



# BUILDING RESILIENCE TO DROUGHT IN LESOTHO

Nearly 75 percent of Lesotho’s population live in rural areas and depend on farming for their livelihoods. The proportion of people living below the poverty line is increasing, and arable land is extremely limited (9 percent of the total area). When the El Niño-induced drought struck in 2015, the agricultural sector was strongly impacted, and the Government of Lesotho declared a state of drought emergency. Many households did not plant at all, leading to a drastic decline in food availability and harvest. In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and the Bureau of Statistics, this project provided urgently needed resources to initiate support for the most vulnerable households in the country. This project aimed to enhance resilience, rebuild agricultural capacities and support the production of short-cycle vegetables and staple crops, thereby increasing food availability and diversity for those most negatively affected by the drought.



## WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

Building on strong collaboration between FAO and MAFS, the project provided technical support to households and government staff, increased the availability of food and strengthened household food security. Livelihood protection packages were distributed to 2 905 vulnerable small-scale households, which included seeds for cereal production, vegetable seeds for home gardening to diversify diets and fertilizers and other inputs to enhance production. Government and MAFS staff benefited from training on geographic information system (GIS) tools and the provision of visual training materials on climate-smart agriculture (CSA), including conservation agriculture (CA). Extension staff provided CA, home gardening and nutrition training and technical support to beneficiary households who implemented these practices and CSA technologies.

## IMPACT

The TCP funding from FAO was particularly important because it acted as a catalyst to provide the initial response and attract additional support. While activities were ongoing, FAO and other partners continued with resource mobilization efforts. In total, FAO was able to raise over USD 9 million for El Niño support to the country. The project enabled country offices to provide community outreach for vegetable and cereal production to alleviate hunger in the short term. Through capacity building for government institutions and training for beneficiaries, the project delivered concrete and complementary support for agriculture production that extends beyond project implementation. By introducing CA techniques, farmers are able to better protect their soil against erosion and nutrient depletion and retain moisture in the soil. The production of food was also enhanced by the introduction of CSA practices and technologies, and households will be able to harvest vegetables most months of the year, even under water-scarce conditions, thereby increasing overall food security.

## KEY FACTS

**Contribution**  
USD 500 000

**Duration**  
July 2016 – July 2017

**Resource Partners**  
FAO

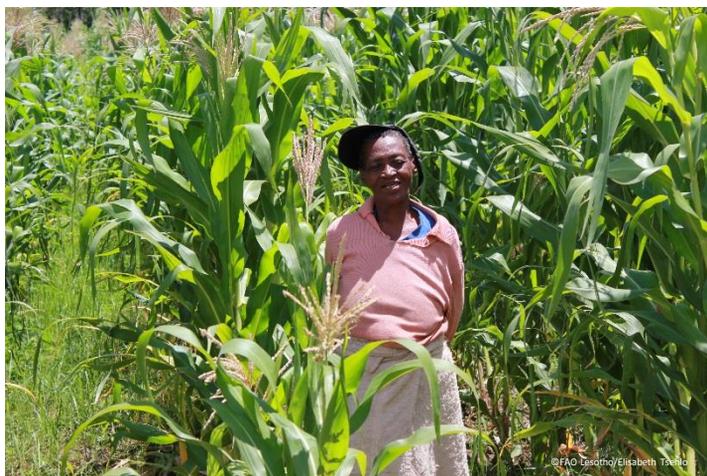
**Partners**  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), Bureau of Statistics

**Beneficiaries**  
Vulnerable smallholder households affected by El Niño-related drought; small-scale farmers; staff from the Bureau of Statistics and MAFS



# ACTIVITIES

- Improved agricultural production, capacities and resilience of 2 905 vulnerable households.
- Procured and distributed agricultural input packages of vegetables and cereals to households for immediate production.
- Monitored and assessed harvest and impact of technical support.
- Strengthened resilience capacities of beneficiaries, as well as MAFS staff through a training of trainers on CSA and capacity building for GIS data and analysis.
- Produced the Lesotho Land Cover Atlas, which generated valuable data and maps used in the response to El Niño.



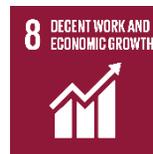
**Project Code**  
TCP/LES/3601

**Project Title**  
Emergency assistance to vulnerable smallholder households affected by El Niño-induced drought

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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