Eswatini 🕕

Lesotho

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY | Decrease in prevalence of high acute food insecurity since 2022.

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY | Since 2022, acute food insecurity has remained largely stable.

PEAK 2023/24 (OCTOBER 2023-MARCH 2024)

Total

population

1.2M

of the total population faced high levels of acute food insecurity. This includes 0.01M people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

This is an improvement compared with the worst period in 2022 when the peak figure reached 29 percent of the analysed population in the December 2021–March 2022 lean season. However, there has been a marginal deterioration since the lean season of October 2022-March 2023, underpinned by the reduced maize harvest and high food prices, as well as income losses associated with a slow economic recovery from the pandemic.

Source: Eswatini IPC TWG, August 2023.

Peak numbers of people (in millions) by phase of acute food insecurity, 2016-2023



Source: Eswatini IPC TWG.

A protracted major food crisis A lower-middle-income country, Eswatini has had at least 21 percent of its population facing high levels of acute food insecurity in each GRFC edition. In 2016, it was affected by the 2015-16 El Niño-related drought. In 2020/21, it had its highest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) in eight years of reporting, at 366 000 - corresponding to 31 percent of the analysed population, driven by COVID-19-related income losses and high prices.

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS 2023-2024

Economic shocks Household purchasing power has been constrained by limited economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including high unemployment and lower wages, and high food prices largely attributable to increases in global commodity prices. The high cost of mineral fertilizers in 2022 also led to reduced application which contributed to curbing crop yields in 2023 (IPC, August 2023).

Weather extremes Prolonged dry spells interspersed with excessive rainfall between January and March 2023 resulted in flooding in the Lubombo region, contributing to reduced crop production. Production of the staple cereal maize was an estimated 15 percent below the five-year average. The prevailing El Niño event is expected to bring drier-than-normal weather conditions between October 2023 and June 2024, and may lead to another season of reduced vields in 2024 (FAO-GIEWS, July 2023).

Note: While the size of the bars reflects rounding to two decimal points, the labelling is rounded to one decimal point.

TTT 0.3M people or 22% of the analysed

population faced high levels of acute food insecurity during the lean season.

PEAK 2023/24 (OCTOBER 2023-MARCH 2024)

In rural areas of Lesotho. the number of people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) during the 2022-23 lean season. when households were expected to have depleted their own food stocks and be reliant on buying food, was slightly lower than in early 2022. No populations faced Emergency (IPC Phase 4) in the latest analysis.

Source: Lesotho IPC TWG Sentember 2023

Peak numbers of people (in millions) by phase of acute food insecurity, 2016-2023

Total

2.7M

Analysed

population

1.5M

42%



Note: While the size of the bars reflects rounding to two decimal points, the labelling is rounded to one decimal point.

Source: Lesotho IPC TWG.

A protracted food crisis A lower-middle-income country, Lesotho has been included in all editions of the GRFC and as a major food crisis five times due to the high share of people facing acute food insecurity, with populations facing Emergency each year except 2023. Levels of high acute food insecurity peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic with 40 percent of the analysed population facing Crisis or worse between October 2020 and March 2021. Widespread poverty and vulnerability to climate extremes underlie food insecurity.

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS 2023-2024

Weather extremes In December 2022, heavy rains resulted in waterlogging and interrupted weeding activities, curtailing production and reducing income. Drier conditions from October to December 2023 were expected to continue until March 2024 with a negative impact on agricultural production (IPC, September 2023).

Economic shocks The purchasing power of the poorest households was eroded by high food prices, inflation and reduced casual labour opportunities, thus reducing access to food. Food inflation rose from 9 percent in January 2023 to 11 percent in February. After a seasonal decline between May and October, inflation reached 10 percent in December 2023 (WFP Economic Explorer, 2023). The Consumer Price Index has been steadily rising since 2016 (Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, February 2024).

Income from non-agricultural activities was expected to remain below normal because of reduced remittances and limited job opportunities inside the country and in neighbouring South Africa (IPC, September 2023).

country 45% population