, more than 70 percent of the population depends on less than 10 percent of arable land.
  - The unfavourable climate: increasingly untimely and irregular rainfalls, abnormal temperature patterns and drought frequently cause shocks to the agriculture sector. This is expected to worsen as a result of global climate change.
  - Overreliance on rainfed agriculture: 99 percent of the total cultivated land is rainfed. About 90 percent of farmers practice rainfed subsistence agriculture, which is vulnerable to drought and erratic rains/temperatures. Water resources need to be optimized, increasing land under irrigation in order to improve the output and reduce dependency on rain. While water export is one of the main sources of revenue generation, a large number of small communities suffer from recurrent droughts.
  - Lack of investment in agriculture: only 3.5 percent of total Government spending went to agriculture between 2005 and 2009.
  - Lack of market infrastructure.
  - Severe land degradation: including severe soil erosion caused by water runoff and overgrazing. Lesotho, with an area of approximately 44 000 ha covered by forest, experienced the loss of an average 200 ha of forest per year between 1990 and 2010. This has caused the exacerbation of soil erosion, carbon loss and biodiversity degradation.
  - Lack of agricultural diversity and poor crop husbandry methods.
  - Lack of access to yield enhancing technologies and inputs.
  - The HIV/AIDS pandemic: that is drastically reducing labour available for cultivation.
- Livestock contribution to GDP (4.1 percent) is almost double than crop (2.3 percent). Lack of investment for the development of strong commodity value chain and outbreaks of animal diseases are the major factors hampering this sector.




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## FAO'S EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN ACTION

### Coordination

The food security sector coordination structures have been recently strengthened with the establishment of the Food Security Sector Coordination Forum (FSSCF), co-chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation and secretary services provided by FAO-Lesotho. The objective of the FSSCF in Lesotho is to provide an action-oriented platform for bringing together national and international humanitarian and development partners to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of humanitarian and development assistance on the lives of food-insecure populations in Lesotho. In particular, it will help ensure coherent, integrated and coordinated responses that encompass sustainable food security and the preservation of natural resources, enhancing the resilience of communities in the short, medium and long terms.

FAO also provides secretary services to the Lesotho National Conservation Agriculture (CA) Task Force, chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. A national CA strategy is being developed, as well as CA curriculum in superior education. CA training materials for farmers are being developed by FAO in consultation with the Task Force.

## FAO Lesotho Emergency and Rehabilitation Unit (ERU) Programme

FAO ERU Lesotho has structured its programme around three main areas of intervention:

- **Sustainable production:** with an integrated range of climate change adapted and sustainable practices, such as CA, homestead gardening, integration of livestock and agriculture, watershed management and food preservation and nutrition.
- **Capacity development:** promotion of climate change adapted technologies among national, district and community stakeholders.
- **Information and analysis:** integrated analysis of food security challenges and vulnerabilities is enhanced and supports more effective evidence-based decision-making by relevant stakeholders.



### Current Operations

FAO is currently promoting the following:

- **Conservation Agriculture (CA):** 10 800 households are receiving agricultural inputs and training to cultivate 0.5 ha of maize and beans under CA. All extension services in project areas distributed over the ten districts of the country are being trained on CA. Adapted methodological materials for training farmers are also being developed.
- **Homestead gardening:** 10 800 households are receiving vegetable seeds and training to improve home gardening production, as well as awareness on nutrition and food use.
- **Seed production:** bean and potato seed producers are being supported in the lowlands. Former beneficiaries of seed production projects are regularly supplying maize and bean seeds in FAO projects.
- **Information:** technical assistance in the improvement of monitoring and evaluation, and surveillance of livestock and agriculture information is being provided to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

### Livestock

Livestock interventions are focusing on improving animal health and surveillance systems across the country. An increased emphasis is being given to the integration of livestock and sustainable agriculture mainly through rangeland management and fodder production.

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### PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- All emergency and rehabilitation actions undertaken by FAO-Lesotho include adaptation measures through the promotion of CA and diversification of crops/improvement of diet through homestead gardening.
- FAO-Lesotho has designed a programme of sustained support to vulnerable households for three years, with special emphasis on continuous technical backstopping and effective training to ensure adequate adoption of new technologies.

## FAO PROJECTS (ONGOING)

Project title	Project symbol	Objective(s)	Project start	Project end	Funding (USD)
Support to farming households affected by drought and late rains in 2011/12 summer cropping season	OSRO/LES/203/CHA	Emergency support provided to 6 500 vulnerable farming households (32 500 people) whose agriculture-based livelihoods were negatively affected by cumulative impact of disasters, particularly late onset of rains in 2011-12 and excessive rains in 2010-11.	26/08/10	25/02/2013	1 106 595
Agricultural support to households affected by heavy rains in Lesotho	OSRO/LES/202/EC	5 000 food insecure households in the selected flood areas have access to appropriate and diverse range of vegetable and winter inputs and training for improved production.	16/04/2012	31/12/2013	660 000
Emergency assistance to improve nutrition of food insecure households in the flood-affected areas of Lesotho	OSRO/LES/201/BEL	To improve the nutrition of food insecure households in the flood-affected areas of Berea, Thaba Tseka, Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek districts.	01/04/2012	31/01/2013	300 000
Strengthening rural livelihoods severely affected by climate change-induced drought in Lesotho	UNJP/LES/046/UNO	Strengthening rural livelihoods severely affected by climate change-induced drought in Lesotho (Mafeteng, Maseru and Mohale's Hoek).	01/03/2011	28/02/2013	633 226
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>					<b>2 699 821*</b>

*\*This is the total budget for the timeframe of the current projects and not the annual budget.*

## FAO PROJECTS (PIPELINE)

Project title	Objective(s)	Funding required (USD)
Support to farming households affected by drought and late rains in Lesotho (Phase 1: 2012-2013 summer cropping season)	Restore crop production capacity through sustainable techniques (conservation agriculture), diversify food production and improve nutritional quality intake (home gardening/nutrition) of 21 000 households in the most food-insecure districts of Lesotho (2012-2013).	4 200 000*
Support productive safety nets for vulnerable households and integrate into the broader social protection system	Improve nutritional quality intake of 4 000 households among the poorest groups as per national information system for social assistance through the provision of adapted food production means at the household level (i.e. home gardening production inputs), production technical knowledge and through nutritional awareness.	500 000
Support animal disease control and manage crop livestock interactions to improve livestock productivity while reducing land degradation	Prevent the loss of livestock from diseases exacerbated by reduction of access to forage and adequate complements; protect public health from the consumption of contaminated animals; promote the use of integration techniques to improve efficiencies between agriculture, livestock production and preservation of natural resources.	400 000
Technical support in disaster risk reduction mainstreaming and integration of natural resources management at policy and programmatic levels in Lesotho	Integrate in agriculture and food security policy and programmes disaster risk reduction mainstreamed actions and natural resources related aspects, including internal dissemination and awareness among extension staff.	200 000
Improvement and coordination of monitoring and evaluation systems of agriculture and natural resources management	Improve quality, timely and harmonized availability of data generated by MoAFS and MFLR to ensure coordinated analysis; and enhance the monitoring and evaluation capacity in order to track the impact of Ministry policies in the field.	200 000
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>5 500 000</b>

*\*The Central Emergency Response Fund has allocated up to USD 1 106 595 in funding for this project, leaving an unmet funding requirement of USD 3 093 405.*

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