



# **FAO LESOTHO**

## **MEDIA COVERAGE/COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

**June 2012-April 2013**

This report compiles all information and communication activities undertaken by FAO Lesotho from June 2012 to April 2013.

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## I- Press articles

The following articles were published by media both from Lesotho and South Africa during the period November 2012-April 2013.

→ 1 Nov. 2012 – Agence France Presse (AFP)  
<http://reliefweb.int/report/lesotho/lesotho-fears-cash-shortfall-food-crisis-deepens>

→ 2 Nov. 2012 – Public Eye

# Sefikeng pins hopes on conservation agriculture



Mr Bokang Mantlule (left) handing over maize seed to Mr Tseiso Semelhe on Thursday last week

**By Tsitsi Matopae**

**SEFIKENG-** For more than 50 years, Mrs Matjama Setel has watched many summers come and go with her love for farming evident each passing season.

From the time she was a little girl living with her parents—to the time she began raising a family and started operating her own farm here in Sefikeng—Setel has ploughed and cleared the weeds, but has not always realised a good harvest.

A mother-of-eight, she watched her children grow and join her on the farm, which the family extended some years later, but still life would become even tougher each year.

Now 66 years of age, Setel is not sure anyone if she could continue trusting her farm to afford her a better livelihood, particularly at this stage of her life.

"It is not possible for a poor family like mine to buy seed from the shop. It's very expensive, not to mention the prices of fertiliser. That is why every year my family has harvested less," she said in an interview on Thursday last week.

Some children in Sefikeng have also become part of the common and futile

toil.

Sello Sesinyi, who is 17 years of age and doing Standard Six, even repeated some of his classes in order to help his mother in the field.

"But there is never enough food in the house for us, despite working so hard and sacrificing my schooling," he said.

Sesinyi's family is one of the 185 households selected as beneficiaries of

Nations' Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

One of the conditions attached to the free inputs, is that all farmers have to adopt conservation farming technology as a way to improve their yields.

In an interview, the FAO Agriculture Officer, who is also Focal Person for Conservation Agriculture, Mr Bokang Mantlule, said his organisation, in

collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security was also promoting vegetable production to boost household nutrition.

"We are encouraging the establishment of keyhole gardens for the vegetable production. This way, the production would be easy to manage even when the rainfall is not enough. It is for the same climatic reasons that we are promoting conservation agriculture

(in conservation agriculture, there is minimum mechanical soil disturbance which is essential to maintaining minerals within the soil, stopping erosion, and preventing water loss from occurring within the soil)," Mantlule said.

Apart from maize and bean, the beneficiaries would also grow beetroot, carrots, spinach, rape, mustard and onions.

However, Mantlule said the programme had supplied inputs to 11 000 vulnerable households countrywide. The CERF alone gave funding enough to supply inputs to 4000 households in Butha-Butha, Leribe, Berea, Maseru, Mafeteng and parts of Molekane's Hoek while ECHO and Belgium funds assisted 7000 households in the highlands.

"The conditions of the funding were to assist households whose livelihoods depend solely on agriculture and are failing to meet their food needs," Mantlule explained.

Of utmost importance, he added, was to ensure the creation of a monitoring system that would ensure all farmers practiced conservation agriculture, which Mantlule said was new to most of the beneficiaries.

"We hope when they see the benefits of this technology, they would continue practicing it even when there are no free inputs and also encourage other farmers who are not part of the programme."

Farmers like Mr Tseiso Semelhe are pinning their hopes on the new technology.

Semelhe, 79, told Public Eye since he returned home from the South African mines where he had worked for more than 15 years, he had lived from hand to mouth.

A father-of-12, his large family made it impossible for any of his neighbours to help him when in time of need.

"The best they could do every year, was to lend me open-pollinated maize seed, which did not yield much. I hope with good rains, this treated seed, fertiliser and new approach to farming (conservation agriculture) is going to improve my yield this time around," he said.

The price of a subsidised 10kg bag of seed ranges between M100 and M150, while 50kg of base and top-dressing fertiliser costs around M110 and M150, respectively.

Sefikeng, in the Berea District, is home to some of the most enterprising vegetable farmers in the country.

According to the Head of Extension Services, Mrs Kaungjoro Matorane, the farmers take advantage of the cool temperatures and also rich, red and black soils at the foothills of the mountains.

Farmers in the area also grow sorghum, beans and wheat.

"Our biggest challenge and indeed, reason for food-insecurity in most households, is the slow-adoption of farming technologies that improve yields, such as conservation agriculture. Poverty also contributes to the inability by a significant number of families, to independently finance household food production."

Matopae remains optimistic the FAO intervention would be successful and go a long way to convince other farmers stuck in the conventional way of farming to shift to conservation agriculture.

**Our biggest challenge and indeed, reason for food-insecurity in most households, is the slow-adoption of farming technologies that improve yields, such as conservation agriculture.**

→ 4 Nov. 2012 – Sunday Times



■ FOOD CRISIS: Lesotho agriculture teacher Makana Makana takes part in the Food and Agricultural Organisation's programme  
Picture: MAMELLO MASOTE

## Lesotho pins hopes on conservation farming

MAMELLO MASOTE

WITH Lesotho in the grip of a food security crisis — declared an emergency by Prime Minister Tom Thabane in early August — conservation agriculture is being expanded aggressively in the country.

Matshidiso Mojaqe, head of the national disaster management authority in Lesotho, said food production has fallen 77% in a year.

About 725 000 people, or 40% of the population of 1.9 million, are said to depend for a living on subsistence farming.

"Most of our land was not cultivated in the last season," said Mojaqe.

Those who managed to cultivate the land had "very low" yields.

"Heavy rains destroyed most of the crops."

"Those rains came after a drought."

Mojaqe said an estimated R1-billion is needed to cope with the crisis until next June.

About R452-million has been contributed by development partners and UN agencies,

with the Lesotho government contributing R188-million.

UN agency the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has stepped in to initiate a programme to teach and train farmers on new methods and technologies to enhance their farming through conservation agriculture.

This method of farming is said to help farmers become better equipped for unpredictable weather, increasing their chances of improved harvests.

Elisabeth Tseho-Fritz of the FAO said conservation farming is already practised in many parts of the southern region of the continent, including South Africa.

SA has also experienced weather shocks that interrupted supply of fruits and vegetables. Earlier this year, farming

### Farmers' stories

■ Mapekenya Liphato lives with her husband and four children in a village in the Maseru district. She is part of the conservation programme being run by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in the area.

"This last season was not good and there was not much food. We still have some maize left over, but it's very little. We had floods last year because of too much rain," she said. Liphato said usually there is surplus maize, which they can sell to help make ends meet but there has been no surplus for a long time.

She is eager to try out the new farming method and understands what was taught to her during the training part of the programme. Each person is given seeds, fertiliser and manure.

■ Makana Makana, 46, is an agriculture teacher at a local high school.

He was able to enter the FAO programme because his land was suitable.

He has one acre of land allocated to him. With the new method he is able to have 7 000 holes, which is expected to yield four tons: two tons of maize and two tons of beans.

He said with this yield he will be able to store some at a nearby storage facility and it should last his family for about a year. "I am glad I am part of the programme because I would not be able to afford the inputs needed," said Makana. — Mamello Masote

areas in parts of Limpopo and Mpumalanga were hit by flash floods that destroyed crops and infrastructure and left many farmers destitute.

Conservation agriculture involves farmers digging basins around planting areas and filling the holes with manure and fertiliser.

After it rains, the farmers plant seeds.

This method, according to FAO agricultural officer Mphahleli Maqoe, leads to minimal evaporation and also helps protect the soil.

"The moisture within the basins will not be moved away and around the basin there will be cover and if the soil won't be exposed," said Maqoe.

"The ground is always desirable for anything to grow."

Maqoe admitted that there has been some resistance to the new method, as it is considered labour-intensive because there is no call for tractors or livestock to help turn the soil. But he said most farmers are eager to try the new method.

Conservation agriculture promotes diversification of crops and plants around the basins and that also protects the soil, said Tseho-Fritz.

"You can't plant the same plant with deep roots two years in a row as it will deplete the nutrients in the soil," said Tseho-Fritz.

"And so, with conservation agriculture, the disturbing of the soil is very minimal."

Unicef, another UN agency, has also stepped in to help with the feeding of children who are considered vulnerable.

Mojaqe said the Lesotho government has also asked South Africa for help but has yet to receive a response.

Find this article online at:

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/agriculture/2012/11/04/lesotho-pins-hopes-on-conservation-farming>

→ 5 Nov. 2012 – Business Day

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/world/africa/2012/11/05/little-food-aid-forthcoming-for-hungry-lesotho>

→ Video available at:

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/world/africa/2012/11/05/food-crisis-plagues-lesotho>

→ 6 Nov. 2012 – Business Day

Lesotho finds itself in need of assistance from SA, writes Khulekani Magubane

## A nation struggling to feed its people

LESOTHO, grappling with food shortages, is banking on SA to make good on its pledge to assist its landlocked neighbour.

Lesotho is in the throes of a food crisis, the result of weather shocks including flash floods and drought over the past two years. SA undertook to assist the mountain kingdom following a visit by Prime Minister Tom Thabane last month. However, the amount and extent of the pledge is not yet known.

The food crisis in Lesotho adds to concerns for its newly formed coalition government. The last elections, held in May, were hotly contested amid political tensions.

The opposition, led by the ousted leader Pakalitha Mosisili, has said that it believes the coalition between the Congress for Democracy and the Basotho National Party will falter and that it will return to power in the next elections in 2017.

Apart from competing with low-wage countries such as Bangladesh on clothing exports, Lesotho's coalition has promised to increase the salaries of lowly paid factory workers, and is also considering a localisation strategy for the mining sector.

In August, Lesotho declared an emergency, a move which



DIRE STRAITS: A young Sotho girl on her way to ploughing in the fields. Drought and flash floods have resulted in a food crisis in Lesotho.

By the end of last month, just \$8.4m of the required \$38.5m had been received.

Last week, during a visit to the UN building in Maseru, the head of the country's disaster management authority, Matshidiso Mojaqe, said they were aware that "we may not even get close to the required funds".

"At this time, we know that we may not get all of this, but however much comes will be

arrangements with Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

Ms Mojaqe has also said food production this year will fall 77% from the previous year.

The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) has been providing assistance to families with vulnerable children in Lesotho. Unicef representative

Naqib Safi says the challenge in its intervention is finding a balance between the prevention

### Only hope for school kids

TWO meals a day: that is all some schoolchildren who rely on feeding programmes will have to eat in Quthing, Lesotho.

Belula Primary School in Quthing has 243 pupils, most of whom are orphans.

Lesotho declared a national emergency in August after weather shocks and low food production in recent years left many exposed. In 1984 the World Food Programme began feeding pupils at Belula — along with several other such centres — as part of a national programme to assist the vulnerable.

Nthoeshe Leche (51) is the school principal. "When there is no food, some students don't come to school. Most have no food

at home and if they come to school and there is no food they might go through the whole day on an empty stomach," she says.

Ms Leche, who has been teaching at the school for almost 28 years, says the situation is worse than in the past due to the harsh weather conditions.

In line with assisting the vulnerable, the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) is running a programme that gives 10,200 households without income, R360 per quarter to meet the nutritional needs of children.

Unicef has also made interventions to protect child-headed households that are targets of land-grabs. *Khulekani Magubane*

Many orphans have lost parents to HIV. Some of the other parents work in SA but mostly don't bring anything back." Ms Makhene says.

Puseletso Tshu, a beneficiary of Unicef, is an elderly woman caring for three children. Their father lives in Johannesburg but sends no money to take care of them. Ms Tshu's main source of income is a Unicef grant of about R360 per quarter to feed the

Full article at:

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/world/africa/2012/11/06/lesotho-a-nation-struggling-to-feed-its-people>

→ 26 Feb/4 Mar 2013 – Informative

# FAO helps 10 800 people with food aid

By Majara Molupe

MOHALE'SHOEK—Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, local authorities and communities, through extension workers in each 10 districts of Lesotho selected worthy project beneficiaries of the food relief program.

The communication and coordination assistant of FAO in Lesotho Elizabeth Tšehlo said the food aid was a direct response of national food security crisis declared by the Lesotho's Prime Minister honourable Tom Thabane last year.

"Priority was given to vulnerable families headed by females, orphans, the elderly and those who had chronically ill family members, children under five or pregnant and lactating mothers," she said.

Tšehlo said statistics show that 725 000 Basotho are considered to be food insecure and this represents a staggering 39% of the total population of the country.

"As a result," she warned, "FAO as the agency of the United Nations (UN) scaled up its ongoing rehabilitation activities, with support from the European Commission Humanitarian Office, Belgium and the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund.

From the original 5,000 households,



Some of the beneficiaries of FAO food aid.

added Tšehlo, FAO is now helping 10,800 vulnerable families, providing seeds and fertilizers, as well as training beneficiaries on the use of sustainable agricultural techniques, such as Conservation Agriculture (CA) and improved Home Gardening and Nutrition".

She said the first stage of the nation-wide response program consisted of distributing agricultural inputs, such as maize and bean seeds, fertilizers and vegetable kits pointing out that there are vulnerable farmers in all the districts and the four agro ecological

zones of Lesotho.

In the project, the coordinator said her organization has encouraged the beneficiaries to change their farming methods to CA because it is sustainable, good for the land and enhances yields.

"The three pillars of CA are minimum disturbance of the soil, crop rotations and intercropping permanent soil cover," she said.

Tšehlo stated that soil erosion is a major problem in Lesotho that affects both quality and quantity of harvests. "By adopting CA,

farmers not only ensure better harvests, but also contribute to the improvement of soil quality."

Although FAO's programme aims at helping farmers in this emergency situation in the short term, she said it also believes that by disseminating knowledge and practices, farmers will be better placed to enhance their agricultural practices in the long term.

FAO representative in Lesotho Attaher Maiga said it is encouraging to see so many farmers taking CA.

"CA offers us one of the best options to adapt to Climate Change the declining production in the country. The involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has been decisive for the success of this ambitious programme," said Maiga.

He said this is the first time that CA is promoted widely at national level saying FAO remains committed in supporting Basotho communities and continuing the promotion of CA benefits.

One of the beneficiaries of the program 'Maletsi Motjamele who is a widow looking after 10 children in the Mophale'shoek district at Meking area said the aid came at the right time when her family was struggling to survive.

Most Basotho are hard hit by poverty and hunger and leave below poverty line.

→ 14 Mar. 2013 – Lesotho News Agency (LENA)

## EXTENSION OFFICERS, FARMERS SENSITISED ABOUT ARMYWORM

Maseru, Mar. 14 (LENA) -- Following an outbreak of armyworm in the country, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Lesotho is currently hosting a one-day training to sensitise extension officers and farmers about the African armyworm outbreak and its management.

Extension Officers were from all the districts of the country and farmers were from areas which are mostly affected by armyworm.

Speaking at the event, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) Principal Secretary, Mr. Nchemo Maile said the outbreak of the armyworm has affected harvest.

He said plant protection is important as it contributes towards harvest, urging Basotho to join forces with the Ministry in the fight against armyworm.

FAO Representative in Lesotho, Mr. Imaddeldin Osmu Salih said the country has been faced with a challenge of crop failures in the past two seasons but Basotho were hopeful that the current season, which began in September last year would be successful, but the country is now confronted with armyworm.

However, he said armyworm requires mobilisation of human beings, resources and Basotho's commitment to control it.

He added that pesticide and insecticides should be used to prevent the outbreak of armyworm, emphasising that the training will equip extension officers, farmers and Basotho with skills that will enable them to manage and fight armyworm.

In his presentation, FAO Senior Entomologist, Dr. Hammond Winfred said the spread of armyworm outbreak is strongly influenced by weather conditions and major outbreaks of worms are commonly preceded by extended draught.

He therefore appealed to Basotho not to be surprised about the outbreak as it has also been in other Southern African countries.

He indicated that the direction and speed of winds at the time of migratory flight plays a major role in determining the distances travelled by armyworm moths, indicating that when wind convergence persist locally, moths flying into the vicinity will be held there, mate and lay eggs.

Analysis, indicates that there is a high likelihood that a lot of larvae has already pupated and this still remains a threat for the coming season.

The outbreak of armyworm was discovered mostly in the grasslands in Lesotho in 1992 and 1996 in Maseru.

It also occurred in 2006 to 2007 in Maseru, Mophale's Hoek and Berea and also occurred in Maseru and Berea in 2009.

On the first week of February 2013, all the Southern and Northern districts were affected by armyworm which was discovered mostly on the maize crop with the exception of Mphotlong and Thaba-Tseka.

# Integrated food security programme in response to 2013 food crisis

## 10.800 Basotho families benefit from emergency programme

Alarming statistics show that 725.000 Basotho are considered to be food insecure. This represents a staggering 39% of the total population of the country. Recently the Government of Lesotho declared a national food security crisis.

As a result the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) urgently scaled up its ongoing rehabilitation activities, with support from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Belgium and the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF).

From the original 5.000 households, FAO is now helping 10.800 vulnerable families, providing seeds and fertilizers, as well as training beneficiaries on the use of sustainable agricultural techniques, such as Conservation Agriculture (CA) and improved Home Gardening and Nutrition.

The first stage of the nationwide response programme consisted of distributing agricultural inputs, such as maize and bean seeds, fertilizers and vegetable kits. There are vulnerable farmers in all ten districts and the four agro ecological zones of Lesotho.

"I am happy about the distribution, coming at



Beneficiaries at Mekaling village, Mophale's Hoek

project beneficiaries. Priority was given to vulnerable families headed by females, orphans, the elderly and/or those who had chronically ill family members, children under five or pregnant and lactating mothers.

In the project, the FAO has encouraged the beneficiaries to change their farming methods to CA because it is sustainable, good for the land and it enhances yields. The three pillars of CA are minimum disturbance of the soil, crop rotations and intercropping permanent soil cover. Soil erosion is a major problem in Lesotho, affecting both quality and quantity of harvests. By adopting CA, farmers not only ensure better harvests, but also contribute to the improvement of soil quality.

Although FAO's programme aims at helping farmers in this emergency situation in the short term, it also believes that by disseminating knowledge and practices, farmers will be better placed to enhance their agricultural practices in the long term.

Attaher Maiga, FAO Representative in Lesotho, said it is encouraging to see so many farmers taking up CA.

"CA offers us one of the best options to adapt to Climate Change and revert the declining production among in the country. The involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has been decisive for the success of this ambitious programme. It is the first time Conservation Agriculture is promoted widely at national level ... Together we can defeat hunger; 'Moho, re ka hloka thala.' he said.

the right time. I will start planting immediately!" said 'Me Maletsi, a widow who is head of her household of 10 people, living near Mekaling in the Mophale's Hoek district.

The FAO collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, local authorities and communities, through extension officers operating in each district, to select worthy

FAO Lesotho remains committed in supporting Basotho communities and continuing the promotion of CA benefits.



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**MATSATSI A LIHOAI A SELEMO SA 2011**

SETEREKE	LETSATSI	SEBAKA
1. Mafeteng	13/03/2013	Hermone
2. Maseru	20/03/2013	Ha-Matela
3. Quthing	29/03/2013	Moyeni
4. Mophale's Hoek	03/04/2013	Mekaling
5. Berea	10/04/2013	Teya-Teyaneng
6. Thaba-Tseka	15/04/2013	Thaba-Tseka
7. Mokhotlong	17/04/2013	Sheep-Stud
8. Qacha's Nek	19/04/2013	Makhaola
9. Leribe	23/04/2013	Pela-Tšoeu
10. Botha-Bothe	25/04/2013	Motete

Sekolo se Seholo sa Temo Maseru



Basins prepared for Conservation Agriculture in Morija

# UK happy with Lesotho's donor funds expenditure

Caswell Tlali

MASERU — The United Kingdom's Foreign Affairs Minister in charge of Africa relations, Mark Simonds (**below**), says he is happy with the way the Lesotho government spent donor funds after the government declared a state of food emergency last year.

Prime Minister Thomas Thabane declared a food emergency last year following a poor harvest last farming season.

Simonds, who was speaking at the end of his two-day visit to Lesotho on Friday, said he will happily report back to the British taxpayers that Basotho spent the donation well.

The British government, through its Department for International Development (DFID), donated approximately M35 million (£2.5m) for poverty reduction programmes in Lesotho.

DFID is part of a United Kingdom government department that manages Britain's aid to poor countries.

The British contribution was sent to Lesotho through the Food and Agricultural (FAO) and other United Nations agencies such as Unicef.

"We responded very quickly to Lesotho's request. I will take this message to the UK that the taxpayers' money is being spent wisely," Simonds said.

"The government of Lesotho, the Prime Minister and all political parties have thanked me on behalf of Basotho."

The DFID's contribution, which was in response to Thabane's call for help, has been expanded to include awareness of community issues on child protection that arise from the food crisis.

The funds were also used to register vulnerable households in six districts.

Approximately 6 150 households with 18 450 orphans and vulnerable children received cash support for six months.

The DFID donation was also used to

establish and strengthen 150 community-based structures to identify and refer vulnerable households for relevant social services.

Simonds said the Lesotho visit was part of his Africa tour ahead of the G8 summit which will be held in June in the UK.

He said he was on a mission to consult African countries on key issues that should be addressed at the summit, which will be chaired by the UK.

"I am consulting to make sure that there will be issues relevant to Africa that will be discussed at the summit," he said.

He said he had so far found that the relevant issues included a transparent agenda regarding trade and how people can benefit from cooperation on the issue of climate change.

Simonds however avoided commenting on the controversial issue of Lesotho's passports. The UK imposed stringent visa requirements for Basotho wishing to visit that country in 2008 after reports that some criminals were using the Lesotho passport to gain easy entry into Europe.

Asked about the issue, Simonds said "he had not come to talk about the past".

"I am here to better the relations with Lesotho and to look forward not to look backwards," he said.

"The world has changed," he said when asked why the British closed their embassy in Maseru.





## II- Press releases

The following press releases were produced by FAO Lesotho and sent to all media in Lesotho, in January 2013 and March 2013.

→ FAO Programme

### INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME IN RESPONSE TO 2012 FOOD CRISIS

#### **Distribution of emergency agriculture inputs and training on Conservation Agriculture and Home Gardening for 10,800 vulnerable farming families successfully implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO**

As a result of the cumulative impact of floods in 2011 and late rains in the early stages of 2011-2012 cropping season, a food insecurity crisis was declared in Aug 9, 2012 by the Government of Lesotho. According to the Lesotho Vulnerability Committee Report released in July 2012, 725.000 people are considered to be food insecure, representing 39% of the total population of the country.

Following the food insecurity crisis declaration, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) scaled up its ongoing rehabilitation activities in order to increase the coverage of beneficiaries from 5,000 households to 10,800 families with the distribution of seeds and fertilizers among vulnerable active farmers as well as training on sustainable agricultural techniques such as Conservation Agriculture (CA) and improved Home Gardening and Nutrition. This large coverage has been made possible with funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Belgium and the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF).

#### **10.800 households from the whole country benefit from this emergency programme**



The initial stage of the response programme is completed. All the beneficiaries have received inputs to start planting for the 2012-2013 agricultural season on time.

This programme is implemented at a national level, covering all ten districts and the four agro ecological zones of the country.

*“I am happy about the distribution, coming at the right time. I will immediately start planting!”* said ‘Me Maletsi, head of her household living near Mekaling in Mohale’s Hoek district.

The beneficiaries of the project were selected in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, local authorities and communities, through extension officers operating in each district. Vulnerability criteria were used in the selection, giving priority to families headed by females, orphans, elderly or having members chronically-ill, children under five or pregnant and lactating mothers.

#### **“Conservation Agriculture, one of the best adaptation measures for Climate Change”**

*“We are pleased to see the increasing enthusiasm among farmers to learn about techniques such as Conservation Agriculture, which will allow Basotho families to improve their food security in a sustainable manner. Conservation Agriculture offers us one of the best options to adapt to Climate Change and revert the declining production among in the country. The involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has been decisive for the success of this ambitious programme. It is the first time Conservation Agriculture is promoted widely at national level. I would like to commend, particularly, the efforts undertaken by the extension officers based in the field, near the farmers*



*who train and provide technical support to thousands of families. Together we can defeat hunger, Moho, re ka Hlola Tlala!*”, said Attaher Maiga, *FAO Representative in Lesotho.*

The three pillars of Conservation Agriculture techniques are: minimum disturbance of the soil, crop rotations and permanent soil cover. Soil erosion is a major problem in Lesotho, affecting both quality and quantity of harvests. By adopting Conservation Agriculture, farmers are not only ensuring better harvest for their households but also contribute to the improvement of soil quality. FAO’s programme aims at helping farmers in this emergency situation in the short term but also disseminates knowledge and practices which will enhance their agricultural practices on a long-term perspective.



Basins prepared for Conservation Agriculture in Morija

FAO Lesotho remains committed in supporting Basotho communities and continuing the promotion of Conservation Agriculture benefits.

→ Launch of documentary on Human Security

### **Launch of “Basotho Voices: Human Security” documentary – 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2013**

**What Basotho dream about?**

**What do Basotho fear?**

**What makes them proud of being Basotho?**

**What do they think Lesotho need?**

A new documentary, “Basotho Voices: Human Security”, gives the floor to a diverse range of citizens from Lesotho. In this production, Basotho express themselves on issues related to Human Security, a concept which entails the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair.

All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.

This 13 minute film will be released on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2013 in Maseru. It has been produced by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and Sesotho Media & Development, a local NGO specialized in the use of films supporting social development.

The film features insightful interviews with Basotho citizens from different corners of the country, from rural and urban areas, male and females, elder, adults, youngsters and children - a true mosaic of Basotho society.

This production is part of a United Nations Lesotho project in support of communities affected by climate change induced shocks funded by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS). The UN agencies involved in the implementation of this project are FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and WHO<sup>i</sup>.

After the official launch, the movie will be displayed through different media to be accessible globally. – FAO

<sup>i</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Population Fund, World Food Programme, World Health Organization



### III- Human Interest Stories

These human interest stories were written in the post-harvest season 2012 (June) and the post-planting season 2013 (January), and shared with stakeholders, donors, UN agencies for their newsletters, and local and regional media.

They include beneficiaries from the FAO Emergency and Recovery Programme funded by UN Central Emergency Fund (CERF), Belgium, and the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), and beneficiaries from the UN Trust Fund For Human Security (UNTFHS) programme.

→ CERF/ECHO/Belgium stories

#### **Basotho farmers picking up CA (1)**

MASERU – When Paul Motseki saw how well the farmers in a neighbouring area were doing – they had strong, quality plants and good yields – he decided to copy their method of farming, using Conservation Agriculture (CA).

He had not heard of it before but the success of his neighbours encouraged him to try it out.

Motseki was selected to become a participant of the emergency programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), funded in 2012 by the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Belgium and UN Central Emergency Fund (CERF). The programme will continue in 2013 thanks to ECHO and the Department For International Development (DFID).

He lives in Mahobong, about 100km from Maseru, in the Leribe District of Lesotho. He owns a horse, a donkey, poultry and 10 cows, four of which are used for farming and the other six for milking. He grows maize, sorghum and beans.

Since he started farming, Motseki has always used conventional methods. But last year he decided to dedicate 0.2ha of his land to CA. He was so happy with the results that he is continuing to use the CA method.

“In conventional farming, I can harvest 960kgs of maize on 1.6ha of land. With only 0.2ha of land in conservation agriculture, I get the same yield!” he said, enthusiastically. “I also noticed that the quality of the crops is better in Conservation Agriculture than in conventional agriculture.”

Practicing CA implies respecting three principles: minimum soil disturbance, crop rotations and soil cover. Motseki said that he does two of them. “I dig basins for minimal soil disturbance and I leave the maize stem on the land after harvesting, as mulch. I use the top of the crops for feeding my livestock.” He wants to do crop rotations in the next season.

Motseki is the Lead Farmer of a group of 17, six men and 12 women. When asked why he was chosen, he said: “They chose me because I am a hard working farmer!”

The group works closely together. They help one another to prepare their lands, before the planting season. “We dig the basins for the seeds and fertilizer of about three lands every day, altogether, until all lands are ready.”

Motseki heads a family of 10. Fortunately six of his children are married and do not depend on him anymore. He takes care of two children and his mother who stays at his home. His wife died the last year.

At the age of 66, Motseki produces enough to cover the needs of his family and he sells the excess to the neighbouring villages. He also has a home garden where he grows tomatoes and other veggies. He sells most of them during the peak season.

“Most of my cereal production is under conventional agriculture,” says Motseki, “but I want to change that. The biggest challenge with CA is digging the basins to prepare the land. It is a lot of work! As I am getting older, I count on team work and motivation to develop conservation agriculture on my land.” – FAO



Lead farmer Paul Motseki in his maize field, Mahobong



Some of the farmers led by Motseki, Mahobong

### **Basotho farmers picking up CA (2)**

MASERU – Impressed by the success of Paul Motseki, lead farmer of her group, Matseko Raseboko did a “U-turn” on her agricultural practices and adopted Conservation Agriculture (CA).

Raseboko has been a farmer for years. She is 77 years old. This is the first time she is using CA methods and she is very happy about the coming season.

“My field looks very good. The maize plants look healthy and well developed,” she said with a large smile on her wrinkled face.

She planted 100% of her field – 0.4ha – using CA. She immediately dropped conventional practices when she saw the benefits of CA on Motseki’s land.



Raseboko is a widow, she had two children, one of whom died and the other is married and has her own family.

Raseboko owns one cow and she grows veggies in the back yard of her house.

In the past her relatives helped her to take care of her field. Now that she is a programme beneficiary of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and a member of the team led by Motseki, she gets help from the other members of the group.

In the previous years, she produced enough to sell her surplus to neighbouring villages. She says excitedly: “Now that I am doing CA, I am going to produce more and I will be able to sell more!” – FAO



M'e Matseko Raseboko, in her maize field in Mahobong

### **Basotho farmers picking up CA (3)**

MASERU – It's been only a year, but Motloheloa Koao has already noticed that his maize crops are greener and healthier – and he hopes this year will be his biggest harvest ever.

Koao is a conservation farmer. He lives in the Berea District of Lesotho, about 50km from Maseru. The closest village is Mafotholeng. He grows maize and beans and owns chickens. Unfortunately, his livestock – cattle, goats and sheep – was stolen.

He is one of the 11,000 vulnerable farmers who was selected by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to “try out” Conservation Agriculture (CA) under 2012 emergency programme funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Belgium and UN Central



Emergency Fund (CERF). Thanks to ECHO and the Department For International Development (DFID), the programme will continue in 2013.

CA is considered to be an effective method to adapt to climate change induced shocks. He had heard about CA before, but did not have a clue of where to begin.

Since he started he has participated in many training sessions. Extension officers regularly visit his farm.

“I have learned a lot from the training and the extension officers. They have given me great tips, new ideas and skills and I now know a lot about CA farming. I wouldn’t like to go back to conventional farming methods,” said Koao.

Farming is Koao’s only source of income. He has a large family, four boys and three girls. Luckily the two eldest girls are out of the house and work in Maseru. They no longer depend on him and have their own families.

All the other children, including the youngest, who is in pre-school, attend school in Maseru. One is a boarder, the others are taken care of by relatives. Koao tries to visit them regularly and the children return to the farm for holidays.

His wife is ill and she, too, is being looked after by relatives.

Koao said, with most of his children still at school and with an ill wife, he needs money to take care of them all.

“I grow enough to feed the family and even sell my produce to the neighbouring villages. I hope this year there will be an even bigger crop and I can sell more and make more money.”

Koao said before he started CA he used to hire a tractor, which was very expensive. In the CA method, he does not need a tractor, which has saved him money.

But one challenge he had come across was in the preparation of the land. He needed extra labour to help him dig the basins for the seeds and fertilizer. “The land was dry so it wasn’t easy to dig and I had to hire labourers to help me.”

But that has not stopped him. He wants to continue CA methods in the coming seasons. And, as long as



Koao on his maize field, Berea District

there is no frost, drought or late rains and the pesty cutworms stay away, Koao is very optimistic that he will have a big harvest this year.

Talking about the three principles of CA: minimum soil disturbance, the use of cover crops and rotating crops, Koao said: “This year I practised minimum soil disturbance and intercropping. But next season I will include mulching the soil.

“So far I am happy with the results,” he said, looking across his field of healthy-looking maize. “More farmers in this area are beginning to use CA methods. I think that when other farmers see how successful CA is, many more will take up CA.” – FAO

→ UNTFHS stories

### **Fighting Food Insecurity, a way forward**

An estimated 70% of Lesotho’s population is dependent on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods, meaning that most people are vulnerable to climate change. This is made because only 9% of the land is arable.



Thabang Motsomi, in his maize field in the village of Maphuts’eng, Mohale’s Hoek

Thabang Motsomi’s family is one of those who have suffered the effects of climate change. Because of the severe drought early last year, he could plant only half of the land – 0.4ha - that he owns.

“We don’t really know what to do about the drought and soon we will not have enough to eat.” Motsomi said: “You see, we have four people in the household, only my son and I can work, and I am already 60.”

In the 2004 National Household Survey, more than 55% of people lived below the poverty line.

“Lesotho experienced the worst drought in 30 years between 2006 and 2007, which resulted in a major drop in the production of maize and sorghum crops. Then we had floods in 2011 and now again in 2012. The impact of late rains affects the capacity of thousands of vulnerable families to recover. If we don’t help, a lot of people will not be able to get enough food to eat,” said Bokang Mantutle, FAO project coordinator in Lesotho. “Food security is important because it relates to many other issues, such as the maternal mortality rate and nutrition issues. Sexual and gender-based violence is also high and is likely to escalate as women tend to bear the brunt of poverty and food unavailability.”

FAO Lesotho realizes the necessity of strengthening the livelihoods of this vulnerable group to ensure that they are able to reach their economic and social potential through food security, empowerment and protection.

With support from the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, FAO Lesotho has been coordinating the implementation of the project “Strengthening Rural Livelihoods Severely Affected by Climate Change-induced Drought in Lesotho” since 2010. The funds are being used to protect and empower the people who have been the most severely affected by climate-change induced drought in 13

communities in three of the most vulnerable agro-ecological zones of Lesotho - Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek.

Working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs, and the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office, FAO has indentified and trained 500 households in Conservation Agriculture (CA) and will continue providing supplies and technical assistance this year.

The aim of CA is to give farmers improved and sustainable livelihoods through the application of the three CA principles: minimum soil disturbance, permanent soil cover and crop rotations. CA provides an adequate adaptation technique for climate change in Lesotho and is affordable to all farmers. CA protects



Shoapeane Rori in her maize field in Hloahloeng, Mohale's Hoek

the soil from erosion by water and wind, improves the soil's organic matter and conserves the infiltration of soil water, while reducing farmers' production costs.

"I planted maize in my filed last November and I am able to produce more this year than last year by using the CA method," said Rori, who is the head of a family of 11. "With the help of FAO, my whole family has enough to eat and we are giving some of the maize to our poor neighbours." Rori received support for the planting season from FAO in September 2012 in the second and last year of the project.

But not all families have been successful yet. Adopting CA requires a continued effort during several agricultural seasons, improving soil quality and moisture progressively.

Tati Pekeche's family has struggled. Because of the severe drought, he was able to plant on only half of his land. Late rains during the planting season have affected crop production negatively nationwide.



Public gathering in Mekaling, Mohale's Hoek District

"I know CA is good and I followed every step that I learned from the training, then I just waited for the rain, but the rain never came. When it finally came, it was too late to plant the whole land," Pekeche said.

Although the situation is challenging, he is optimistic about the future and is expecting to improve his harvest.

When asking about this year, he said: "I will definitely continue doing CA, because I think the seeds that FAO distributed were the best we have had access to and these training sessions were very useful. I just hope that we will get more rain next season."



“The last harvest season was one of the lowest in the past decade in Lesotho. The impact of erratic weather patterns and climate change can be strongly felt by the communities in rural areas,” said Borja Miguelez, FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator, “but there are solutions to these problems. Conservation Agriculture gives us hope for the future, we need to continue working.”

The Commission on Human Security (CHS) defines human security as the protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfillment” (UN Trust Fund official website). FAO Lesotho has closely followed this definition to design its projects according to different groups’ needs and helping them feel more secure about their lives.

### **Nearly half of all children under five years in Lesotho are stunted, an indicator of chronic malnutrition**

Stunting is common in southern Africa. It is estimated that in Lesotho about 40% of children under the age of five are stunted.

To improve the nutritional status of the Basotho people, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – with support from the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) – decided to help 2,560 families to start their own home-based gardens and to grow a selection of vegetables.

“Vegetable production diversifies food sources and improves the diets of rural families” said Bokang Mantutle, FAO project coordinator in Lesotho. “Most of Basotho families have access to small plot of land near their houses where they can grow vegetables. With the right techniques, we can increase the production and extend the availability of vegetables all year long.”

Manyefolo Ralefu is one of the participants in the backyard garden production project in Mafeteng District. She is a widow and heads a household of five.



Manyefolo Ralefu in her backyard garden, in Mafeteng District

Ralefu received seeds from the FAO and underwent five days of intensive training. Last year she had her first harvest.

“I started the project in 2011 because my family needs to eat vegetables and we don’t have enough money to buy them from the market. Now we have rakes and spades and we grow rape, spinach, beetroot, carrots and onions all over our backyard and we are so happy.”

FAO also collaborated with World Food Programme (WFP) in school feeding programmes in Lesotho. The aim was to bring home gardens to schools.



Makhotso Lephutha at Mokhalimetso Primary School, in Mophale's Hoek District

For Makhotso Lephutha, the backyard garden project not only means sufficient food to eat, but also brings hope for the future. Lephutha is a teacher at the Mokhalimetso Primary School, where she has worked for five years.

Mokhalimetso Primary School has 215 pupils, but only seven teachers. The school has no running water or electricity.

“Before we started the project, our kids here could eat only one kind of vegetable every week, which is not good for their health. We worried about it so much. In 2011, we received peas, potatoes, tomatoes and cabbage seeds from the FAO. Now pupils get more nutrition, so they grow faster and study better.”

By helping people to achieve food security, FAO does not only help farmers to get enough food to eat, but it also spurs them on to plan and dream for the future.

Lephutha has a dream for her pupils at Mokhalimetso Primary School: “FAO helps me to dream about something that I could never think about before. I want all of my pupils to eat well and go to secondary school and even university in the future.”

“Chronic malnutrition levels in Lesotho are unacceptably high. Malnutrition is often the result of a combination of social aspects and deserves multi-sector responses,” said Borja Miguez, FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator. “Home gardens are an excellent complement for Basotho families’ livelihoods. Communities are increasingly interested in new techniques, such as key holes and double trenches. We start seeing families replicating these techniques on their own and this is a great encouragement for the future.” – FAO

### **Planting the seeds of hope**

Heavy rainfall, long withering droughts and other natural shocks and disasters – all signs of increased climate change – have made it almost impossible for vulnerable people to cope.

In most cases they simply do not have the capacity – physically and financially – to survive.

Accessing quality agricultural inputs - such as seeds and fertilizers - is a major problem for rural communities in Lesotho because they have limited resources. And, even when money is available, isolated farmers face the further challenge of getting to and from distant markets.

For this reason, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs and the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office, has been supporting in the last years seed production at local level. Higher quality of inputs and local availability are the main expected outcomes of this initiative.

According to the World Bank, up to 50% of crop yield increases have come from improved seeds. However, in Africa, less than 30% of smallholder farmers use seed of improved varieties, and they are of variable quality. Realizing this problem, FAO has selected 38 farmers in three pilot districts to help them improve seed production and find local markets to sell their seeds. This activity has been supported by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) and coordinated by FAO Lesotho.

FAO's activities include, but are not limited to, supporting early generation seed multiplication by national research institutions to the promotion of small-scale seed enterprises, supporting community seed production in order to ensure production and access to good quality seed of adapted varieties at the community level, and providing training and technical support to the pilot participants.



Women selecting seeds, in Rothe – Maseru District

Mphakela Kutho is a teacher who decided to participate in the seed production project last year. Now he is standing in front of his beans and smiling. "I received bean seeds from FAO and they grew very well. A lot of schools and neighbours nearby want to buy my beans and I see a big market here," said Kutho.

He is hiring eight people to help him produce beans this season and most of them are women, who have difficulties to find jobs in other places.



Public gathering in Ramokoatsi, in Mafeteng District

For Matamane Hlalele, the most valuable thing that she received from the project was not the seeds, but the training. "I have 7ha of land but this was the first time to produce beans. FAO and experts from the Ministry of Agriculture came to my field to inspect the land before planting and to ensure that they came back to revisit us all the time to give us suggestions. I am very satisfied with the training and their services."

The Food and Agriculture Organization is renowned for its work in helping farmers to become more sustainable in Lesotho. FAO started its work in the country in 1983. Since then, FAO Lesotho has assisted in devising agricultural policies, supporting planning, drafting legislation and creating national strategies to achieve rural development and hunger alleviation goals.

## IV- Joint Media Visits

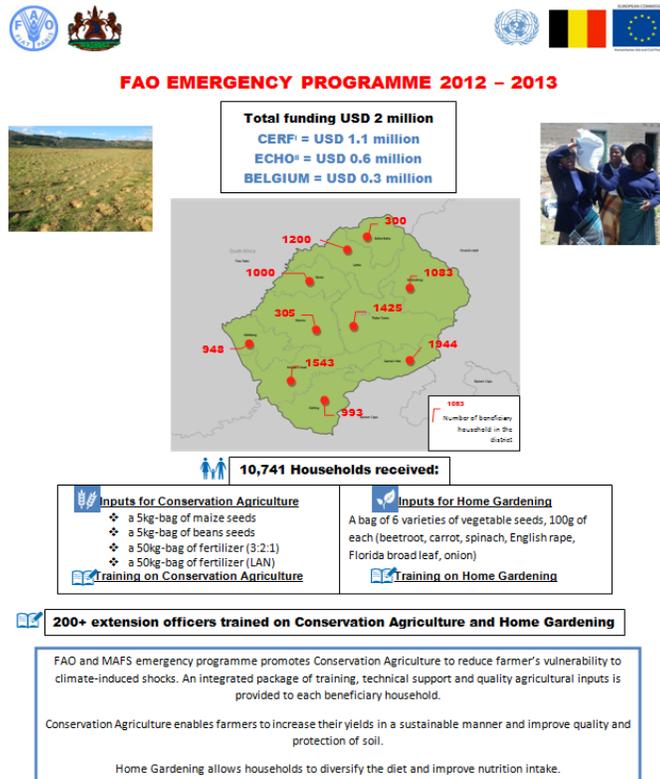
FAO together with WFP and UNICEF organized a joint media visit on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2012 to explain their programmes to media staff, from South African agencies such as Business Day and Sunday Times. They visited beneficiaries in Mohale's Hoek and Mafeteng Districts.

(See section I- Press articles)



Journalist filming a CA land prepared with basins, Morija, Maseru District

→ Summary of activities 2012-2013, distributed to media people during the mission

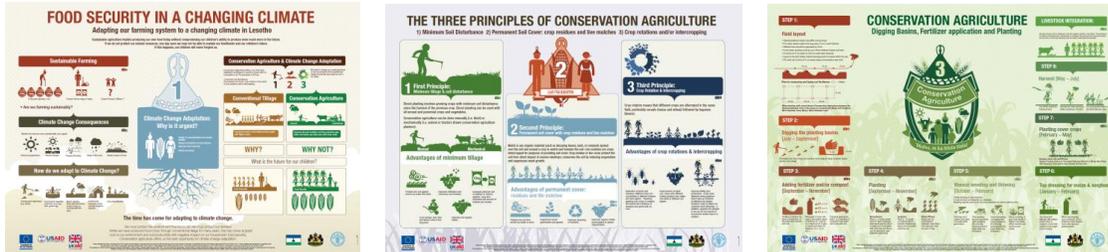


\* Central Emergency Response Fund  
 \*\* European Commission Humanitarian Office

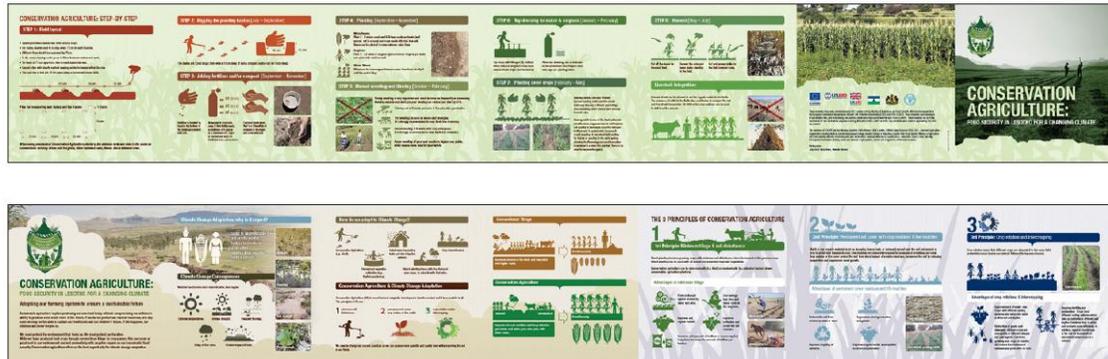
## V- Training materials

Under the Emergency and Recovery Programme and the CA coordination project funded by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the following training materials have been developed.

→ Posters for extension officers to use during CA trainings for farmers



→ Leaflet to be distributed among farmers and all public



→ Photoguide for extension officers to use during CA trainings for farmers





School kids looking at the training material, Maphuts'eng, Mohale's Hoek District

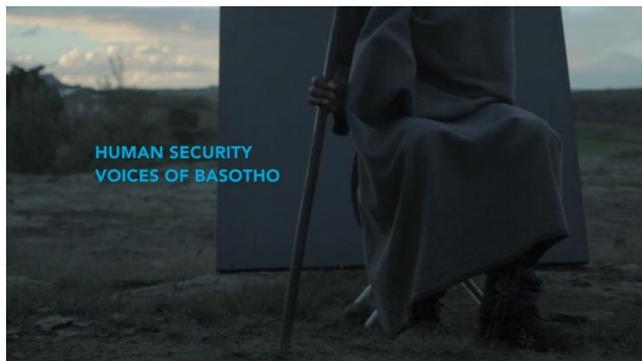


Journalist filming CA material

## VI- Promotion of Human Security Concept

FAO, on behalf of all UN agencies in Lesotho, developed a 12min-documentary with the NGO Sesotho Media & Development. This documentary called “Basotho voices: Human Security” promotes human security concepts through interviews of Basotho people from the whole country.

(See section II- Press releases)



## VII- Awareness raising and advocacy

Production of CA logo and t-shirts, to be distributed to all beneficiaries of the programme, staff of Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, members of the CA Task Force, decision makers and policy makers



Mr. Litsoane Litsoane (on the right), Minister of Agriculture and Food Security wearing a CA t-shirt, Maphuts'eng, Mohale's Hoek District