



### MAIN HIGHLIGHTS



**Over 534,000 people are at risk of food insecurity up to June 2016** (one in every four people in Lesotho) – the number is likely to go up beyond **725,000** people after June 2016.



Over **377,000 people require immediate food or cash assistance** to enable them to access food from the market as well as livelihood support to resuscitate own food production (revised figures will be available after June 2016 once crop forecast is available).



The 2016 season is **expected to be worse in all aspects** than the last food insecurity crisis experienced in 2012. The planting season failed and food prices in the region are rising sharply due to poor production in South Africa and weak Rand-Loti exchange rate against USD.



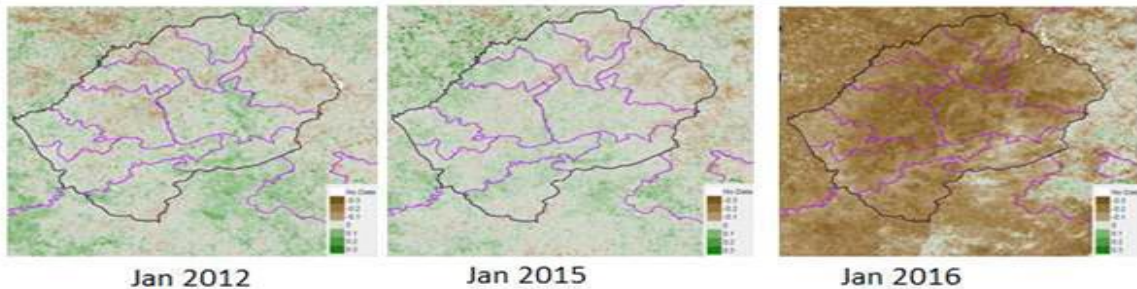
**Rangeland and water availability for livestock is poor** and **livestock conditions have deteriorated** with reported **drought-related deaths** in Senqu Valley and Lowlands mainly.



**FAO needs USD 7 million** to assist drought-affected people through coordinated support to agriculture and livestock production, nutrition, social protection and resilience-building interventions. Of this, **USD 1.1 million** has already been pledged by ECHO.

## CHALLENGES FACING AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

**Humanitarian needs in Lesotho are on the increase** as one of the strongest El Niño events on record has caused severe drought, leading to a poor rainfall season and widespread crop failure. Dry conditions prevailed in the country during the summer crop planting season (Aug-Dec 2015) and prevented most farmers from planting. The few areas that were planted suffered from failed germination, heat or water stress. The next harvest (May-June 2016) is expected to be the lowest ever recorded, even below the previous lowest recorded in 2012.



**Fig.1 Comparison of vegetation expressed as deviation from average (Source: OCHA Situation Update No.2)**

**Prices of maize meal have been increasing since mid-2015**, largely in response to the sharp increase and record high prices in South Africa (main source of food imports). In Dec 2015, maize meal prices in Maseru were 17 percent above the 2014 prices. Wholesale price of maize in South Africa was at a record level in Jan 2016, more than double its earlier year value.

**Food insecurity and malnutrition** - Lesotho has relatively low global acute malnutrition rates however, drought conditions have increased the causal factors (water, sanitation and food insecurity). Chronic malnutrition of children under 5 is critically high with a national average of 33 percent. Over 50 percent of children suffer from anemia.

**The El Niño-induced drought is not just a food crisis; it is a livelihood crisis.** Agriculture supports livelihoods of over 80 percent of the rural population – significant production losses will severely affect households' food security and incomes. Rural population represent 70 percent of the total inhabitants of Lesotho.

**Meeting immediate needs to be combined with sustainable recovery.** To safeguard and build the resilience of agriculture-based livelihoods, urgent support is required to enable families sustainably resume production.

The Government of Lesotho declared a drought emergency on 22 December 2015 and appealed to international community for support in relief actions to mitigate the effects.

OVERVIEW AND KEY MESSAGES

### CONTACT

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FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

The Rapid Drought Impact Assessment Report of January 2016 estimates that **535,000 people** will be in need of humanitarian assistance until **June 2016**. For the period June 2016 – May 2017, once the crop forecast is available, the caseload of people in need of humanitarian assistance is expected to go beyond the **725,000 people** (level identified during 2012 food crisis, when food prices remained lower and planting was not severely affected as this season).

**Lower staple food production** and **soaring food prices** create direct increased risk of food insecurity (in terms of availability and accessibility) among rural as well as urban/peri-urban poor populations.

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

**Over 377,000 people** need immediate humanitarian assistance including agricultural production support for 2016/17 agricultural season.

**The next summer crop harvest is expected to be well below average.** This is due to the extended failure of the planting season and the poor performance of germinated crops.

**Seed reserves could be severely depleted among the most vulnerable** as a result of the crisis. FAO is planning to conduct a detailed Seed Security Assessment in April 2016 to establish the extent to which the sub-sector has been affected. However, plans to support seed distribution should not be put pending as it is obvious that the seed availability has been affected by the drought.

**Reported livestock mortality and worsening animal body conditions** an estimated 20% of consulted communities in Quthing, Mohale's Hoek and Butha-Buthe reported animal death while between 5 and 15% in other districts attributed animal deaths to the drought conditions. Vegetation and pasture conditions have deteriorated during this season due to insufficient rainfall. Due to poor livestock body conditions, communities have reported that income from sales of animals is declining as the animal conditions deteriorate, reducing potential income.

OUTLOOK

**The number of severely food insecure is expected to surge** if the humanitarian assistance is not well coordinated and delivered on time. Malnutrition rates will likely deteriorate in areas worst-hit by the drought and this will further affect the capacity to produce during the next agricultural season starting in August – September 2016 until May 2017.

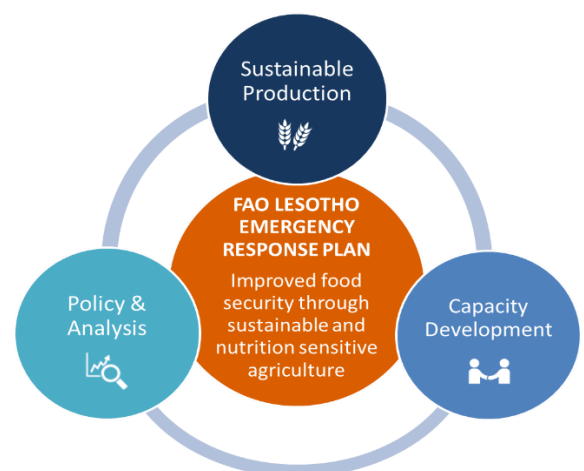
## FAO LESOTHO EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN 2016 - 2017

The objective of FAO's Emergency Response Plan is to increase food security of the vulnerable households that have been affected by the 2016 El Niño-induced drought through sustainable and nutrition sensitive agricultural practices.

The Response Plan is based on three Pillars:

1. **Sustainable Production** – Integration of a range of climate smart agricultural and nutrition sensitive practices such as conservation agriculture, improved home gardening, food use and sustainable land management.
2. **Capacity Development** – Promotion of climate smart agricultural techniques among national, district and community stakeholders. Special emphasis is put on communication and the development and dissemination of visual training materials.
3. **Policy and Analysis** – Monitoring of needs and impact of the plan and generation of evidence for improved decision making.

Fig. 2. FAO Emergency Response Plan



## Supporting the most vulnerable and strengthening national capacities:

The Emergency Response Plan for 2016-2017 (24 months) has a total budget of **USD 7 million**. It builds on the gains accrued from previous emergency recovery activities (2012-2015) and responds to the current drought emergency focusing on the most vulnerable while strengthening national capacities. The emergency response plan is comprised of the following main components:

<b>Social Protection, Agricultural Production and nutrition enhancement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emergency inputs distribution for home gardening and nutrition enhancement (six different varieties of vegetable seeds and shade net).</li><li>• High quality training materials distributed to all beneficiary households and technical support by nutrition extension officers.</li><li>• Targeting beneficiaries of social protection programmes of the Government of Lesotho or those who are receiving cash top-ups from UNICEF or WFP cash transfer schemes.</li></ul>
<b>Protection and restoration of livelihoods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restore food production capacity of drought affected households and communities while introducing improved knowledge on Climate Smart techniques.</li><li>• Distribution of integrated recovery production package (cereal seeds, bean seed, grazing vetch seed, vegetables and shade net) diversifying production and improving nutrition and soil conditions.</li><li>• Technical support through extension services on conservation agriculture, home gardening and nutrition production and sustainable land management.</li></ul>
<b>Climate smart food production in schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Primary and secondary schools will be supported in improving teaching capacities on Climate Smart food production, nutrition and demonstration plots</li><li>• Support construction and/or rehabilitation of water harvesting structures in schools to promote improved water availability for food production.</li></ul>
<b>Emergency livestock vaccination and de-stocking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working with the Department of Livestock, avert drought-related diseases such as anthrax outbreaks.</li><li>• Develop locally adapted guidelines and methodology for de-stocking for the most vulnerable groups (last resort).</li></ul>
<b>Information, Coordination and Policy Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct specific food security and agriculture sector assessments, evaluations and analyses and support Government-led assessments.</li><li>• Assess and disseminate impact and lessons learnt of FAO Emergency Response Plan</li><li>• Production of evidence-based analyses, GIS products to feed into advocacy efforts and policy support for decision making, particularly promoting synergies between Social Protection and Agriculture.</li><li>• Act as a Secretariat to Government-led coordination structures and technical groups and actively participate in UN Disaster Management Team and emergency coordination fora.</li></ul>