GIEWS Country Brief
The Kingdom of Eswatini

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**FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT**
- Cereal production forecast at above-average level in 2021
- Imports of cereals forecast at high level in 2020/21 marketing year
- Prices of key cereal staples remained stable but higher year on year
- About 210 000 people projected food insecure during 2021 harvest period, well below estimates for previous periods

## Cereal production forecast at above-average level in 2021

Harvesting of the 2021 cereal crops (mainly maize) started in April and production is anticipated at an above-average level. Although rainfall amounts were slightly below average between October and December 2020, soil moisture levels were generally conducive for planting operations and early crop development. Rainfall amounts increased since the beginning of 2021, notably after the passage of tropical storm Eloise in late January, boosting yield prospects of the crops that were at maturing stages. The 2021 maize production is forecast at an above-average level of 100 000 tonnes, about 16 percent above the good 2020 output, based on an expected increase in yields and owing to favourable weather conditions that will more than offset an estimated reduction in the area planted.

## Imports of cereals forecast at high level in 2020/21 marketing year

The country is a net importer of cereals, mostly maize, rice and wheat, with imports satisfying on average about three-quarters of the domestic consumption needs. Cereal imports in the 2020/21 marketing year (May/April) are forecast at 250 000 tonnes, 25 percent above the five-year average, mainly reflecting the country’s drive to secure adequate staple stocks amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Imports of maize (both for human consumption and livestock feed) are forecast at an above-average level of 166 000 tonnes and are sourced entirely from neighbouring South Africa. Imports of rice and wheat are expected to remain stable on a yearly basis at a near-average level of 40 000 tonnes and 46 000 tonnes, respectively.

Cereal import requirements in the forthcoming 2021/22 marketing year (May/April) are foreseen to decline year on year, on account of the expected above-average maize harvest in 2021.
Prices of key cereal staples remained stable but higher year on year

Prices of maize meal were generally stable between July 2020 and January 2021 (latest available data), reflecting an adequate supply situation stemming from above-average imports. However, prices in January 2021 were about 12 percent higher on a yearly basis, largely owing to the increasing wholesale prices in South Africa during the second semester of 2020.

Improvements in food security expected in 2021

According to the latest IPC analysis, about 210 000 people (about 18 percent of total population, mainly located in the Shiselweni and Lubombo provinces) are projected to be facing acute food insecurity (IPC phases 3: “Crisis” and 4: “Emergency”) during the April-September 2021 period, when the harvest of the main maize crops is expected to replenish households’ food stocks. This level is about 40 percent below the previous estimates for the January-March 2021 period, which corresponds to the lean season, and the June-September 2020 period, when the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic drove up the number of food insecure people. The significant improvement reflects the anticipated above-average maize output and expectations of a recovery of economic activities in 2021.

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