GIEWS Country Brief

Lesotho

Reference Date: 25-July-2022

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- **Cereal production in 2022 estimated well below average**
- **Import requirements for cereals forecast to increase in 2022/23 marketing year**
- **Elevated global prices contributed to domestic inflationary pressure**
- **Food insecurity expected to increase in late 2022**

Cereal production in 2022 estimated well below average

Harvesting of the 2022 main season summer cereal crops, mostly maize and sorghum, is complete. Production of maize, the main cereal staple, is about one-third of the average, while the sorghum output is almost negligible.

The poor harvest was primarily due to torrential rainfalls during January and February, which caused localized flooding and resulted in crop losses. The heavy rains were most prominent in the main cereal-producing northwestern areas, with a significant negative impact on yields of the main season summer crops, mostly due to waterlogging that resulted in extensive weed infestations.

Including an average output of 6 000 tonnes of the minor winter wheat crop, to be harvested in November in northern regions, total cereal production in 2022 is forecast at 35 000 tonnes, well below the previous five-year average.

Import requirements for cereals forecast to increase in 2022/23 marketing year

Reflecting the very low production, cereal import requirements in the 2022/23 marketing year (April/March) are forecast at high levels. The total amount of cereal imports needed to maintain stable national consumption levels is 237 000 tonnes, including 146 000 tonnes of maize and 86 000 tonnes of wheat. Most imports are expected to be sourced from South Africa.

Elevated global prices contribute to domestic inflationary pressure

According to the Consumer price index (CPI), prices of bread and cereals increased by about 4 percent on a yearly basis in May.

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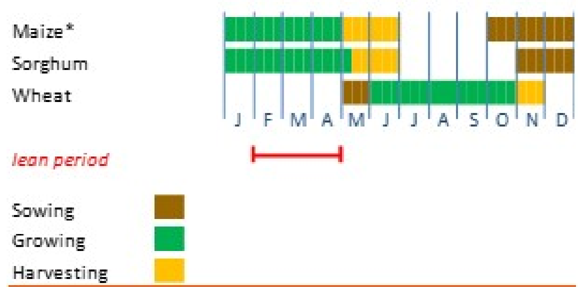
Crop Calendar (*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

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Cereal Production

	2017-2021 average	2021	2022 forecast	change 2022/2021
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	86	90	28	-68.9
Sorghum	21	25	1	-96.3
Wheat	5	6	6	-5.0
Total	112	121	35	-71.4

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

In addition to the expectations of a poor 2022 harvest, the increase in food inflation is mainly driven by high international prices of food and energy, including in South Africa, the main source of cereal imports.

Food insecurity expected to increase in late 2022

According to the latest national food security assessment, 22 percent of the rural population are expected to face IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) acute food insecurity between October 2022 and March 2023, compared to 15 percent between July and September 2022. The forecasted proportion translates into 320 000 people in rural areas, while an additional 201 000 people in urban areas are foreseen to also need assistance.

The foreseen increase of acute food insecurity levels is primarily due to the reduced harvest, high food prices in basic food and non-food commodities and a slow recovery of households' income reflecting a downturn economic growth. This has compromised the purchasing power of very poor and poor households, resulting into some households engaging in negative livelihood coping strategies.

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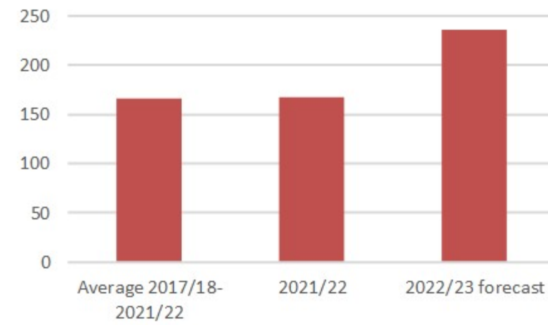
Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



Notes: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.