



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO LESOTHO COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

July - December 2015



This report compiles all information and communication activities undertaken by
FAO Lesotho from July to December 2015



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I. Press articles

→ Home Gardening and Nutrition Training Material dissemination – LENA 10th of July

FAO PRODUCES NUTRITION MATERIALS

Maseru, July 10 (LENA) -- The training material providing information about home gardening and nutrition have been produced to overcome the challenge of malnutrition in the country.

According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Lesotho Communication and Coordination Assistant Mrs. Elizabeth ~~Tsoho~~, they are targeting a larger public in issues of organic pest control remedies, fruit trees growing and care and Lesotho recipes.

The statement said FAO Emergency and Resilience Coordinator ~~Boris Miguel~~ had stated that nutrition is a serious problem in Lesotho as stunting affects 33 percent of all children under 5.

It stated that only 11 percent of children between six months and two years old meet the criteria for a minimum acceptable diet whilst half of the children suffer from some degree of ~~malnutrition~~.

'Getting the right information on nutrition practices and concrete ways to produce more diverse food such as keyhole or trench gardens are factors to correct this situation'.

'However, nutrition status is sustained by many elements beyond food availability like health, water and sanitation and feeding practices'.

'This complexity calls for joint efforts by all stakeholders and this explains our interest to work with extension staff and schools,' the statement indicated.

Key messages were developed by FAO, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and all members of the Home Gardening and Nutrition Working Group (NGOs, UN agencies and Government institutions) have completed the production of harmonized and visual training materials on Home Gardening and Nutrition.

For training purposes, 400 kits combining the four posters and a portable stand have been produced. Targeting a larger public, 60,000 kits of four handouts have also been printed.

The statement said kits are currently being distributed to over 300 schools (primary, secondary and high schools), all 68 agricultural Resource Centres and to all members of the Home Gardening and Nutrition Working Group including various ministries and NGOs and to 18,500 vulnerable farming families which will get one kit per family.

The production and distribution of the training material was funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Office of the U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

Ends
LENA/KLM/ml

→ Farmers’ exchange visits – Informative Newspaper 4th of August

Lesotho farmers share their experiences on Conservation Agriculture

Published: Tuesday, 04 August 2015 09:20



FAO Lesotho and MAFS organize exchange visits among Basotho farmers supporting the adoption of Conservation Agriculture across the country.

Maseru-Lesotho's food security gradually declined in the last decades as a result of environmental and social challenges. The agricultural production is particularly affected by severe land degradation, limited access to quality inputs and limited use of productivity enhancing technologies. Additionally more than 75% of the population lives in rural areas and depend mostly on agriculture for their livelihoods.

In the 2012/2017 National Strategic Development Plan, the Government of Lesotho set the promotion of Conservation Agriculture (CA) as a key to improve household food security, one of the strategic objectives aiming at reducing vulnerability and realising sustainable agriculture growth.

The practice of CA has shown great results in improving soil conditions as well as yields and quality of crops. CA consists of three main pillars which are minimum soil disturbance, permanent soil cover with crop residue or live mulch and crop rotations and/or intercropping.

FAO Lesotho Emergency and Resilience Programme

In 2012, FAO Lesotho in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) started the implementation of the Emergency and Resilience Programme (ERP), helping a total of 18,500 vulnerable farming families across the country with agricultural inputs and supporting MAFS extension staff with training on Conservation Agriculture and Home Gardening and Nutrition.

One of the main challenges in practicing CA is the understanding of the second principle, which encourages farmers to maintain their fields with a permanent organic soil cover made of live mulch or cover crop – such as grazing vetch. Grazing vetch is a cover crop that protects the soil against erosion and enriches it with Nitrogen while contributing to optimize soil moisture.

In 2014, farmers' exchange visits were organised in the Leribe district to give farmers the opportunity to discuss their experience and ideas on the practice of CA but also to witness the use of cover crops with the example of the grazing vetch. The positive feedbacks received from last year's visits led to an upscale of the activity, involving all districts of Lesotho in 2015.

MAFS and FAO have embarked on supporting the exchange visits in nearly all Resource Centres of the country facilitating visits to the best performing farmers having adopted CA and the use of cover crops during the months of July and August. It is expected that at least 1,000 farmers and 80 extension officers will participate in this important activity promoting first hand sharing of knowledge and experience.

'The main reason we were interested in Conservation Agriculture was to improve the moisture and fertility of our fields' said Mr. and Mrs. Tasso, who hosted a group of 50 farmers in Butha-Buthe on the 21st of July 2015. 'Given the changes of the rains, we needed to improve moisture of the soil to be able to plant earlier. We have seen how the organic matter of crop residues is also benefiting our crops'.

The ERP is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), Belgium, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the British Department for International Development (DFID), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

→ Use of grazing vetch – Informative Newspaper Week of the 25-31 August 2015

<http://www.informativenews.co.ls/index.php/news/1080-fao-agriculture-ministry-encourage-famers-to-plant-grazing-vetch>



The screenshot shows the Informative Newspaper website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for HOME, BUSINESS, NEWS, SPORTS, LENTSOE LA SECHABA, RELAX, SEND US, and CONTACT US. Below the menu, the date "25 August - 31 August 2015" is displayed. The main content area features a news article titled "FAO, Agriculture Ministry encourage famers to plant grazing vetch". The article includes a sub-header "Opportunities & Careers" and a small image of a farmer. The text of the article discusses the collaboration between FAO Lesotho and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) to encourage farmers to plant grazing vetch. It mentions that Bokang Mantutle, an official from FAO, explained that in the past few years, farmers had been subsidised with grazing vetch seeds but only discovered that they had not planted the seeds as supervised by his organisation. Consequently, Mantutle said they felt obliged to hold campaigns geared towards sensitising farmers about the practice.



- World Food Day Celebration – Public Eye 23rd of October
<http://www.publiceyenews.com/site/2015/10/23/world-food-day-celebrated/>
- Conservation Agriculture education in schools – Lesotho Times 29th of October
<http://lestimes.com/homestead-gardens-bring-hope-to-lesotho/>
- Lesotho gears up to improve agriculture – Informative Newspaper 3rd of November
<http://www.informativenews.co.ls/index.php/43-lesotho-gears-up-to-improve-agriculture>

II. Press releases

The following press releases were produced by FAO Lesotho and sent to all media in Lesotho and FAO regional and headquarters offices during the reporting period.

- Keyhole gardens key for improved nutrition – 17 July 2015
ONLINE - <http://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/301709/>

FAO Lesotho supports home gardening and nutrition education to improve the lives of the Basotho

Lesotho faces challenges around nutrition with around 33 percent of the children under five years of age stunted. Official statistics also show that only 11 percent of children between six months and two years meet the criteria for a minimum acceptable diet while half of infants are suffering from some degree of anaemia. These drawbacks can be surmounted if communities receive the right information on nutrition as well as support on gardening at the household level.

Lesotho prioritises the fight against hunger and the government works with several stakeholders on how to improve productivity and nutrition. These efforts have been buttressed by various other instruments aimed at strengthening partnerships between state and non-state actors for promoting technologies, methods and tools for increasing agricultural production and productivity within the broader farming community.

As a result of these partnerships, various stakeholders in Lesotho have come up with a mechanism to equip farmers with the requisite skills in home gardening and information on nutrition. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and all members of the Home Gardening and Nutrition Working Group (NGOs, UN agencies and Government institutions) have produced training materials on Home Gardening and Nutrition aimed at enhancing productivity as well as access to information on nutrition.

Joint efforts required

Borja Miguélez, FAO Emergency and Resilience Coordinator, said disseminating information on nutrition as well as equipping farmers with skills on gardening was the first step towards mitigating some of the challenges that the country faced.

“Getting the right information on nutrition practices and concrete ways to produce more diverse food such as keyhole or trench gardens are factors to correct this situation. However, nutrition status is sustained by many elements beyond food availability like health, water and sanitation and feeding practices. This complexity calls for joint efforts by all stakeholders. This explains our interest to work with extension staff and schools,” said Miguélez.

The training materials produced focused on messages revolving around healthy eating, diversifying crops, improving productivity and the importance of growing food at home. They are being distributed widely across schools, farmers, agricultural resource centres as well as other stakeholders involved in agriculture, food security and nutrition. They were produced with funding from the [European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department \(ECHO\)](#), the [United Kingdom’s Department for International Development \(DFID\)](#) and the [Office of the United States Foreign Disaster Assistance \(OFDA\)](#).



King Letsie III – the Lesotho Monarch and [Africa's Nutrition Champion](#) – has shown how his country prioritises eradication of hunger and increased nutrition by consistently highlighting how this could be achieved at various forums. This includes the [Second International Conference on Nutrition \(ICN2\)](#) last year where he met the FAO Director General, José Graziano da Silva, and reiterated how countries in Africa are still confronted with multiple burdens of malnutrition, including the high rates of stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies.

Additional Links

- [Website - Second International Conference on Nutrition \(ICN2\)](#)
- [African Nutrition Champion urges African leaders to invest in nutrition](#)

[FAO Director-General meets with African Union "Champion for Nutrition", King Letsie III of Lesotho](#)

→ Working together on a Land Cover map for Lesotho – 14 July 2015

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, is currently supporting Lesotho on the preparation of a national land cover map.

This national land cover map is being implemented in partnership with all the institutions represented in the Lesotho Committee on Environmental Data Management (CEDAMA) chaired by the Bureau of Statistics (BoS) and it is the result of a collaborative and consultative effort.

After completion of the indicative map legend in December 2014 and the preparation of the high resolution satellite imagery for the whole country, the map has entered the interpretation phase.

On the 13th of July in Maseru, Mr. Bahman Jazayeri, FAO senior technical expert on Land Cover, led the discussions in a workshop with CEDAMA, refining the interpretation of the images with the enrichment of Lesotho experts.

This workshop will be followed by a three days field mission integrated by experts from the Ministry of Forestry, Soil Conservation and Rangeland, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture, Lesotho Land Administration Authority and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship.

The field team will visit 8 districts of the country and will collect information that will further improve the accuracy of interpretation.

"A high quality Land Cover map of Lesotho will allow assessing rigorously the status of the soil cover in the country and planning the necessary actions required for the protection of Lesotho natural resources. It will also provide the opportunity for the development of a diverse range of applications that could provide valuable evidence for decision makers", said Mr. Borja Miguelez, FAO Emergency and Resilience Coordinator in Lesotho.

Land cover is the observed bio physical cover on the earth's surface. It is the basic information for geospatial databases and can be considered as a boundary object to link different disciplines. Land cover is useful for planning, education, research and for many other applications such as agriculture, environment, monitoring and health for example.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) support financially this initiative. Its production will continue during 2015 in cooperation with CEDAMA members.

→ Improving production, preserving the environment – 29 July 2015

FAO, MAFS organize Conservation Agriculture exchange visits among Basotho farmers

The agricultural production of smallholder farmers in Lesotho is most affected by severe soil degradation, limited access to quality inputs, poor produce markets and poor farming practices. The country's food security situation gradually worsened in the past years due to climatic and social challenges. This poses a threat to more than 75 percent of the population who live in rural areas and depends mostly on agriculture for their livelihoods. The declining agricultural productivity, low food security and seemingly untenable situation can easily be reversed with the adaptation of climate smart agriculture such as conservation agriculture (CA).



"The government has emphasized the importance of Conservation Agriculture (CA) through its National Strategic Development Plan 2012-17", said Borja Miguélez, FAO Emergency and Resilience Coordinator in Lesotho. "Conservation agriculture saves labour, makes efficient use of inputs, produces higher yields and is environmentally friendly. It also provides better resilience against drought and prevents soil erosion", he added.

Farmers learn from each other

In 2012, FAO Lesotho in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) started the implementation of the Emergency and Resilience Programme (ERP), helping a total of 18,500 vulnerable farming families across the country with agricultural inputs and supporting MAFS extension staff with training on Conservation Agriculture and Home Gardening and Nutrition.

"The main reason we were interested in Conservation Agriculture was to improve the moisture and fertility of our fields" said Mr. and Mrs. Taaso, who hosted a group of 50 farmers in Butha-Buthe on the 21st of July 2015. "Given the changes of the rains, we needed to improve moisture of the soil to be able to plant earlier. We have seen how the organic matter of crop residues is also benefiting our crops".

In 2014, farmers' exchange visits were organised in the Leribe district to give farmers the opportunity to discuss their experience and ideas on the practice of CA but also to witness the use of cover crops with the example of the grazing vetch. The positive feedbacks received from last year's visits led to an upscale of the activity, involving all districts of Lesotho in 2015.

MAFS and FAO have embarked on supporting the exchange visits in nearly all Resource Centres of the country facilitating visits to the best performing farmers having adopted CA and the use of cover crops during the months of July and August. It is expected that at least 1,000 farmers and 80 extension officers will participate in this important activity promoting first hand sharing of knowledge and experience.

The ERP is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), Belgium, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the British Department for International Development (DFID), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

About conservation agriculture

CA is a way of managing agro-ecosystems aiming to improve productivity, while preserving the environment. It is based on three interlinked principles: minimal soil disturbance, permanent soil cover and crop rotation.

One of the main challenges in practicing CA is the understanding of the second principle, which encourages farmers to maintain their fields with a permanent organic soil cover made of live mulch or cover crop – such as grazing vetch. Grazing vetch is a cover crop that protects the soil against erosion and enriches it with Nitrogen while contributing to optimize soil moisture.

Complemented by other good practices, including the use of quality seeds, and integrated pest, nutrient, weed and water management, as well as the use of sustainable mechanization approaches, Conservation Agriculture can serve as a basis for market-driven and sustainable intensification of agricultural production.

→ Chiefs' training – 9 September 2015

ONLINE: <http://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/329979/>

FAO supports Lesotho Government's efforts to protect natural resources and food security

FAO, MAFS and MFRSC conduct training on Rangeland Policy and Conservation Agriculture for chiefs and local authorities from Maseru district.

Conservation Agriculture (CA) is proven to be one of the best technologies and strategies to combat the negative effects of land degradation, which has led to a dramatic decline in agricultural production in Lesotho. Furthermore, rangelands which are not properly managed by users decrease their feeding potential and progressively deteriorate. Spreading CA practice and Rangeland management are therefore keys in attaining Lesotho's food security.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), the Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation (MFRSC) and FAO Lesotho work hand in hand to increase the understanding and appreciation of the benefits of Conservation Agriculture as well as the adoption of the Rangeland Policy at community level.



Two rounds of training for 80 chiefs and local representatives from Maseru district are being conducted in September 2015.

“Sustainable changes in the management of natural resources are only possible if they are embraced by communities and their leaders.” said Mr. Yves Klompenhouwer, FAO Representative a.i. in Lesotho. “Therefore, we support the government’s initiative to train local government representatives and traditional leaders. Substantial impact can only be achieved by working together.” Klompenhouwer added.

The content of the training focused on the Rangeland policy and the principles, benefits and practices of Conservation Agriculture. These two topics are in fact closely related since livestock feeding needs often challenge CA farmers as they try to keep crop residues and live mulch in their CA fields, a principle aiming at protecting soil from erosion and improving organic matter to enhance production.

With better rangeland management and adoption of CA, both communities and animals will have access to better food while preserving the natural resources.

This activity is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

→ Linking nutrition to social protection – 22 September 2015

ONLINE: <http://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/330751/>

FAO supports the integration of Social Protection in Agriculture

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), the Ministry of Social Development (MoS) and UNICEF facilitated training on Nutrition, Home Gardening and Social Protection to 72 Nutrition Officers from the 10 districts of Lesotho and 5 Community Councils Representatives.

“The impact of social protection interventions on nutrition often also depends on nutrition education.” says Mr. Yves Klompenhouwer, FAO Representative in Lesotho. “It is necessary to strengthen the link between agricultural development programmes and social protection programmes to improve vulnerable household’s nutrition and food security. Only thus can we help ensure that children are adequately fed for healthy and active lives and can their families hope to escape poverty” explains Mr. Klompenhouwer.

In a 2-day event, participants were familiarised with agricultural techniques aiming at increasing food production at the homestead and how to achieve healthy eating habits and improved food preservation techniques. This is based on new visual training materials on Home Gardening and Nutrition developed by the Government with FAO support and contributions from a diverse range of food security sector stakeholders.

Moreover, nutrition officers were familiarized with social protection concepts and with the mainstreaming of social protection in their daily activities enhancing complementarities between these two sectors of activity.

“Social protection contributes to improving nutrition outcomes by improving the quantity and quality of food consumption, leading to increased dietary diversity. Social protection is an important component of integrated approaches to address the multiple determinants of malnutrition.” says Benjamin Davis, FAO senior economist, Team Leader of the project “From Production to Protection (PtoP)”.

Lesotho is one of the six pilot’s countries in which the project PtoP is implemented since 2012, aiming at evaluating the impact of Cash Transfers and Agricultural complementarities.

The training held in August 2015 was funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Additional Links

- [FAO Report – Nutrition and Social Protection](#)
- [Website - Second International Conference on Nutrition \(ICN2\)](#)

[From Protection to Production Report – Lesotho Child Grant Programme and linking Food Security to Social Protection Programme](#)



→ FAO supports Conservation Agriculture education in Lesotho – 21 October 2015

Strong partnership with Lesotho’s education system for increased practice of Climate Smart Agriculture

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Lesotho recently conducted training sessions on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) technologies including Conservation Agriculture (CA), Home Gardening (HG) and Nutrition. The training was organised in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) through the leadership of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).

120 Senior Education Officers and resource teachers from all districts of the country participated in this series of training.

Climate Smart Agriculture aims to help communities improve their food security while adapting to climate change. “Lesotho’s agricultural sector is affected by severe land degradation, which increases the intensity of climate induced shocks and emergencies,” says Yves Klompenhouwer, FAO Representative in Lesotho. “It is critical to develop the practice of Conservation Agriculture in Lesotho as it increases soil quality, reduces soil erosion and enables families to improve their livelihoods in a sustainable manner”.

Earlier this year, 280 primary and secondary school teachers received the same training along with the distribution of a training material kit on Home Gardening and Nutrition. In 2014, 260 teachers were also trained on Conservation Agriculture and received a related training material to assist them in teaching their students. A total of 300 schools have been reached so far.

Ms. ‘Makhothalo Mohlori, a Berea District Resource Teacher, said about her participation: “I initially come to the training with some fears and misconceptions about Conservation Agriculture and Home Gardening and Nutrition, but they were totally addressed during the sessions. The topics were very pertinent in addressing and counterbalancing the effects of climate change that cripple the ability of farming communities to produce their own food.”

Mohlori explains that the knowledge and skills she acquired from the training would certainly help her in supporting and mentoring the hands-on work of teachers she works with resulting in more efficient teaching to the learners.

“It is imperative that CA is incorporated in the school curriculum to give it the weight and recognition it deserves”, she adds. “Now that we have been imparted with the relevant skills, we are going to lobby and advocate for CA with the view of raising awareness to the communities, teachers and their fellow workmates.”

Her colleague and Resource Teacher from Leribe, ‘Me Masenate Jonathan Molapo, felt inspired to write a poem about Conservation Agriculture:

A poem about Conservation Agriculture (CA)

Who are you?
Oh, you keep on asking who am I, let me tell you, tell you indeed,
I am Conservation Agriculture, I am a Basotho last born,
I am a Moshoeshoe by clan; I have been here since time in memorial,
It’s just that I have been away for some time, you know what? I am back,
Back to kill HUNGER, I am back for I thought is the right time,
I am back because you need me; I have come back because I am your shield,
I want to kill this monster, “HUNGER”
I just can’t wait, and watch my people being swallowed, swallowed in my presence,
If only, and only you listen to me, listen to me as your grand pa,
I have lived and seen hazardous events,
I have lived and watched when my grandchildren die,
I have lived and watched when my people struggle to grow,
I have lived and watched as man tempered with nature,
Now is the time, the time that I do something,
I order you to respect me, respect me your grandfather CA,
Follow in my footsteps; see many years, like nkhone Kholu, ntate-moholo Moshoeshoe, Nkhono Mantsopa,
See many more years, like Israel, Isaac and Ibrahim,
God Almighty will bless you on my behalf,
For thou said, honor thy father and mother so that God Almighty grand you many years,
Stop! Stop! and Stop tempering with nature, but *REMEMBER*
- Continuous minimal soil disturbance,
- Remember permanent organic soil cover,
- And oh! Never forget crop rotation and intercropping.

The training was funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).



→ Education: key route towards sustainable food security and Climate Change adaptation – 24 November 2015

Lesotho school children express their views on Conservation Agriculture in an art competition organised by FAO, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)

In the prevailing context of climate change and declining food security in Lesotho, the need to raise children, parents and communities' awareness on Climate Smart Agriculture technologies including Conservation Agriculture (CA) and improved Home Gardening and Nutrition is essential.

One of Lesotho's strategies to boost its agricultural growth is to encourage youth participation in agriculture along with promoting CA. CA entails minimum soil disturbance, soil cover at all times and intercropping or crop rotation. This protects the soil and increases its fertility.

Following the training of over 700 principals and teachers on CA and Home Gardening and Nutrition by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in April 2015, children from 300 primary and secondary schools across the country were invited to participate in an Art Competition on Conservation Agriculture.

In this initiative, school children had to make drawings to illustrate one of the three following topics: *Climate Change in Lesotho and its impact on food security*, *Conservation Agriculture principles* and *Conservation Agriculture benefits*.

A selection committee, integrated by representatives of the NCDC, MAFS and FAO, has identified the finalist that made the best drawings. The top 12 drawings will be used for the production of a 2016 calendar that will be distributed nationwide. The launch of the calendar and the award ceremony is foreseen towards the end of November, before the start of the Paris 2015, the UN Climate Change Conference.

"Education and sensitisation are the building blocks of lasting change of our agricultural practices, so that our children can have the benefits of sustainable impact", said Mr. Klompenhouwer, FAO Representative to Lesotho "We must invest in the education of our children".

This activity is supported by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

→ Improving food security in Lesotho through the practice of Conservation Agriculture – 17 December 2015

FAO Emergency and Resilience Programme supports vulnerable farmers with agricultural inputs to practice permanent soil cover

While the 2015 El Nino event is severely affecting the Southern African region, Basotho farmers depend on rain for crop production and face an important delay in planting: Improving soil moisture and water efficiency is essential for sustainable food production.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Lesotho encourages Basotho farmers to adopt Conservation Agriculture (CA) as a concrete practice to adapt to erratic weather patterns and improve food security.

CA is a sustainable farming technology based on three principles: minimum disturbance of the soil, permanent soil cover and crop rotations/intercropping, which brings solutions not only to improve quality and quantity of harvests but also to improve soil quality (moisture, nutrient content, etc.) and its preservation.

In November and December 2015, FAO and MAFS have been distributing grazing vetch seeds to 7,500 vulnerable farming families across Lesotho (5kg per family). This distribution was preceded by exchange visits of farmers to grazing vetch fields in July-August 2015 across the country.



Grazing vetch is a legume crop which fixes nitrogen into the soil, benefitting other crops such as maize, sorghum, wheat, etc. when intercropped with them. Grazing vetch has a creeping/runner growth habit. It produces very good hay and is adapted to most soils, including on loam and heavy clays.

This distribution of grazing vetch aims to promote the adoption of the second principle of CA – permanent soil cover – encouraging farmers to plant cover crops in maize fields (around February).

Mr. Molikoe, farmer in the surroundings of the Sehong-Hong agricultural Resource Centre in the Thaba-Tseka district says: “The grazing vetch is working very well. Having used it for demonstration the previous season, it was my first time this planting season to see beneficial soil worms in my field after many years; this is a sign that my soil is improving its nutritive value. It is doing great things for me”.

In Mphaki Resource Centre, Quthing district, Mr. Lefu Phate explains how planting grazing vetch helped him being ready for planting while most farmers were not.

“Last season I used the vetch as a demonstration on my field. It helped conserving the moisture and this is why this year, I was able to plant in time. My maize crop is already at knee height while most farmers are still planting and some others have not even started. I intent to use grazing vetch every year.”

In the current context of El Nino event as well as the world changing climate, it is critical to keep informing and assisting farmers who are willing to try new technologies to adapt to climate change and its effects on crop production and the country's food security.

This activity is funded by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO).

III. Awareness raising and advocacy

→ WFD Preparations – 30th June/7th July

A communication team deployed by FAO HQ spent a week in Lesotho documenting FAO efforts in Lesotho supporting the *Integration of Social Protection and Agriculture* as it is the theme for this year's World Food Day. The team filmed and took photographs of the different elements of the FAO Lesotho Emergency and Resilience Programme (ERP) which includes explicit complementarities between Social Protection and Agriculture through Conservation Agriculture, Home Gardening and Nutrition and strong emphasis on capacity development and production of visual training materials in collaboration with other stakeholders. See above press release *Impact study Report on CGP & LFSSP*.

The following activities were documented: A community day organized by the Ministry of Social Development bringing services closer to the communities including FAO supported training materials in Thaba Tseka, the construction of trench garden at a Primary school in Leribe and a keyhole garden at a Secondary school in Morija, Conservation Agriculture farmers, and a pay day for Child Grant Programme beneficiaries in Butha Buthe.



Fig 1 – Conservation Agriculture farmers and school kids enthusiastically explained FAO communications team about the benefits of the CGP and home gardening training they got through the project Linking Food Security to Social Protection – June/July 2015, Lesotho

→ Commemoration of Conservation Agriculture Day at Alliance Française – 21st November 2015

Conservation Agriculture day - 21st of November, 10am

The FAO is coming to the Alliance Française to share hundred of children's drawings inspired by the wonderful program "Conservation agriculture".

Developped all over the country during the past months, this ambitious program helps farmers in learning new ways of cultivating crops and vegetables in a more and more endangered ecosystem.



On 21st November, during a CA celebration event held at the Alliance Française (AF) of Maseru, FAO awarded the winners of the School Art Competition on CA organised in 2015.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Karla Hershey, FAO, a European Union Representative, a Representative from the Ministry of Education

and the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security were attending the event.

The School Art Competition involved school children from 300 primary and secondary schools across the country. They had to make drawings illustrating one of the three following topics: *Climate Change in Lesotho and its impact on food security, Conservation Agriculture principles and Conservation Agriculture benefits.*

This event was an opportunity to expose to the public the 100 finalist drawings, together with launching the 2016 calendar compiling the top 12 winning drawings of the competition. This calendar is now being distributed nationwide.

To emphasize on the importance of the practice of CA in Lesotho, participants could watch a video developed by FAO on CA and the benefits it can bring to Lesotho’s agriculture. The European Union also showed a video on Climate Change.

The Director of the Alliance Française, Mr. Beghin, read a speech on behalf of the French Ambassador who could not be present.



Fig 2 – Three pages of the CA calendar