LESOTHO

IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY ANALYSIS
JULY 2022 – MARCH 2023

Published on August 19, 2022

Excessive rains received from October 2021 to March 2022 resulted in low crop production compared to 2021 and reference year

CURRENT SITUATION JULY- SEPTEMBER 2022

229,000 15% of the population analysed. People facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION	Phase 5	0 People in Catastrophe
	Phase 4	0 People in Emergency
	Phase 3	229,000 People in Crisis
	Phase 2	495,000 People Stressed
	Phase 1	761,000 People in food security

PROJECTION OCTOBER 2022 - MARCH 2023

320,000 22% of the population analysed. People facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION	Phase 5	0 People in Catastrophe
	Phase 4	0 People in Emergency
	Phase 3	320,000 People in Crisis
	Phase 2	511,000 People Stressed
	Phase 1	655,000 People in food security

Overview

According to the latest results of an IPC Acute Food Insecurity analysis, an estimated of 229,000 people representing 15% of the population in rural areas of Lesotho are classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) in the current period from July to September 2022, and will require urgent action to reduce food gaps, protect and restore livelihoods and prevent acute malnutrition. Six out of 10 analyzed districts of the country have been classified in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed) in the current period while four districts are classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis).

From October 2022 to March 2023, an estimated 320,000 people representing 22% of the population in rural areas of Lesotho are projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). Eight of the analyzed districts are projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). At a country level and with regards to the weather condition itself, seasonal rainfall came with no delay. However, throughout the rainy season most areas experienced excessive amounts of rain, which destroyed some crops and caused waterlogging in most parts of the country. As a result, Lesotho registered low crop production compared to the previous year (2021) and the most recent five-year average.

A decrease in crop production and the loss of main livelihoods will cause the lean season to start as early as July versus October in a normal year; with very poor households across all livelihood zones expected to experience food consumption gaps before the start of the projected period, which is normally the lean season in Lesotho. The food insecurity status is also because of prices of food remaining higher than both last year (2021) and the five-year average and increasing inflation, which is expected to remain high in the projection period.

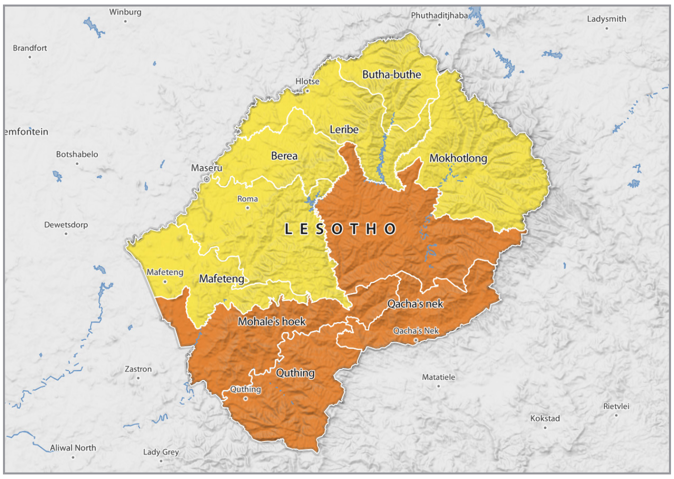
Key Drivers

Waterlogging
Heavy rains destroyed crops and property in January, resulting in waterlogging in a number of areas in the country.

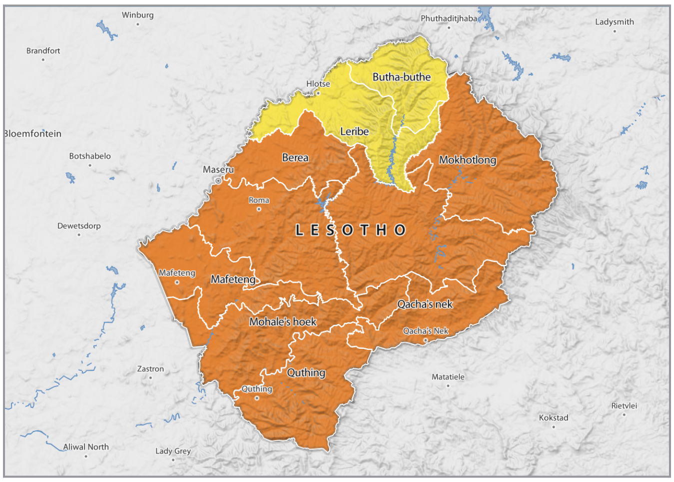
Price shocks
Prices have remained higher than the 5-year average and higher than last year.

Economic Decline
Increasing inflation coupled with reduced income opportunities from main sources, reducing purchasing power.

Current Acute Food Insecurity (July 2022 – Sept 2022)



Projected Situation (October 2022 - March 2022)



Key for the Map

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

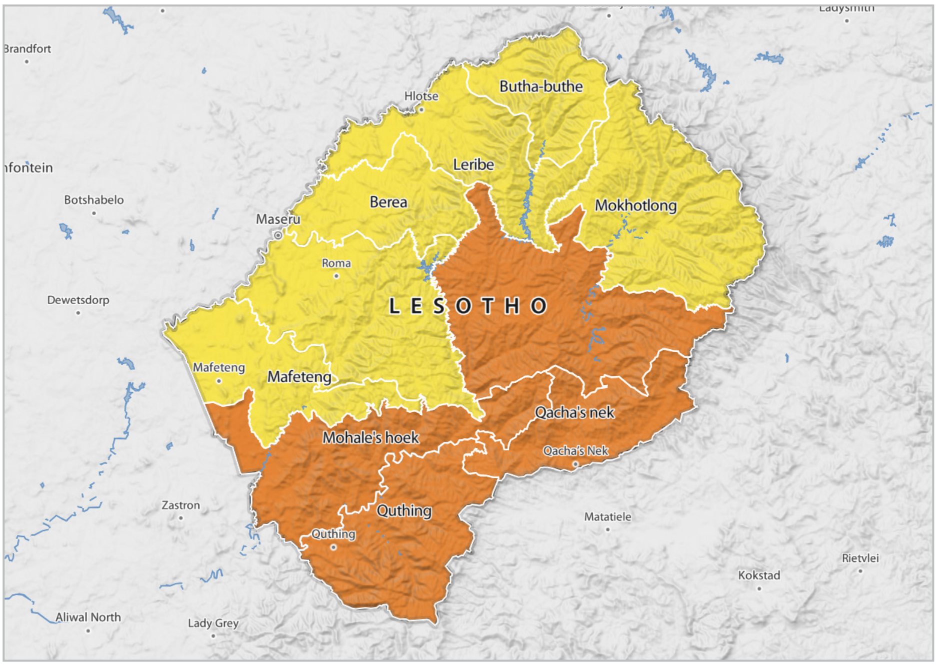
(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine

Evidence Level

** Medium

CURRENT SITUATION MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (JULY - SEPT 2022)



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Evidence Level

** Medium

District	Total population analysed	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3+	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Berea	182,965	100,631	55	54,890	30	27,445	15	0	0	0	0	2	27,445	15
Butha-buthe	87,377	48,057	55	30,582	35	8,738	10	0	0	0	0	2	8,738	10
Leribe	261,178	143,648	55	91,412	35	26,118	10	0	0	0	0	2	26,118	10
Mafeteng	157,065	70,679	45	62,826	40	23,560	15	0	0	0	0	2	23,560	15
Maseru	233,995	116,998	50	81,898	35	35,099	15	0	0	0	0	2	35,099	15
Mohales hoek	160,129	80,065	50	48,039	30	32,026	20	0	0	0	0	3	32,026	20
Mokhotlong	99,386	54,662	55	29,816	30	14,908	15	0	0	0	0	2	14,908	15
Qachas nek	55,975	22,390	40	22,390	40	11,195	20	0	0	0	0	3	11,195	20
Quthing	118,495	53,323	45	41,473	35	23,699	20	0	0	0	0	3	23,699	20
Thaba tseka	128,580	70,719	55	32,145	25	25,716	20	0	0	0	0	3	25,716	20
Grand Total	**1,485,145**	**761,171**	**51**	**495,471**	**33**	**228,503**	**15**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**		**228,503**	**15**

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, and thus, they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.

CURRENT SITUATION OVERVIEW (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022)

During the current period (July to September), six of 10 analyzed districts of the country have been classified in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed) and four are in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). The current period coincides with the post-harvest period in Lesotho when the majority of households are expected to consume food from their own production as well as generate income from selling crops, especially households with surplus. During this period, it is estimated that about 229,000 people (15% of the rural population) are in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) and require urgent action. This represents an increase of 28% from the previous analysis in June 2021.

Heavy rains received from October 2021 to March 2022 resulted in crop damage to some fields and waterlogging at the critical growth stage for some crops. Weeding was negatively affected, resulting in reduced casual labour opportunities for poor households. The excessive rains further resulted in low crop production this year compared to last season, and below total production of reference year (2009/10) based on HEA analysis. Some households are likely to deplete their food stock from own production within four months after harvest, with poor households likely to deplete within the first two months compared to six months in a normal year. HEA Outcome analysis indicated that food gaps will start being experienced as early as July in most Livelihood Zones for all the very poor and some poor households.

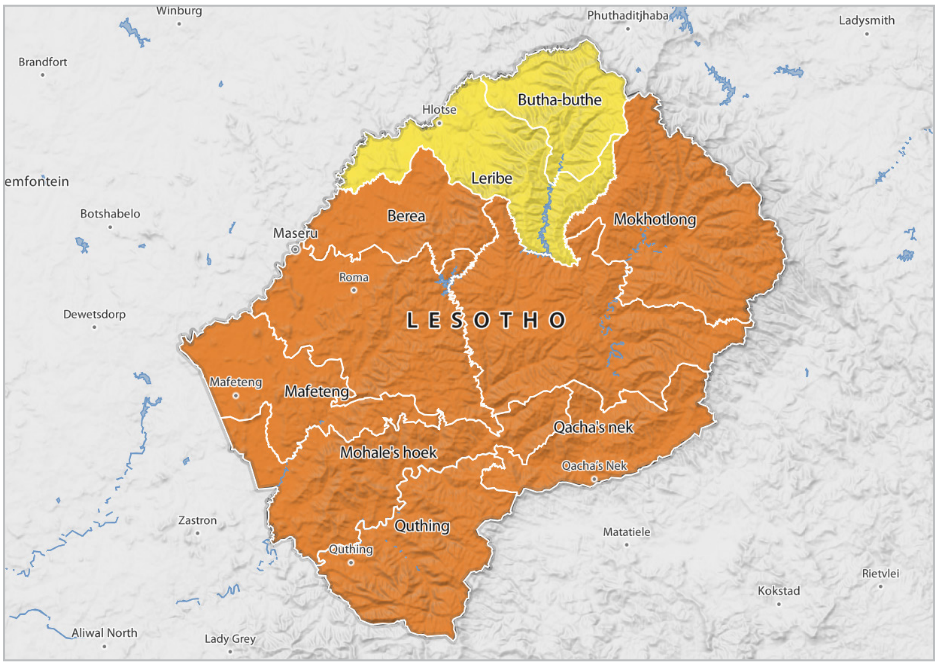
Food availability is expected to remain a minor limiting factor. Despite the decrease in local crop production and 10% decrease in maize production in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) compared to last season, the imports from South Africa are expected to remain normal. However, food prices remain high compared to last year and above the five-year average, and are expected to remain high throughout the analysis period. It is anticipated that households will continue to rely on markets more than usual to cover their consumption needs. The prices of staples have been largely impacted by the knock on effects of the declining economic situation in the country. Fuel prices have increased as a result of headline inflation of 7.8% compared to 6.5% in the previous fiscal year. This increased the cost of importation of oil and oil products. The resultant effect is high prices, especially for staples and cooking oil for the households. This is going to affect those households that will deplete their stocks early in the consumption year who eventually rely on markets for supplies.

Sources of livelihoods (On farm casual labour, remittances, crop sales, beer brewing, petty trade, formal salary/wages, livestock or livestock product sales) remained slightly lower than normal, thus implying deterioration in income from other sources. There is an increase in the number of farmers that planted crops during the 2021/22 agricultural season compared to previous season, but households did not get normal income from weeding because this activity was inhibited by water logging from excessive rains in most areas in the country, thus reducing food access at household level.

Livestock body conditions improved since last year (2021) following the timely onset of rains which resulted in improved rangelands. This is expected to benefit those households that rely on selling of wool and mohair for food and income. While livestock prices remained almost the same as last year, the livestock market contracted for households who sell their animals in the Republic of South Africa because of the legal regulations that require all those who sell to get the permits and secure money to cover costs of veterinary services to get market access in RSA.

The Multi Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2018) indicated low GAM rate for the country compared to previous year. It also indicated that the majority of households were engaging in stress coping strategies due to decline in crop production.

PROJECTED SITUATION MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (OCT 2022 - MARCH 2023)



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Quthing	118,495	47,398	40	41,473	35	29,624	25	0	0	0	0	3	29,624	25
Thaba tseka	128,580	57,861	45	38,574	30	32,145	25	0	0	0	0	3	32,145	25
Grand Total	**1,485,145**	**654,668**	**44**	**511,048**	**34**	**319,429**	**22**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**		**319,429**	**22**

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, and thus, they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.

PROJECTED SITUATION OVERVIEW (OCTOBER 2022 - MARCH 2023)

The projected period marks the lean season in Lesotho when most households are expected to have depleted their own produce and increased reliance on purchases and causal labour for food and income. However, food prices are expected to remain high compared to last year and five-year average and will further reduce the purchasing power of market dependent households.

During this period (October 2022 – March 2023), about 320,000 people (22% of the rural population) are projected to face a Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity situation and may require humanitarian assistance to reduce food gaps, protect and restore livelihoods and prevent acute malnutrition. During this period, the total population that will likely experience high acute food insecurity is expected to be higher in numbers compared to the same time last year, representing an increase of 3 percent. Eight (8) out of ten (10) analyzed districts are projected to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) while the remaining two areas will continue to face a Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity situation.

The lean season is also the rainy season in Lesotho and normal to above normal rains have been forecasted, which are likely to allow farmers to start planting on time and hence increase on-farm casual labour opportunities for poor households. However, income from non-agricultural activities is expected to remain slightly below normal because of reduced remittances, beer brewing and limited job opportunities in the country and in South Africa impacted by COVID-19. Livestock condition is expected to remain fair to good due to improved rangelands and water sources, but income from sales will be negatively impacted by legal restrictions at the borders of RSA, limiting the numbers of livestock sold in RSA.

Humanitarian Food Assistance

HFA data was not available for the current analysis period as most interventions ended in March 2022, while for the projected period the only available HFA was food assistance from government, which did not meet any of the guidelines provided for AFI IPC Analysis.

Key Assumptions

1. **Rainfall**: Lesotho Meteorological services forecasted normal to above normal rainfall for October to December 2022. According to the International Research Institute (IRI, June 2022), a large majority of the models in the plume predict Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) to remain below-normal at the level of a weak La Niña until Jul-Sep 2022. Similar to the most-recent official CPC/IRI ENSO Outlook issued on June 9, 2022, the objective model-based ENSO outlook forecasts a continuation of the La Niña event with moderate probability (52% chance) during Jul-Sep 2022, continuing into boreal fall and winter with 51-59% likelihood. This means there is a good probability of normal to above normal rains in the projected period.
2. **Agricultural casual labour:** it is expected that agricultural activities such as weeding are susceptible to disruption due to heavy rains that might be brought by the anticipated La Nina conditions.
3. **Non-agricultural casual labour** is expected to be slightly below normal due to reduced remittances and limited labour opportunities.
4. **Seasonal employment:** It is expected that opportunities for seasonal workers will remain below normal, and this will reduce seasonal jobs for Basotho migrants.
5. **Food availability at Household level/Imports:** Although the heavy rains destroyed some crops in January and caused waterlogging, most maize crops reached maturity stage. The 2021/22 agricultural season recorded a low harvest of main crops compared to the five-year average. Imports from South Africa are expected to remain constant.
6. **Markets:** The markets in both rural and urban settings are expected to be fully operational in the projected period.
7. **Food prices** are extremely high and are expected to remain high in the projected period.
8. **Livestock production and sales:** Livestock conditions improved since last year and these conditions are expected to prevail in the projected period. However, livestock prices remained almost the same as last year and the livestock market contracted, thus farmers are expected to sell fewer animals than normal.
9. **Border restrictions:** Though border restrictions into South Africa are eased, high prices will continue to limit access to animal vaccines and semen (artificial insemination), thus resulting in poor productivity and overall livestock conditions.
10. **Employment:** COVID-19 resulted in job losses which added to the already existing high unemployment in the country.

Impact of the war in Ukraine in Lesotho

The war in Ukraine has resulted in price hikes for both food & non-food items. As of June 2022, the price of one litre of paraffin was M18.90 compared to M9.50 in 2021 same time. The price of 750 ml of cooking oil also increased from M28 to M50 in June 2022. Price increases were evident in the fertilizer trade. Regarding cereal trade, as of June 2022, a ton of wheat cost M24,000.00 compared to M9,000.00 in 2021. The Government of Lesotho subsidized fuel prices by 6% effective from July to December 2022. Prior to the 6% subsidy, the price of petrol 93 was M23.70 compared to M22.20, Petrol 95 was M24.15 and now M22.65. Russia and Ukraine are also the main producers of wheat and currently, the alternative wheat suppliers are strained, causing high demand and negatively impacting on the price of wheat. Lesotho is a net importer of most of its food commodities from South Africa and will also suffer from the increasing prices of wheat. Further price increases are anticipated as the war in Ukraine continues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Response Priorities

1. Urgent action is required to save lives, reduce food consumption gaps and protect livelihoods of all vulnerable people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).
2. Provision of agricultural inputs to farming households that cannot afford access to them.
3. Government to continue with the initiative of purchase of grains and beans from local producers to promote market opportunities for farmers who have surplus from own produce.
4. Reduction of food consumption gaps by improving access to food through appropriate modalities.
5. Protection of livelihood assets and production systems through livestock vaccination campaigns and fodder production interventions.
6. Promotion of resilience building initiatives, such as climate-smart agriculture.
7. Returnee migrants should be prioritized for support to establish alternative livelihoods and should be included in social relief programmes.
8. Livelihood recovery programmes (i.e. agricultural inputs) for populations in Stressed (IPC Phase 2).
9. Development of complementarity programmes (i.e. backyard gardening inputs for poor and very poor households).
10. Capacity building programmes for populations in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and higher.
11. Food price subsidy intervention should be prioritized and well targeted.
12. The government to continue implementing agricultural inputs subsidies to include the short seasoned varieties, and supply be on time to facilitate timely planting.
13. The National Strategic Resilience framework should be fully operationalised to ensure that households diversify their livelihoods to withstand future shocks.
14. Intensify nutrition education with more emphasis of feeding practices inclusive of exclusive and recommended duration of breastfeeding.

Risk Factors to Monitor

- Prices for food & non-food items, agricultural inputs and fuel
- Rainfall patterns
- Income levels and food sources
- Overall Inflation and food inflation as well as their impact on the economy

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

- The IPC TWG conducted a face-to-face workshop, observing COVID-19 mitigation protocols, to analyse data from different sources. The IPC Global Support Unit (GSU) provided virtual technical assistance and there were also IPC Cross Country Learning Exchange participants s from Zimbabwe, Malawi & Eswatini included.
- Primary data was used from the following food security indicators: FCS, HDDS, HHS, LCSI from the LVAC Main Assessment conducted in June 2022, with secondary data on prices from WFP monitoring and the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics as well as weather information from Lesotho Meteorological Services data. Crop estimates data was also provided by BOS from the Crop Forecasting Report July 2022.
- Trend analysis from previous years VAA and rapid assessments and analyses (2017-2022) was undertaken.
- HEA was also used to analyse data collected from key informants. Only the following key parameters were monitored: price of staples, price of food for work, remittances, beer brewing, and agricultural labour opportunities and prices, national crop production estimates, livestock numbers, livestock and livestock products prices.
- IPC AFI analysis was conducted to classify the severity of food insecurity in all rural districts.

Limitations of the analysis

The analysis duration was impacted by the late start of the preceding VAA activities which impacted on late uploading of pieces of evidence in the ISS. Also, the HEA Baseline Profiles used are old and were last updated in 2009/10.

What is the IPC and IPC Acute Food Insecurity?

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Acute Food Insecurity is defined as any manifestation of food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration. It is highly susceptible to change and can occur and manifest in a population within a short amount of time, as a result of sudden changes or shocks that negatively impact on the determinants of food insecurity.

Contact for further Information

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Classification of food insecurity and malnutrition was conducted using the IPC protocols, which are developed and implemented worldwide by the IPC Global Partnership - Action Against Hunger, CARE, CILSS, EC-JRC , FAO, FEWSNET, Global Food Security Cluster, Global Nutrition Cluster, IGAD, Oxfam, PROGRESAN-SICA, SADC, Save the Children, UNICEF and WFP.

IPC Analysis Partners: