Dry conditions at start of 2017/18 cropping season

Land preparation and planting for the 2018 cereal crops is underway and is expected to be finalized by the end of the year. Abnormal dry conditions were observed during most of September and November, resulting in below-average vegetation conditions in cropped areas in the main cereal-producing northern regions. However, heavier rains were recorded at the beginning of December and meteorological forecasts point to a higher likelihood of above-average rainfall in the first quarter of 2018. Should the favourable rains materialize, the current moisture deficits are expected to be reversed with a positive effect on 2018 production prospects.

Production rebounded strongly in 2017

Based on the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics’ agricultural assessment, cereal production in 2017 is estimated at a well above-average level of 238 000 tonnes, a significant increase compared to the drought-reduced level of 2016. Most of this increase reflects a sharp upturn in maize production, estimated at 200 000 tonnes. In addition, there was a sharp increase for sorghum production, while the wheat output is estimated at an average level, but still well above the previous year’s output.

Import requirements drop in 2017/18

As a result of the bumper 2017 output, cereal import requirements are estimated at a well below-average level of 177 000 tonnes in the 2017/18 marketing year (April/March). Of this amount, imports of maize would account for 65 000 tonnes.
In addition, given the favourable supply situation, stock levels are forecast to rise sharply in 2017/18 to near average levels.

**Decreased number of food insecure**

The food security situation has improved markedly in 2017/18 compared to the previous year where an estimated 709,000 people required food assistance. Based on the latest 2017 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s (LVACs) evaluation, the number of food insecure people in 2017/18 is estimated at about 225,000. The year-on-year decline is mostly attributed to the upturn in this year’s agricultural output.

### Lesotho

#### Cereal production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2012/16 average</th>
<th>2016 estimate</th>
<th>change 2017/2016 percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS: Country Cereal Balance Sheets

### Lesotho

#### Total cereal imports

**000 tonnes (300)**

- Average 2012/13-2016/17: 220
- 2016/17: 263
- 2017/18 forecast: 177

Note: Total cereal includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing year.

Source: FAO/GIEWS: Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.