



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# FAO LESOTHO COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

*January - June 2016*



This report compiles all information and communication activities undertaken by  
FAO Lesotho from January to June 2016





## Contents

I. Press articles .....	3
II. Press releases.....	10
III. Awareness raising and advocacy .....	17



## I. Press articles

### → Development partners call for close monitoring of the season

Published by LENA on 23 Feb 2016

Maseru, Feb 16 (LENA) -- As the grip of intense drought continues to expand and strengthen since the earliest stages of 2015-2016 agricultural season driven by one of the strongest El Niño events, over the last 50 years, there is a need for continued close monitoring of the season to inform decision-making on programming and targeting.

This is according to the statement issued by Development Partners organisations which said immediate additional assistance to help currently food-insecure households is needed and updating of contingency plans, intensification of advocacy and resource mobilisation to address the impact of an extended post-2016 harvest lean season amongst others.

The Joint statement was made by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, (FEWS NET) Famine Early Warning Systems Network, (JRC) - European Commission's Joint Research Centre, WFP - World Food Programme.

The statement continues to state that across large swathes of Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, and Madagascar, the current rainfall season has so far been the driest in the last 35 years.

It continues to state that Agricultural areas in northern Namibia and Southern Angola have also experienced high levels of water deficit.

It said much of the southern African sub-region has consequently experienced significant delays in planting and poor conditions for early crop development and pasture re-growth saying in many areas, planting has not been possible due to 30 to 50-day delays in the onset of seasonal rains resulting in widespread crop failure.

'Although there has been some relief since mid-January in certain areas, the window of opportunity for the successful planting of crops under rain-fed conditions is nearly closed'. 'Even assuming normal rainfall for the remainder of the season, crop water balance models indicate poor performance of maize over a widespread area,' it stated.

The combination of a poor 2014-2015 season, an extremely dry early season and forecasts for continuing hot and drier-than-average conditions through mid-2016, suggest a scenario of extensive, regional-scale crop failure.

It said South Africa has issued a preliminary forecast of maize production for the coming harvest of 7.4 million tonnes, a drop of 25 percent from the already poor production levels of last season and 36 percent below the previous five-year average.

These conditions follow a 2014-2015 agricultural season that was similarly characterized by hot, dry conditions and a 23 percent drop in regional cereal production.

The statement said this drop has increased the region's vulnerability due to the depletion of regional cereal stocks and higher-than-average food prices, and has substantially increased food insecurity saying even before the current crisis began, South African Development Community (SADC) the number of food-insecure people in the region not including South Africa, already stood at 14 million.

As of early February, FEWS NET estimates that, of this total, at least 2.5 million people are in Crisis and require urgent humanitarian assistance to protect livelihoods and household food consumption.

The numbers of the food insecure population are now increasing due to the current drought and high market prices and maize prices in South Africa and Malawi were recorded to be high in January.

Drought emergencies have been declared in most of South Africa's provinces as well as in Zimbabwe and Lesotho and in Lesotho Prime Minister declared the state of emergency in December 2015.

It said water authorities in Botswana, Swaziland, South Africa and Namibia are limiting water usage because of low water levels. Power outages have been occurring in Zambia and Zimbabwe as water levels at the Kariba Dam have become much lower than usual.

The statement concluded by saying over the coming year, humanitarian partners should prepare themselves for food insecurity levels and food insecure population numbers in southern Africa to be at their highest levels since the 2002-2003 food crisis.



→ **Together, agriculture and social protection can combat hunger and poverty**

Published by the Public Eye on 19 Feb 2016 (p. 15)

→ **FAO launches social protection, agriculture publication**

Published by LENA on 1 Mar 2016

Maseru, Mar 1 (LENA) -- Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) launches Social Protection and Agriculture publication called : 'Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty' on March 01.

Speaking during the launch, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Mrs. 'Mamosa Molapo said the government of Lesotho has proposed M421 million to support agriculture which is a sign that the government of Lesotho has the intention to subsidise agriculture.

She said that has been done after realising the decline in income generated from agricultural produce due to climatic conditions and soil infertility.

Mrs. Molapo said they, therefore, saw the need to help farmers to migrate from subsistence farming to commercial farming as that shall help reduce vulnerability.

She said the plan is to provide training to farmers to process foods and do home gardening to ensure they have enough to feed their families especially now that the country is faced with drought.

The Minister said social protection can play a critical role as it shall help farmers not end up having eaten seeds and withdrawing their children from school as they could not longer afford to pay for their fees.

According to the published report, social protection is emerging as a critical tool in the drive to eradicate hunger and reduce poverty yet, the vast majority of the world's rural poor, are to be covered by social protection programmes and their agricultural livelihoods require more support.

The reports said the existing evidence shows that combining social protection and agricultural interventions is an effective approach to overcome hunger and poverty.

The State of Food and Agriculture 2015 published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) states that in poor countries, social protection schemes such as cash transfers, school feeding and public works offer an economical way to provide vulnerable people with opportunities to move out of extreme poverty and hunger and to improve their children's health, education and life chances.

It said such programmes currently benefit 2.1 billion people in developing countries in various ways including keeping 150 million people out of extreme poverty.

The report said expanding such programmes in rural areas and linking them to inclusive agricultural growth policies and interventions would significantly reduce the number of poor people.

Based on an assessment it has been found that 534,502 people were at risk of food insecurity until June 2016 with the situation expected to worsen in the second half of the year and the beginning of 2017 once the summer crop forecast for 2016 is available.

Currently in Lesotho about 12,741 are receiving public assistance, 15,000 awarded with school bursaries, the social grants programme is reported to reached 1250 households and today it is reaching more than 30 000 households and over 65 000 children across the country.

The publication also talks about extreme poverty which is concentrated in rural areas, saying the rural poor largely depend on agriculture especially in sub-Saharan Africa where as much as 66 percent of the income of poor small family farmers comes from agriculture.

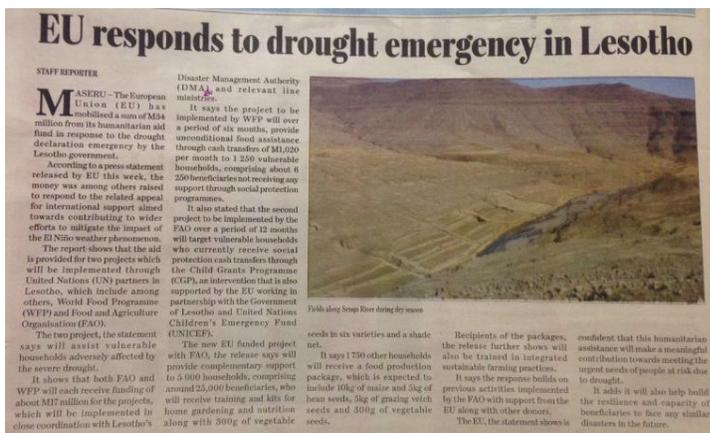
The publication says on one hand, agricultural programmes can increase access of small family farmers to natural resources, technology, insurance, markets and increase their employment opportunities, and ensure that sufficient food is available on the market and the stability of prices.

It is reported that Lesotho has already made some progress towards coordinated effort between agriculture and social protection as it piloted a model through 2013-2014 through which the Cash Grants Programme is complemented with a home gardening package to assist families in improving their food intake, dietary diversity and nutrition and it is now being up scaled in response to drought induced by El Nino. In addition, other approaches to combining social protection grants and community development components are being tested.

Ends

LENA/KLM

→ **EU mobilises two millions euros in response to the drought emergency in Lesotho**  
 Published by the Lesotho Times and The Post Newspapers on 17 Mar 2016 and the Public Eye and Informative Newspapers on 18 Mar 2016 (see below)



→ **Together, agriculture and social protection can combat hunger and poverty**  
 Published by the Public Eye on 18 Mar 2016



→ **China to donate M42.4 million food aid to Lesotho**

Published by the Informative Newspaper on 29 Mar 2016.

**ONLINE:** <http://www.informativenews.co.ls/index.php/news/851-china-to-donate-m42-4-million-food-aid-to-lesotho>



→ **BOS undertakes crop forecasting survey**

Published by LENA on 13 April 2016

Maseru, April 13 (LENA) --- The Bureau of Statistics (BOS) began a crop forecasting survey on Tuesday this week with the objective of compiling information relating to expected production of the main cereals in the country.

BOS stated in a press release that the crop forecasting survey is undertaken on three main cereals that include maize, sorghum and wheat. This kind of survey is conducted annually during the last two weeks of April.

The Bureau further said the survey will be undertaken in sampled farming households that are already in the selection for the 2015/16 agricultural production survey.

It said the survey will inform the government, the private sector and development partners about food security situation in advance to determine quantities and shortfall of cereals needed in the country for the following agricultural year.

Unlike the previous crop forecasting surveys, this year the BOS in collaboration with Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has introduced additional questions that are intended to assess sources of seeds and reliability of their supply and also get farmers opinion regarding ploughing in the next agricultural year given the current drought and the Elnino effect.

The Bureau further said the survey will also assess the use of organic and inorganic fertilisers by farmers. In as much as there are two field activities running concurrently in the country, the Population and Housing Census of 2016 and the crop forecasting survey, BOS assured the public that for the latter, only selected households will be enumerated by field personnel while the former affects all households in the country.

Ends  
LENA/LU/TL



→ **FAO receives m16 million to respond to drought emergency**

Published by LENA on 19 April 2016

Maseru, Apr 19 (LENA) -- Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) received additional funding of M16 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in response to the El Niño induced drought emergency.

This is according to the FAO Lesotho Communication and Coordination Assistant Ms. Elisabeth Tsehlo in an interview with LENA on Tuesday who said this follows the declaration of drought emergency by the Lesotho government in 2015.

She said following that FAO Lesotho developed a national response plan which will be partly funded by CERF and directly implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Social Development.

Ms. Tsehlo said FAO is now building on its previous Emergency and Resilience Programme in which it is targeting 105,000 new individuals countrywide, with priority given to the Southern Lowlands and the Senqu River Valley which are worst hit by the current drought.

It is reported that this emergency intervention s aimed at responding to the early effects of the El Niño-exacerbated drought in Lesotho with the focus on the complementarity between Social Protection and Agriculture, assisting 20,000 very vulnerable households enrolled in Social Protection programmes such as the Lesotho Child Grant Programme (CGP).

It is reported the families will receive a home gardening production kit and information materials in Sesotho on home gardening techniques and nutrition, which also include water-efficient practices.

Ms. Tsehlo said on other hand, additional 1,120 households whose livelihoods have been affected by the current drought will receive support in the form of an agricultural production package, including staple food, vegetable and cover crop seeds. Together with this package, beneficiaries will receive technical support on integrated sustainable farming.

Since 2012, FAO has supported the Government structures in reinforcing their capacities to effectively promote Climate Smart Agriculture.

This programme supports the promotion of climate change adaptive farming techniques with nutrition sensitivity and contributes to the resilience building of communities from the onset of the emergency response.

Currently, Lesotho is experiencing one of the worst droughts to have hit the region in thirty-five years, a situation which creates a huge threat to the agricultural sector and to food security across the country.

Ends

LENA/KLM/vmm

→ **FAO emphasizes on food production**

Published by LENA on 28 April 2016

Maseru, Apr 27 (LENA) -- With the current El Niño-induced drought affecting Basotho across the country, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Lesotho, through its Emergency programme, emphasizes on home food production to help very vulnerable families to better cope with the drought and become more resilient in the future.

According to a press release issued on Wednesday, it is important to improve the nutrition status of Basotho as children can only fully reap the benefits of schooling if they get all the nutrients they need; and Lesotho's emerging economy won't reach its full potential if workers are more often tired or sick because their diets are unbalanced.



It continued to state that moreover, adequate nutrition is also important both in the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS.

The release said on April 1, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed a Decade of Action on Nutrition from 2016 to 2025, highlighting the need to "eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide".

It said key nutrition indicators in Lesotho show a worrying situation, and had called for action to reverse the negative trends on stunting of children under five which is estimated at 33 percent, while 41 percent of adults are overweight and 17 percent are obese.

It is also reported that 27 percent of women and 51 percent of children under five are anaemic.

FAO Lesotho's Emergency Programme has been designed with a nutrition sensitive approach, aiming at improving the nutritional status of Basotho, assisting directly vulnerable active farmers and students in primary and secondary schools.

It is reported beneficiaries receive support in the form of agricultural and home gardening inputs and are also trained in Home Gardening practices such as keyhole and trench gardens as well as on nutrition topics.

Since 2012, 18,500 farming families received a home gardening kit comprising of a package of 600g of six varieties of vegetables carrots, beetroot, onions, English rape, Florida broad leaf and spinach.

The release said the 2016 Emergency programme is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), the Netherlands Government and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) of the United Nations, and implemented in close partnership with the Lesotho Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

Ends

LENA/KLM/ml

### → Drought spikes food prices in Lesotho

Published by the Public Eye Newspaper on 6 May 2016.

↳ Maseru - The El Niño induced drought, riding on the back of a depreciating Rand, has triggered a spike in the retail prices of cereal with dire consequences for poor households, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has said.

On 5 May 2016 FAO released a study on the impact of food prices increases on the Lesotho's poorest households. This study intended to inform emergency response actions in the context of the El Niño induced drought, which has triggered a spike in cereal prices in southern Africa and is compounded by the depreciation of the Rand.

Communication and Coordination Assistant at FAO Elisabeth Tsehlo wrote in a press release that the main staple food in Lesotho is maize and that households either produce or buy the maize they eat. She said due to El Niño, Lesotho is currently facing one of the worst droughts that have hit the region in the last 35 years. Most small-scale farmers rely exclusively on rain-fed agriculture and will therefore face crop failures.

She revealed that even larger scale farmers are affected since only a few planted crops. As a result, Tsehlo said many households will not be able to rely on their own production and will need to purchase most food on the market in what remains of 2016 and well into 2017.

Changes in food prices including imports, on which Lesotho is heavily reliant, are critical for Lesotho as they have serious implications for household food security, particularly among poor and vulnerable households.

"Food prices are increasing at a higher rate than other basic consumption items. Food is the main driver of inflation as it accounts for about 40 percent weight in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

"In the period between March 2015 and March 2016, maize meal prices in Maseru have increased by 36.9 percent. Most probably this increasing trend will continue in retail prices as increases in wholesale prices in South Africa which have reached record levels of 100 percent for yellow and white maize in December 2015 might add further inflationary pressure to retail prices," Tsehlo said.

She affirmed that the main cause of the price increase in Lesotho is the tightening of maize supply in both Lesotho and South Africa due to the failure in production brought about by the drought. Tsehlo further showed that the current depreciation of the Rand and expectations of reduced production in 2016 have put further inflationary pressure on food prices.

She said prices of wheat, the closest substitute for maize, are also increasing in both countries and for similar reasons. This rise in food prices is likely to reduce consumers' purchasing power and will certainly worsen the food security situation in the country.

According to FAO news release, the poorest and least endowed households will be most directly affected by the price shock. The report indicates that, in order to maintain household food consumption unchanged, every percentage increase in the price of cereals should be matched by a 0.4 percent increase in income. The findings also indicate that vegetables are an important food item in Lesotho. Poor households spend around 65 percent of their income on food and 20 percent of this amount on vegetables.



→ **FAO releases study on food price increase**

Published by LENA on 7 May 2016

Maseru, May 07 (LENA) --- The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) conducted a study on the impacts of the food price increases on the Lesotho's poorest households.

According to a press release, the study intends to inform emergency response actions in the context of El Nino induced drought, which has triggered a spike in cereal prices in Southern Africa and is compounded by a depreciation of the rand.

The main staple food in Lesotho is maize and the households either produce or buy the maize they eat. But due to the El Nino, Lesotho is currently facing one of the worst droughts that have hit the region in the last 35 years. The study said that most small scale farmers rely exclusively on rain for irrigation and will face crop failures. Even larger scale farmers are affected because only a few planted crops. It showed that as a result many households will not be able to rely on their own production and will need to purchase most food on the market in what remains of 2016 and well into 2017.

It said changes in food prices including imports on which Lesotho is highly reliant are critical for Lesotho as they have serious implications for households food security, particularly among the poor and vulnerable households.

Food prices are increasing at a higher rate than other basic consumption items.

Food is the main driver of inflation as it counts for about 40 percent weight in the Consumer Price Index.

The study showed that in the period between March 2015 and March 2016, maize meal prices in Maseru has increased by 36.9 percent. It further said this increasing trend will continue in retail prices as increased in wholesale prices in South Africa which has reached record levels of 100 percent for yellow and white maize in December 2015.

It indicated that the main cause of the price increase in Lesotho is the tightening of maize supply in both Lesotho and South Africa due to the failure in production brought about by the drought.

The study that the price increase will have different impacts on different socio-economic groups as they will be directly affected by the price shock.

The report suggests that in order to maintain household food consumption unchanged, every percentage increase in the price of cereals should be matched by a 0.4 percent increase in income.

Ends

LENA/LU/TL

→ **Key nutrition indicators in Lesotho worrying**

Published by Informative Newspaper on 10 May 2016

[http://www.informativenews.co.ls/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1106:key-nutrition-indicators-in-lesotho-worrying&catid=10&Itemid=107](http://www.informativenews.co.ls/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1106:key-nutrition-indicators-in-lesotho-worrying&catid=10&Itemid=107)

→ ***“Basotho ba tla fumana litheolelo tsa lijo-thollo” [“Basotho are to get reduced prices on whole grains”]***

Published by Informative Newspaper on 24 May 2016

Mohlomphehi Metsing o bile a hlalosa hape hore metsoalle ea Lesotho khoebong ese e ntse e phalla, ‘me Mokhatlo oa Lenane oa Lijo lefatše (WFP) o se o ile oa phallela ka M2,000 .00\$ e ileng ea sebelisoa ho thusa litereke tsa Mafeteng le Mohale’s Hoek tse ileng tsa hloauoa ele tsona tseo komello e ileng ea otlala ka matla... A tsoela pele ho hlalosa hore Mokhatlo oa Linaha tse Kopaneng tsa Europe (EU) ona o ile oa phallela ka M2,000.00 euros e ileng ea aroleloa mafapha a Mokhatlo oa Lijo oa Lefatše (FAO) le WFP ka ho lekana ‘me “FAO eona ke hona e ntseng e etsa meralo etla thusa Makala a Ntšetso pele ea Sechaba le la Temo le Kanetso ea Lijo.”



Programmes proliferate but the vast majority of rural poor with agricultural livelihoods remain uncovered by social protection and collaboration with agricultural interventions is limited



Fig 1 - M. Knowles Beneficiary of the Child Grants Programme and support to kitchen gardening and nutrition in Lesotho, next to her key hole gardens

**March 2016, Maseru** – Social protection is emerging as a critical tool in the drive to eradicate hunger and reduce poverty. Yet, the vast majority of the world's rural poor, are to be covered by social protection programmes and their agricultural livelihoods require more support. Existing evidence shows that combining social protection and agricultural interventions is an effective approach to overcoming hunger and poverty.

*The State of Food and Agriculture 2015* published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) finds that in poor countries, social protection schemes - such as cash transfers, school feeding and public works - offer an economical way to provide vulnerable people with opportunities to move out of extreme poverty and hunger and to improve their children's health, education and life chances.

Such programmes currently benefit 2.1 billion people in developing countries in various ways -- including keeping 150 million people out of extreme poverty.

Expanding such programmes in rural areas and linking them to inclusive agricultural growth policies and interventions would significantly reduce the number of poor people, the report says.

The report was released on the eve of [World Food Day](#) (16 October 2015), whose focus is on social protection's role in breaking the cycle

of rural poverty.

"It is urgent that we act to support the most vulnerable people in order to free the world of hunger," said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

"Social protection programmes allow households to access more food -- often by increasing what they grow themselves -- and also make their diets more diverse and healthier. These programmes can have positive impacts on infant and maternal nutrition, reduce child labor and raise school attendance, all of which increase productivity," he said.

### Breaking out of the hunger trap

Yet, despite global, regional and country level commitments to expand social protection coverage, these still need to be translated into concrete investments to ensure social protection effectively reaches the rural poor and vulnerable. Only about a third of the world's poorest people are covered by any form of social protection. Coverage rates dip even lower in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, regions with the highest incidence of extreme poverty, the report said. In Lesotho, for example, despite the important efforts made by the Government to expand coverage, further efforts are needed for better reaching the most vulnerable households. .

Without such assistance, many poor and vulnerable people will never have the opportunity to break out of the poverty trap -- in which hunger, illness and lack of education perpetuate poverty for future generations, according to the report.

Most countries -- even the poorest -- can afford some kind of social protection programme. FAO estimates that globally, some \$67 billion a year in income supplements, mostly provided by social protection programmes, would - along with other targeted pro-poor investments in agriculture -- allow for the eradication of hunger by 2030. That is less than 0.10 percent of world GDP.



### **Understanding social protection**

Currently, many extremely poor households are forced to adopt detrimental risk-coping strategies, such as going entire days without eating, reducing the number of meals per day, selling off productive assets, putting children to work, over-exploiting their small landholdings unsustainably, or engaging in badly paid casual jobs.

Yet basic social transfer schemes offer the poor an opportunity to improve their own productive potential and overcome the impact of shocks and food price increases. They also have positive spillover effects on local economies, increasing business opportunities, raising rural wages, and allowing the poorest to acquire or invest in assets.

In Lesotho, a rigorous evaluation of the Child Grants Programme (CGP) showed that this led to significant impacts in terms of education, food security and dietary diversity, and to an increase in the adoption of agricultural inputs. The wider community is also benefiting from this intervention through the increased demand for locally produced goods and services generated by the transfers. The evidence coming from these impact evaluations, led by FAO and UNICEF, are supporting the Government in gradually expanding the CGP to reach all poor households. In 2009, when it started the programme reached 1250 households and today it is reaching more than 30 000 households and over 65 000 children across the country.

At least 145 countries today provide one or more forms of social assistance, including unconditional cash transfers, meaning outright grants for eligible recipients, conditional cash transfers, usually linked to school attendance or health checkups and, public-works programs that offer guaranteed employment. Other forms include in-kind transfers, including food distribution and school feeding programs.

### **Cash means more than spending**

The report stresses that the concern that social protection reduces people's work effort is a myth. Social protection programmes generally only provide a small percentage of households' basic consumption needs and despite this recipients respond to social protection positively, including improving the nutrition and education of their children, relying more on producing their own food rather than on poorly paid wage work and also increasing their participation in existing networks such as funeral societies, a common form of risk management in many traditional communities.

### **Social protection and agriculture need to work together to support people in moving out of poverty**

Notwithstanding its proven effectiveness, the report stresses how social protection alone cannot sustainably eradicate hunger and rural poverty. It therefore underscores the importance of coordinating social protection efforts with other development sectors, especially with the agricultural one.

Why? Extreme poverty is concentrated in rural areas, and the rural poor largely depend on agriculture especially in sub-Saharan Africa where as much as 66% of the income of poor small family farmers comes from agriculture. Because they are poor, these small family farmers are the main target of social protection interventions.

On one hand, agricultural programmes can increase access of small family farmers to natural resources, technology, insurance, markets and increase their employment opportunities, and ensure that sufficient food is available on the market and the stability of prices. On the other hand, social protection, by alleviating liquidity constraints and providing certainty, can allow rural poor to invest thus engaging in more productive agricultural and economic activities.

Lesotho has already made some progress towards coordinated effort between agriculture and social protection: In 2013-2014 it piloted a model through which the CGP is complemented with a home gardening package to assist families in improving their food intake, dietary diversity and nutrition and it is now being up scaled in response to drought induced by El Nino. In addition, other approaches to combining social protection grants and community development components are being tested.

Strengthened coordination between these two development sectors represents a sustainable and concrete way to combat poverty and hunger.

→ **EU mobilises two millions euros in response to the drought emergency in Lesotho – Mar 2016**

Press release shared by the European Union Office in Lesotho, written in collaboration with FAO Lesotho



**PRESS RELEASE**

**EU mobilises two million euros in response to the drought emergency in Lesotho**

Maseru - In response to the declaration of a drought emergency by the Government of Lesotho and the related appeal for international support to contribute to wider efforts to mitigate the very serious impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon, the European Union has now mobilised two million euros (approx. 34 million maloti) from its humanitarian aid budget.

This EU funding is provided for two projects which will be implemented through our UN partners in Lesotho - the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). These two projects will help vulnerable households adversely affected by the severe drought.

*"The current El Niño weather phenomenon is the most severe on record. It is having devastating humanitarian consequences around the globe. Populations that are already vulnerable, as is the case in Southern Africa, are hit particularly hard. They are losing all means of subsistence they have. Today, with the help of our partners from the WFP and the FAO, the EU will help bring much needed food assistance to the people of Lesotho. Together, we will deliver emergency relief to thousands of people affected by the drought,"* said European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides.

The FAO and WFP will each receive funding of 1 million euro (approx. 17 million maloti) for the projects, which will be implemented in close coordination with Lesotho's Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and relevant line ministries.

The project to be implemented by the WFP will, over a period of six months, provide unconditional food assistance through cash transfers of LSL 1,020 per month to 1,250 vulnerable households, comprising around 6,250 beneficiaries, who are not receiving any support through social protection programmes.

The second project, to be implemented by the FAO over a period of 12 months, will target vulnerable households who currently receive social protection cash transfers through the Child Grants

Programme (CGP), an intervention that is also supported by the EU working in partnership with the Government of Lesotho and UNICEF. The new EU funded project with FAO will provide complementary support to 5,000 households, comprising around 25,000 beneficiaries, who will receive training and kits for home gardening and nutrition, including 300g of vegetable seeds (of six varieties) and a shade net. Another 1,750 households will receive a food production package which is expected to include 10kg of maize and 5kg of bean seeds, 5kg of grazing vetch seeds and 300g of vegetable seeds. Recipients of these packages will also be trained in integrated sustainable farming practices. This response builds on previous activities implemented by the FAO with support from the European Union and other donors.

The European Union is confident that this humanitarian assistance will make a meaningful contribution to meeting the urgent needs of people most at risk due to the drought and will also help build the resilience and capacity of beneficiaries to face any similar disasters in the future.

- For more information on sustainable farming practices in Lesotho: [www.lesotho-csa.com](http://www.lesotho-csa.com)
- For more information on EU humanitarian aid to Southern Africa: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/sub-saharan-africa/southern-africa\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/sub-saharan-africa/southern-africa_en)

- Press & Information Office, EU Delegation, Maseru; Telephone 22272200 -

→ **FAO receives additional funding of USD 1.1 million (M16million) from CERF in response to the El Niño induced drought emergency**

**Maseru, 18 April 2016** – Lesotho is experiencing one of the worst droughts to have hit the region in thirty-five years, a situation which creates a huge threat to the agricultural sector and to food security across the country.

Following the declaration of drought emergency by the Lesotho government on 22 December 2015, FAO Lesotho developed a national response plan which will be partly funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and directly implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD).

Building on its previous Emergency and Resilience Programme\*, FAO Lesotho targets 105,000 new individuals from all districts of the country, with priority given to the Southern Lowlands and the Senqu River Valley which are worst hit by the current drought.

"As part of the UN system, FAO stands ready to address the humanitarian needs of Basotho while contributing to build the resilience of communities through climate smart agriculture and sustainable land management", says Yves Klompenhouwer, FAO Representative in Lesotho. "The El Niño-induced drought is having a great impact across the country and Government, development partners and international community need to work hand in hand", he adds.



This emergency intervention aims at responding to the early effects of the El Niño-exacerbated drought in Lesotho. On one hand, focus will be on the complementarity between Social Protection and Agriculture, assisting 20,000 very vulnerable households enrolled in Social Protection programmes such as the Lesotho Child Grant Programme (CGP). These families will receive a home gardening production kit and information materials in Sesotho\* on home gardening techniques and nutrition, which also include water-efficient practices.

On the other hand, additional 1,120 households whose livelihoods have been affected by the current drought will receive support in the form of an agricultural production package, including staple food, vegetable and cover crop seeds. Together with this package, beneficiaries will receive technical support on integrated sustainable farming.

Since 2012, FAO has supported the Government structures in reinforcing their capacities to effectively promote Climate Smart Agriculture. This programme supports the promotion of climate change adaptive farming techniques with nutrition sensitivity and contributes to the resilience building of communities from the onset of the emergency response.

\*More information on the Emergency and Resilience Programme as well as all information material to be distributed to households is available at the following link [www.lesothocsa.com](http://www.lesothocsa.com)

### → **Proclamation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition from 2016 to 2025**

FAO Lesotho Emergency Programme in line with United Nations General Assembly resolution on Nutrition

**Maseru, 26 April 2016** – On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed a Decade of Action on Nutrition from 2016 to 2025, highlighting the need to “eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide”.

Key nutrition indicators in Lesotho show a worrying situation, calling for action to reverse the negative trends. Stunting of children under 5 (i.e. that they are too short for their age) is estimated at 33%\* while 41% of adults are overweighted and 17% are obese\*\*. Also, 27% of women and 51% of children under 5 are anemic\*.

FAO Lesotho’s Emergency Programme has been designed with a nutrition sensitive approach, aiming at improving the nutritional status of Basotho, assisting directly vulnerable active farmers and students in primary and secondary schools.

Beneficiaries receive support in the form of agricultural and home gardening inputs and are also trained in Home Gardening practices such as keyhole and trench gardens as well as on nutrition topics. The extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security play an important role in training the communities.

Since 2012, 18,500 farming families received a home gardening kit comprising of a package of 600g of six varieties of vegetables – carrots, beetroot, onions, English rape, Florida broad leaf and spinach – and four posters with extensive information on the following critical themes: 1. *Grow food at home*, 2. *Improve yields*, 3. *Diversify crops*, and 4. *Eating well*. On the back of these posters, the reader can find tips on how to grow fruits trees, ways to preserve fruits and vegetables, cooking recipes, etc (training materials available at [www.lesothocsa.com](http://www.lesothocsa.com)). New beneficiaries will now also receive a shade net to use in their home gardens.

With the current El Niño-induced drought affecting Basotho across the country, FAO Lesotho, through its Emergency programme, emphasizes on home food production to help very vulnerable families to better cope with the drought and become more resilient in the future.

The FAO Representative in Lesotho, Mr. Yves Klompenhouwer, highlights the need for Lesotho to improve the nutrition status of Basotho: “Children can only fully reap the benefits of schooling if they get all the nutrients they need; and Lesotho’s emerging economy won’t reach its full potential if workers are more often tired or sick because their diets are unbalanced. Moreover, adequate nutrition is also important both in the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. Our evaluations have shown that home gardening support is particularly suited for households supporting the sick.”

The 2016 Emergency programme is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), the Netherlands Government and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) of the United Nations, and implemented in close partnership with the Lesotho Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

\*Demographic and Health Survey 2014

\*\*2014 Nutrition Country Profile – Lesotho available at

[http://globalnutritionreport.org/files/2014/12/gnr14\\_cp\\_lesotho.pdf](http://globalnutritionreport.org/files/2014/12/gnr14_cp_lesotho.pdf)

For more information on the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, please see links below

2016 – [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.42](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.42)

2015 – <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/conference/c2015/documents/en/>

2014 – <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

All training materials on Home Gardening and Nutrition are available for download at the following link [www.lesothocsa.com](http://www.lesothocsa.com)



Fig 2 - Posters 1 & 4 of the Home Gardening & Nutrition training material

→ **Impact of food prices increase among the poorest**

Maseru, 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2016

By how much should the size of the Social Cash Transfer be increased to allow the poorest families to manage the food price shock?

A simulation analysis of the possible effects of the El Niño induced drought and the increasing food prices

**Highlights:**

- The drought induced by El Niño that is affecting southern Africa in 2015-2016 has triggered a rise in food prices – especially cereals – in the region.
- Poorer and less endowed households are the most affected by these price increases.
- Assuming that increases in total income will come only from existing social protection schemes such as the Child Grants Programme (CGP) and that all other sources of income remain stable, the amount of the CGP cash transfer will have to increase by 2 per cent for every percentage point increase in the price of cereals.

*In May 2016 the Food and Agriculture Organization has released a study on the impacts of food prices increases on the Lesotho's poorest households. This study intends to inform emergency response actions in the context of El Niño induced drought, which has triggered a spike in cereal prices in southern Africa and is compounded by a depreciation of the Rand.*

*The complete report can be accessed at:*

*[http://www.lesothocsa.com/uploads/5/2/0/9/52092147/report\\_lesotho\\_cereals\\_price\\_increase.pdf](http://www.lesothocsa.com/uploads/5/2/0/9/52092147/report_lesotho_cereals_price_increase.pdf)*

**Increases of food prices and serious impacts on food security**

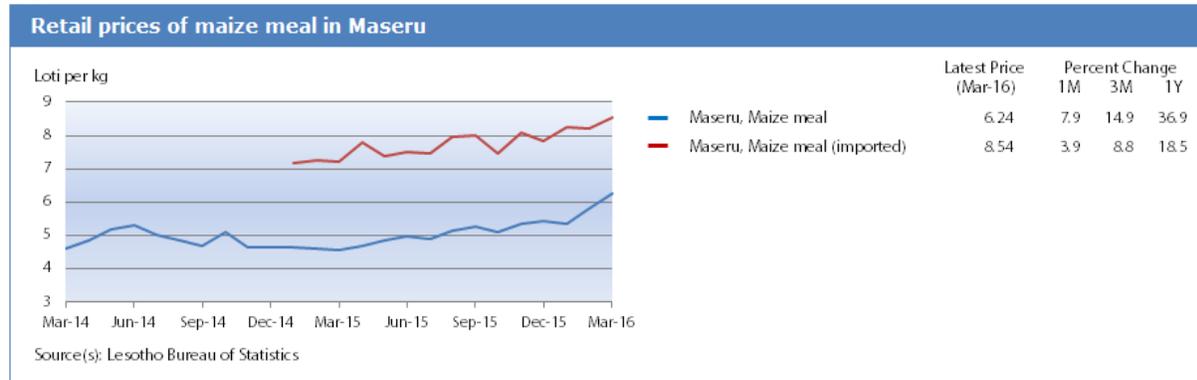
The main staple food in Lesotho is maize. Households either produce or buy the maize they eat. Due to El Niño, Lesotho is currently facing one of the worst droughts that have hit the region in the last 35 years. Most small scale farmers rely exclusively on rains for irrigation and will face crop failures. Even larger-scale farmers are affected –

only a few planted crops. As a consequence, many households will not be able to rely on their own production and will need to purchase most food on the market in what remains of 2016 and well into 2017. Changes in food prices – including imports, on which Lesotho is highly reliant – are critical for Lesotho as they have serious implications for household food security, particularly among poor and vulnerable households.

Food prices are increasing at a higher rate than other basic consumption items. Food is the main driver of inflation as it counts for about 40 percent weight in the CPI (Consumer Price Index).

In the period between March 2015 and March 2016, maize meal prices in Maseru have increased by 36.9 percent (see below Fig.1). Most probably this increasing trend will continue in retail prices as increases in wholesale prices in South Africa – which have reached record levels of 100 percent for yellow and white maize in December 2015 – might add further inflationary pressure to retail prices.

**Figure 1 Retail Prices of maize meal in Maseru**



The main cause of the price increase in Lesotho is the tightening of maize supply in both Lesotho and South Africa due to the failure in production brought about by the drought.

The current depreciation of the Rand and expectations of reduced production in 2016 have put further inflationary pressure on food prices. Prices of wheat, the closest substitute for maize, are also increasing in both countries and for similar reasons.

This rise in food prices is likely to reduce consumers’ purchasing power and will certainly worsen the food security situation in the country. The aim of the FAO report “How do food price increases affect households’ consumption in Lesotho” is to quantify the likely decrease in food consumption and identify which households will suffer most.

**Impact on the food security of Basotho poorest families**

The study shows that the price increase will have different impacts on different socio-economic groups. The poorest and least endowed households will be most directly affected by the price shock. The report indicates that, in order to maintain household food consumption unchanged, every percentage increase in the price of cereals should be matched by a 0.4 percent increase in income. If increases in total income will only come from social protection schemes, in order to allow the poor to satisfy their minimum food consumption needs, the amount of the CGP cash transfer – which represents 20% of the minimum subsistence basket of a family per month – will have to increase by 2 percent for every percentage point increase in the price of cereals. The increase registered thus far (December 2015) in the retail maize price was approximately 15 percent at the national level, which calls for an increase of almost 30 percent in the amount of the cash transfer.

The study also finds that vegetables are an important food item in Lesotho. Poor households spend around 65 percent of their income on food and 20 percent of this amount on vegetables. This confirms the adequacy of complementing cash transfers with home gardening kits.

The home production allows families to save on expenditures on vegetables and allocate more cash resources to the purchase of staple food and other commodities.

To mitigate the impact of the prevailing drought and food prices increases, FAO is supporting the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Social Development to complement the Child Grants Programme with home gardening and nutrition education.

FAO has received so far funds from the European Union (ECHO – European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Directorate) and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

More information on FAO Lesotho resilience building activities with its partners is available at: [www.lesothocsa.com](http://www.lesothocsa.com)



## → **Launch of Agriculture Social Protection complementarities in response to the drought**

FAO, UNICEF and the Government of Lesotho provide agriculture inputs and cash top-ups to vulnerable families affected by the increase of food prices.

**Maseru, 23 June 2016** – As Lesotho is facing the consequences of the El Niño induced drought, with 680,000 of its people in need of humanitarian assistance, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security have started implementing a new programme aiming at complementing the Child Grant Programme (CGP).

CGP beneficiaries receive additional cash, on top of the normal Child Grant, for two quarters and a package for Home Gardening production and nutrition which includes seeds of six varieties of vegetables, shade net and visual training materials in Sesotho. This response will assist vulnerable families to improve their food and nutrition security.

Last Monday 13th of June 2016, 990 families were assisted in Mapoteng Community Council (Berea district), in the presence of the Minister of Social Development, the Deputy Ministers of Agriculture and Food Security, the European Union's Head of Operations, the UNICEF Representative, the FAO Representative and the EU Programme Manager for Social Protection.

UN Agencies and the Government of Lesotho plan to assist a minimum of 23,000 families before October 2016 in all districts of Lesotho.

This intervention is based on the positive evaluation results of the pilot project Linking Food Security and Social Protection\* conducted in Leribe in 2013. This pilot showed the positive impact of combining cash grants with agricultural support – in the form of a home gardening and nutrition kit – to improve the poorest households' homestead food production capacity and diversify their diet.

Distribution events are also an opportunity for beneficiaries to receive guidance on home gardening by trained nutrition extension officers. Moreover, the same training materials have been used in 2014-2015 by 300 schools with formal training for 600 teachers, 250 principals, and 120 senior education officers and resource teachers, ensuring consistent messages are spread across the country.

This activity is funded jointly by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) and the United Nations Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF).

Achieving food security for all is at the heart of FAO's efforts, to make sure people have regular access to enough high quality food to lead active, healthy lives. More information is available at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

### **III. Awareness raising and advocacy**

#### → **Joint effort with all UN Agencies in Lesotho to raise awareness on Lesotho situation during El Niño event – From Feb 2016**

##### **February 2016**

###### **AL JAZEERA, 2 FEB**

Lesotho farmlands dry up as drought worsens

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/lesotho-farmlands-dry-drought-worsens-160202210750524.html>

###### **MIRAJNEWS, 3 FEB**

Lesotho farmlands dry up as drought worsens

<http://mirajnews.com/lesotho-farmlands-dry-drought-worsens/73479/>



**NEWS 24, 3 FEB**

Lesotho farmlands dry up as drought worsens

<http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/lesotho-farmlands-dry-up-as-drought-worsens-20160203>

**GHANANEWS, 3 FEB**

Lesotho farmlands dry up as drought worsens

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/worldNews/Lesotho-farmlands-dry-up-as-drought-worsens-412501>

**SABC, 5 FEB**

Lesotho makes plea for assistance as drought intensifies

<http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/26523f804b92eb8d9f7affb8aad9916/Lesotho-makes-plea-for-assistance-as-effects-of-drought-intensifies-20160502>

**TIMESLIVE, 5 FEB**

Lesotho drought action plan set in motion

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/thetimes/2016/02/05/Lesotho-drought-action-plan-set-in-motion>

**SHANGHAIDAILY.COM, 5 FEB**

Lesotho appeals for emergency aid as drought worsens

[http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article\\_xinhua.aspx?id=319142](http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=319142)

**STARAFRICA, 5 FEB**

Lesotho gov't sets aside US\$130m for drought relief

<http://en.starafrika.com/news/lesotho-govt-sets-aside-us130m-for-drought-relief.html>

**SABC, 12 FEB**

Basothos to receive drought relief cash grants

<http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/fa6347004ba7bf3790dbdeab7e8da8e1/Basothosundefinedtoundefinedrecieveundefineddroug>  
[htundefinedreliefundefinedcashundefinedgrants-20161202](http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/fa6347004ba7bf3790dbdeab7e8da8e1/Basothosundefinedtoundefinedrecieveundefineddroug)

**PHYS.ORG, 12 FEB**

Drought caused by El Nino threatening southern Africa: UN

<http://phys.org/news/2016-02-drought-el-nino-threatening-southern.html>

**NEWSGHANA, 12 FEB**

Drought worsening in Lesotho, urgent aid needed

<http://www.newsghana.com.gh/drought-worsening-in-lesotho-urgent-aid-needed/>

**CBS EVENING NEWS, 16 FEB**

El Niño drought leaves millions hungry in southern Africa – Focus on Lesotho

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/el-nino-drought-leaves-millions-hungry-in-southern-africa/>

**CHINA.ORG, 15 FEB**

Humanitarian organizations help drought-hit people in Lesotho

[http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off\\_the\\_Wire/2016-02/15/content\\_37792573.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2016-02/15/content_37792573.htm)

**THE SOUTHERN TIMES, 21 FEB**

Government disburses US\$130 million to counter drought

<http://southernafrican.news/2016/01/21/government-disburses-us130-million-to-counter-drought/>

**AGENCE DE PRESSE AFRICAINE, 23 FEB**

Lesotho: More than 500, 000 people at risk of food shortage: UN - See more at:

<http://www.apanews.net/news/en/article.php?id=846596>

LEMONDE.FR, FEB

Durement touché par El Nino, le Lesotho craint la famine

[http://mobile.lemonde.fr/planete/visuel/2016/02/28/durement-touche-par-el-nino-le-lesotho-craint-la-famine\\_4873171\\_3244.html?xtref=acc\\_dir](http://mobile.lemonde.fr/planete/visuel/2016/02/28/durement-touche-par-el-nino-le-lesotho-craint-la-famine_4873171_3244.html?xtref=acc_dir)

→ Contribution to ACAPS Report “El Nino in Southern Africa” – Feb 2016

<http://acaps.org/img/documents/e-el-nino-in-southern-africa---focus-on-lesotho-and-zimbabwe.pdf>



Home > Resources > Documents

Lesotho El Niño-induced Drought Briefing - February 2016

Tags: LESOTHO, SOUTHERN AFRICA, EL NIÑO, EL NIÑO 2015/16, CRISIS, FOOD CRISIS, DROUGHT, SITUATION REPORT, FOOD ASSISTANCE, CONDITIONAL CASH ASSISTANCE, AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK,



Mar 2016

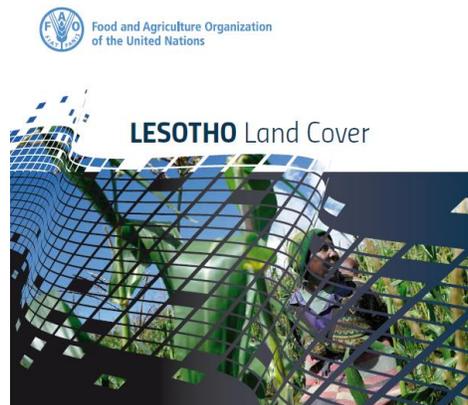
Highlights

- Over 534,000 people are at risk of food insecurity up to June 2016 (one in every four people in **Lesotho**) – the number is likely to go up beyond 725,000 people after June 2016.
- Over 377,000 people require immediate food or cash assistance to enable them to access food from the market as well as livelihood support to resuscitate own food production (revised figures will be available after June 2016 once crop forecast is available).
- The 2016 season is expected to be worse in all aspects than the last food insecurity crisis experienced in 2012 due to the current **El Niño events**. The planting season failed and food prices in the region are rising sharply due to poor production in **South Africa** and weak Rand-Loti exchange rate against USD.
- Rangeland and water availability for livestock is poor and livestock conditions have deteriorated with reported drought-related deaths in Senqu Valley and Lowlands mainly.
- FAO needs USD 7 million to assist **drought-affected people** through coordinated support to agriculture and livestock production, nutrition, social protection and resilience-building interventions. Of this, USD 1.1 million has already been pledged by **ECHO**.

Lesotho El Niño-induced Drought Briefing – February 2016

→ Land Cover Change – Mar 2016

A leaflet has been produced in collaboration with FAO HQ technical team to sensitize stakeholders in Lesotho as well as international partners about the on-going project.



**Justification**

Severe land degradation, including excessive soil erosion caused by water run-off, inappropriate agronomic practices and overgrazing is one the main contributors to declining food security in Lesotho. This situation is exacerbated by the impact of Climate Change and compounded by socioeconomic challenges to sustainable production, nutrition and food security. In order to take information on the status of national natural resources is scarce and fragmented, yet the need for evidence base decision making is critical in the production and sustainable exploitation of Lesotho's natural resources.

**Background**

The new National Land Cover database supported by FAO in Lesotho with financial assistance from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) is an important element of FAO Lesotho Strategy. Since 2012, FAO Lesotho, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MFS) and the Ministry of Forestry, Design and Soil Conservation (MFRSC) started implementing the Resilience Strategy, promoting adaptation to climate change, promotion of sustainable farming systems with emphasis on sustainable land management. The Resilience Strategy is implemented at national level and involves an increasing range of stakeholders with cooperation in schools and inclusion of local leaders. The Land Cover database has been implemented in partnership with the Government of Lesotho through CESDMA (Committee for Environment Data Management) chaired by the Bureau of Statistics.

**DESCRIPTION**

The land cover database covering the entire territory of Lesotho is developed through multi-spectral image fusion (or pan sharpening) technique using the following two sets of images:

- satellite imagery (Landsat 8) of lower spatial resolution (30 m) but higher spectral resolution (visible and infrared bands);
- the panchromatic band of aerial photography (ortho-photos 2014) of very high spatial resolution (0.5 m) but lower spectral resolution.

The result is a set of pan sharpened and mosaicked files (SD) from merging 1,237 aerial photographs covering the whole country.

A legend including relevant land cover classes was developed in country using the Land Cover Classification System (LCCS/CLC/CLM) methodology. Interpretation of the land cover database was undertaken to generate a national land cover object oriented vector database according to the legend with 1.5 m resolution in lowlands and 2 m resolution in highlands.

Additional spatial ancillary data has been provided by the institutions to enrich the dataset and foster coordination among spatial data users.

*Figure 1: (a) Landsat 8 composite image at 30 m resolution; (b) Aerial photograph dataset; (c) Pan-sharpened image at 0.5 m resolution.*



Project funded by:  
  
 and implemented by:  

 the Government of Lesotho and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).  
 FAO  
 Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
 00153 Roma, Italy  
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 www.fao.org

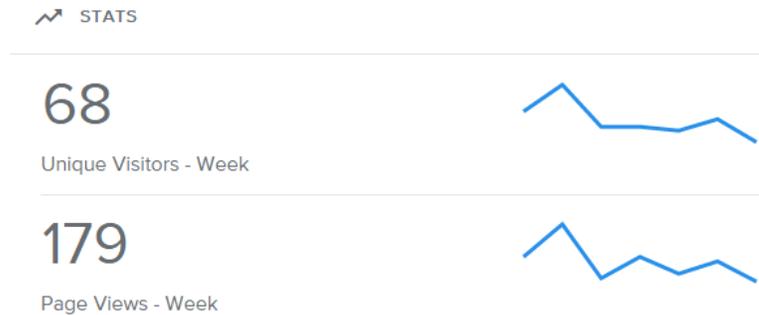


→ **Repository website**

A repository website was launched in September 2015, containing all information regarding the Lesotho Resilience Strategy, including all training materials and reports available for download.

The website is accessible at [www.lesothocsa.com](http://www.lesothocsa.com)

Statistics for the period April 4<sup>th</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016:



Statistics for the period May 24<sup>th</sup> – June 24<sup>th</sup> 2016

- 33 sessions for 17 users
- 63.6% of returning visitors and 36.4% of new visitors
- Users come from 8 different countries (1. South Africa, 2. Lesotho, 3. Russia, 4. Argentina, 5. United Kingdom, 6. India, 7. Kenya, 8. USA)