



CONTRIBUTING TO AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



FAO Lesotho: Contributing to Agriculture, Food Security, Nutrition and Rural Development

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Maseru, Lesotho

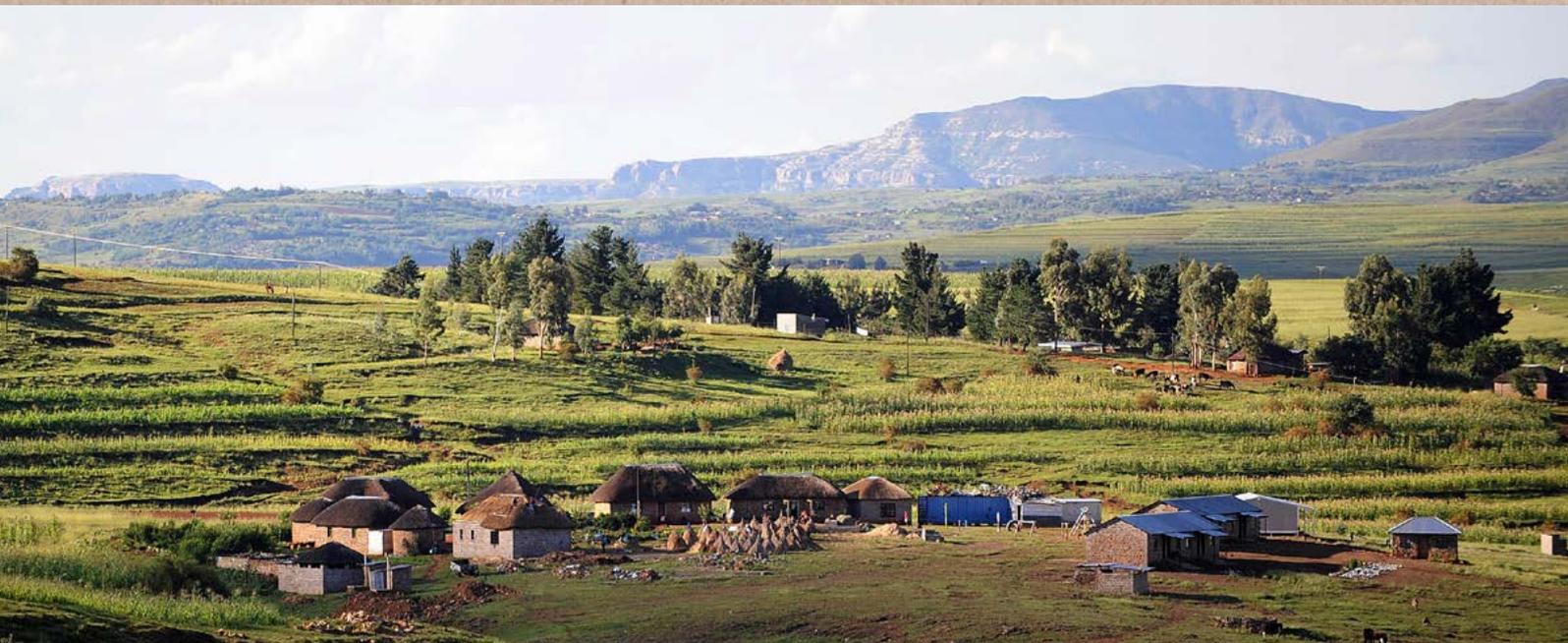
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TO EKE OUT A LIVING FROM THE LAND IS NOT EASY. VEGETATION COVER IN THIS MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY IS SPARSE AND THE SOILS ARE THIN; THE ECOLOGY IS FRAGILE. THE SCARCITY OF FERTILE LAND IS BOTH A CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE OF POVERTY.



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COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Kingdom of Lesotho is a small, landlocked country of about 2.2 million people, 65 per cent of whom are rural. Agriculture is a relatively small part of Lesotho's economy, contributing an average of 6 per cent to the national gross domestic product (GDP) over the period 2012–2016.¹ Despite its low contribution to GDP, agriculture is an important means of livelihood for the majority of rural Basotho.

To eke out a living from the land is not easy. Vegetation cover in this mountainous country is sparse and the soils are thin; the ecology is fragile. The scarcity of fertile land is both a cause and consequence of poverty. The high pressures of people and their agricultural activities have led to environmental problems – pastures are disappearing, soils are eroded and rivers are laden with earth. Compounding these challenges, the frequency of climate-induced emergencies is increasing – delayed rains, droughts, unseasonal snowfalls, late frosts and localized flash floods and hailstorms.

The vast majority of rural households are in a situation of increasing vulnerability, reflected by low standards of food and nutrition security. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by capacity constraints, weak support systems and limited job opportunities.

¹ World Development Indicators

LESOTHO'S DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

In spite of the challenges, Lesotho continues to recognize agriculture as an important sector for its economy and food security. It has been prioritized – with manufacturing, tourism and creative industries – as a critical productive sector.

As articulated in their National Strategic Development Plan II, the government and people of Lesotho aspire to realize inclusive economic growth, private-sector job creation and reduced unemployment. Key priority actions for achieving these goals include: strengthening human capital (health, nutrition, education and skills development); building enabling infrastructure; and strengthening governance and accountability systems.

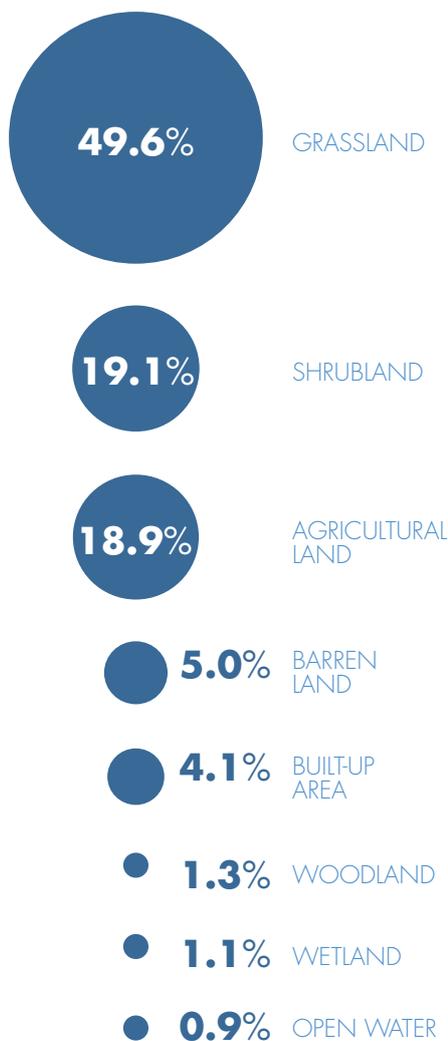
More specifically, the strategic objective of the agriculture sector is to promote sustainable commercialization and diversification. Many strategies and actions required to achieve this objective are within the mandate and competence of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is therefore well placed to support the Government of Lesotho in achieving its objective for agriculture.

FACT FILE: LESOTHO

AREA	30,500 km ²
AGRICULTURAL AREA	22,773 km ²
ARABLE LAND	2,700 km ²
ALTITUDE	1,500–3,350 mamsl
POPULATION	2,203,821
RURAL (65%)	1,429,350
URBAN (35%)	774,471
DEPENDENT ON AGRICULTURE (75%)	1,652,866
BASOTHO LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE	57.1%
BASOTHO LIVING BELOW THE FOOD POVERTY LINE	34.0%
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX	161 OUT OF 188
GINI COEFFICIENT	0.549
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	32.8%

Source: UN Lesotho, 2017, Lesotho Country Analysis Working Document Final Draft, September 2017

LAND COVER IN LESOTHO



Adapted from: The Government of Lesotho and FAO, 2017, Land Cover Atlas: Lesotho, FAO: Rome, p. 13

KEY ACTIONS TO COMMERCIALIZE AND DIVERSIFY AGRICULTURE IN LESOTHO

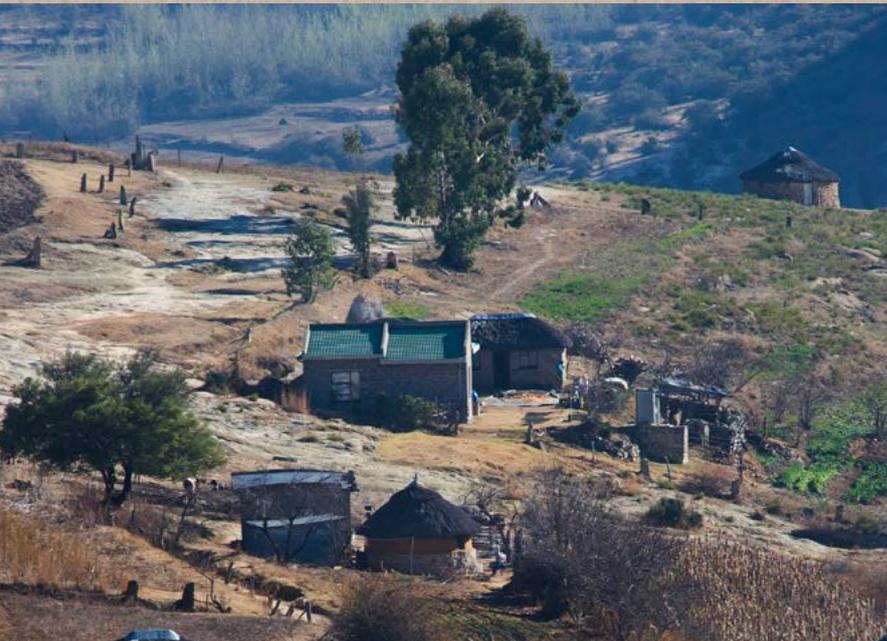
- Improve access to finance, especially for women and youth
- Improve technology and infrastructure
- Promote production and marketing of high-value crops and livestock
- Develop institutional frameworks for producer organizations and industry associations
- Build capacity of farmers and other value-chain players
- Strengthen gender-sensitive agrifood systems and chains
- Improve management of natural resources, with emphasis on integrated watershed management.

Source: NSDP II





ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE HEART OF FAO'S ACTIVITIES IN LESOTHO.



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FAO IN LESOTHO

The Kingdom of Lesotho joined FAO in 1966. FAO has supported projects in Lesotho since the late 1970s, but the organization became more visible and impactful in the agriculture and rural development sector following the establishment of the country office in 1983.

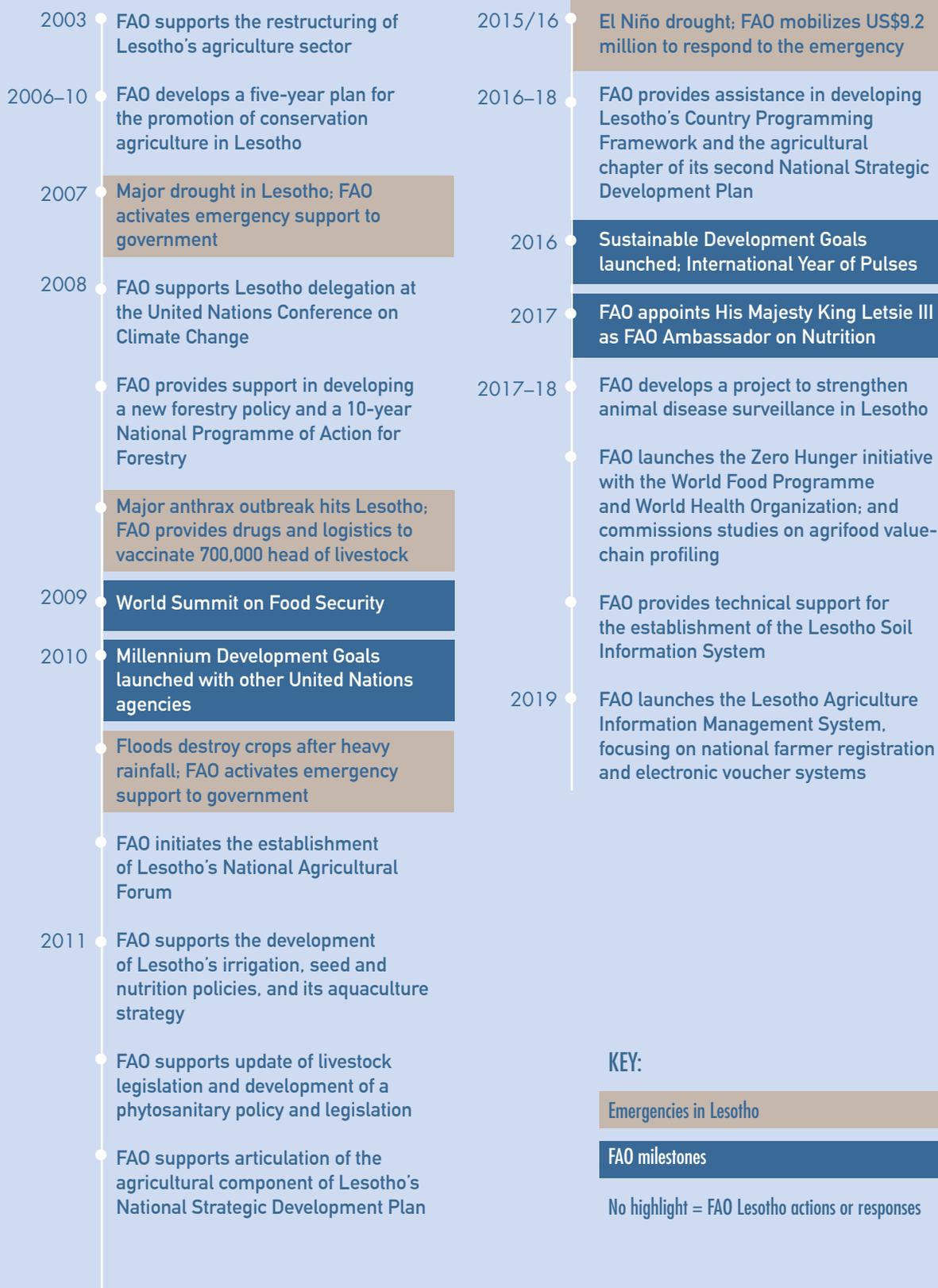
Achieving food security for all has always been at the heart of FAO's activities in Lesotho. It strives to ensure that people have regular access to food of sufficiently high quality to lead active and healthy lives.

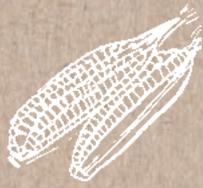
To this end, FAO has supported the government's efforts in formulating and implementing agricultural and rural development policies and programmes. The organization has worked at all levels in the sector, but it has been instrumental in supporting vulnerable farming households – providing essential agricultural inputs and technical support and promoting sustainable land management practices and improved technologies – to improve their agricultural outputs and to build resilience.

With its experience in the country and its expertise, FAO is well positioned to support the Government of Lesotho over the next five years in achieving its development goals and objectives for 2023.

PARTNERS FOR FIVE DECADES, A TIMELINE

- 1945 • **FAO is born**
- 1966 • Lesotho joins the FAO
- 1983 • FAO office established in Lesotho
- 1983–87 • Support to form local and grass-roots institutions, such as farmer associations and cooperatives for vegetable, fodder and egg production, and cottage industries
- 1984–89 • Assistance to the rural poor to increase their income and self-reliance through promotion of self-help organizations
- 1986 • Launch of FAOSTAT, FAO's database of key agricultural statistics for member countries
- 1987–89 • FAO's first support to the establishment of Lesotho's National Early Warning Unit, which provides advance information on crop production and food supply
- 1987–91 • FAO supports the establishment of the wool and mohair testing laboratory, and capacity building of farmers through institutions for rural development
- 1989–95 • FAO supports the introduction of a diploma course on forestry, and range and natural resource management at the Lesotho Agricultural College
- 1992 • FAO launches Lesotho's chapter for *World Declaration and Plan of Action on Nutrition*
- 1994 • **FAO launches its Special Programme for Food Security**
- 1995 • FAO develops a project to strengthen Lesotho's agriculture sector planning, policy analysis and monitoring
- FAO supports Lesotho with an emergency prevention system for transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases





FAO'S PROGRAMME IN LESOTHO WILL FOCUS ON FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES TO SUSTAINABLY ADDRESS HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION, WHICH CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS ACHIEVING TWO UNDAF OUTCOMES.



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ALIGNING FAO'S EXPERTISE WITH LESOTHO'S PRIORITIES

FAO's partnership with and support of the Government of Lesotho is guided through a Country Programming Framework (CPF) – a tool for strategizing and planning country-level support. It identifies priority areas and brings together innovative international best practices and global standards with national and regional expertise for implementation over a five-year period.

The CPF is usually prepared following consultation and agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. In-depth consultations with wider government institutions, civil society

organizations, the United Nations system and other development partners are usually done through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process.

The resultant CPF for Lesotho (2019–2023) is in line with Lesotho's National Strategic Development Plan and UNDAF (2019–2023). It will shape FAO's assistance to Lesotho over the next five years. FAO's programme in Lesotho will focus on four strategic priorities to sustainably address hunger and malnutrition that contribute towards achieving two UNDAF outcomes.

FOUR PRIORITY AREAS

To help achieve Lesotho's national strategic objective – to promote sustainable commercialization and diversification – and the associated UNDAF outcomes, FAO will focus on the following priority areas in 2019–2023:

1. Strengthening the management and reducing the risk of disasters, building resilience and attaining sustainable natural resources management
2. Enhancing agricultural productivity and strengthening agrifood value chains
3. Supporting nutrition-sensitive agriculture and social protection
4. Strengthening policy frameworks and developing institutional capacity.

TWO OUTCOMES

FAO's focus will contribute to two UNDAF 2023 targeted outcomes:

- Increased opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, improved food security, decent work and poverty reduction, especially for women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- The people of Lesotho use natural resources in a more sustainable manner and the marginalized and most vulnerable are increasingly resilient.

FIVE STRATEGIES

To achieve the outcomes of this ambitious programme, FAO will work strategically by:

- Creating an enabling environment through policy and strategic interventions
- Focusing on efforts on upstream and downstream activities for effective and impactful results
- Broadening our sphere of influence and partner base, including the private sector
- Encouraging a culture of monitoring and evaluation and information-based decision-making
- Engaging in meaningful capacity-building.



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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS, AND HOW THESE FACTORS AFFECT FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY ARE COMPLEX.

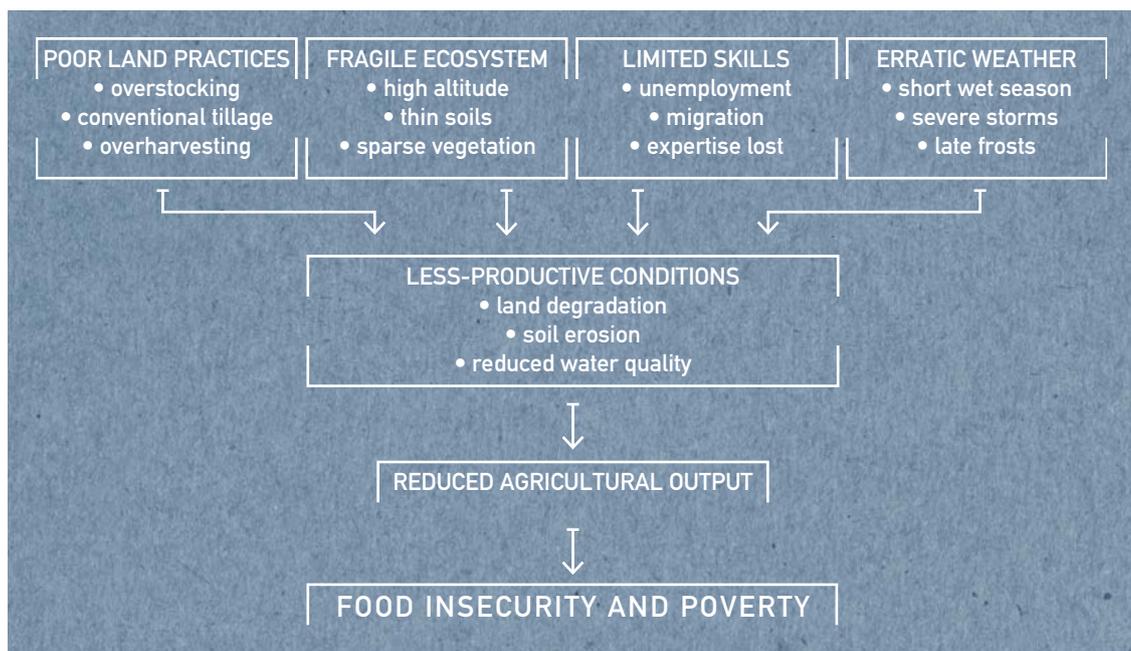


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UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

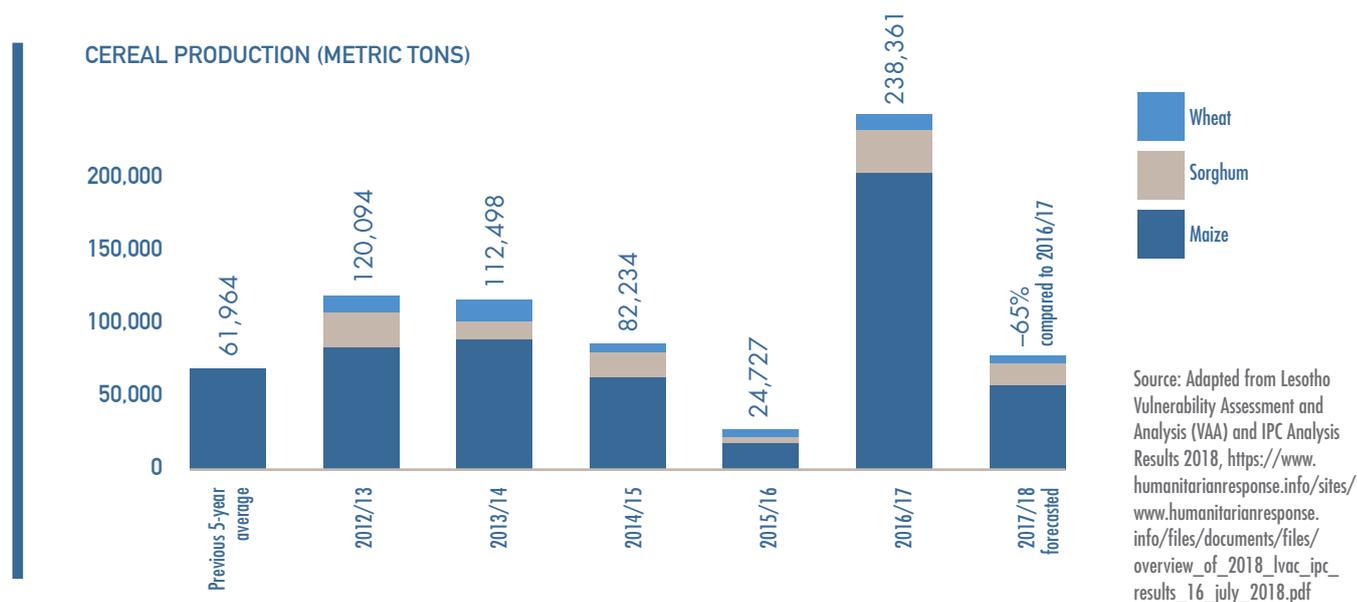
The relationship between environmental, social and economic factors, and how these factors affect food security and poverty, are complex, as shown in the diagram below.

FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY IN LESOTHO

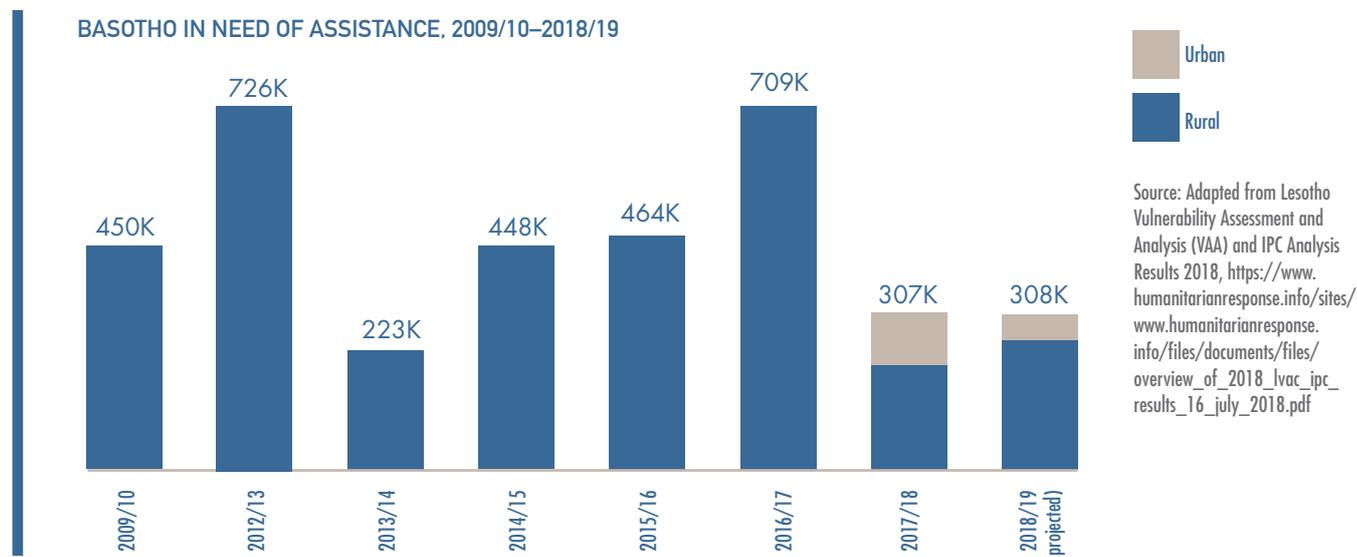


HOW SEVERE IS LESOTHO'S FOOD SECURITY SITUATION?

Even with good harvests, the country does not produce enough food to meet Lesotho's needs. On average, 70 per cent of its annual cereal requirements are imported. Productivity levels are low and the use of agricultural inputs is very limited.



In addition to the low production figures, there has been chronic food insecurity in Lesotho, with increasing numbers of people who have been classified as food insecure and in need of either food assistance or food production mechanisms.





IN SPITE OF RECENT SETBACKS, FAO BELIEVES THAT HUNGER CAN BE ERADICATED IN LESOTHO BY 2030.



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ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY BY 2030 IS POSSIBLE

In spite of recent setbacks, FAO believes that hunger can be eradicated in Lesotho by 2030. Significant strides have been made by the government in a number of key areas, including those to which FAO has contributed.

FAO supported the development of Lesotho's Integrated Plan for Agricultural Development. During this process the government articulated its vision for the agriculture and food sector: "Food and nutrition security, and decent jobs for all Basotho."

To achieve this vision, the government is committed to promoting the transformation of Lesotho's agrifood systems, with a focus on upgrading and aggregating smallholder farmers into priority-commodity value chains.

Evidence has shown that investing in agriculture is effective in reducing poverty, particularly amongst

the poorest people. Hunger eradication in Lesotho, however, requires a multi-dimensional approach that invests in and improves:

- Agricultural productivity
- Development of agrifood value chains
- Management of the land and its resources
- Nutrition-sensitive social protection
- Gender equity
- Monitoring and coordination for food security and nutrition
- Education, health, water and sanitation.

There are multiple pathways to reducing rural poverty, which can be synergistic. Lessons learnt and best practices developed in reducing poverty and improving product and productivity should be taken forward, and efforts redoubled.

PRIORITY AREA 1: BUILDING RESILIENCE

FAO defines 'resilience' as 'the ability to prevent disasters and crises, as well as to anticipate, absorb, accommodate or recover from them in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner. This includes protecting, restoring and improving livelihoods systems in the face of threats that impact agriculture, nutrition, food security and food safety.'

Much of FAO's work focuses on reducing people's vulnerability to hazards – building resilience. Lesotho is prone to disasters related to climate change and other shocks. These include drought, seasonal floods and out-of-season hailstorms, snow and frost; outbreaks of livestock diseases such as anthrax, rabies and sheep scab; and crop pests and diseases. Such disasters negatively impact food security and the incomes of rural and urban households.

FAO's work in emergencies focuses on reducing people's vulnerability to hazards before, during and after disasters through risk assessment, risk reduction, emergency response and rehabilitation.

When an emergency does hit, FAO focuses on recovery and rehabilitation to increase the resilience of livelihoods in the future through longer-term interventions that facilitate the transition from relief to development.

FAO has been working in partnership with the Government of Lesotho to strengthen the country's disaster preparedness and response systems, and strengthen the resilience of the Basotho and their livelihoods to these threats and crises.

Over the next five years, resilience building and sustainable management will continue to be FAO's primary focus, but the approach will be different. FAO has vast experience helping government implement downstream activities to build the resilience of communities. During this programming cycle, the organization is placing more emphasis on guiding upstream policy and strategic interventions that address the root causes of vulnerability, and will engage in downstream activities to demonstrate the effectiveness of these policies.



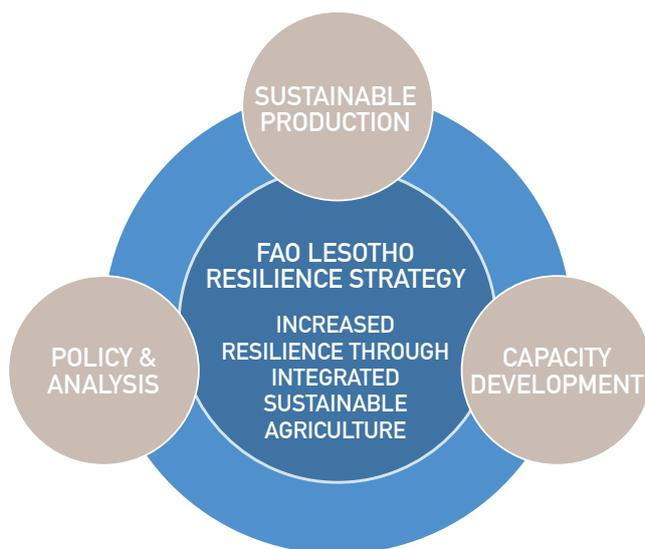
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IN 2015/16, LESOTHO EXPERIENCED ONE OF THE WORST DROUGHTS IN OVER THREE DECADES.

LESOTHO'S RESILIENCE STRATEGY: CONSOLIDATION OF GAINS MADE

Lesotho's Disaster Management Authority, in consultation with relevant technical government departments and through the support of the United Nations system in Lesotho, has formulated a resilience strategy to ensure consolidation of the gains made in recent years. The strategy is built on the efforts of community structures with support from government to respond to emergencies and strengthen resilience at all levels.



Based on this national resilience strategy, FAO Lesotho developed and implemented an emergency and resilience strategy over the last programming period, 2014–2018. FAO's strategy is structured around three pillars of action common to all its programmes: sustainable production, capacity development and policy and analysis:

- **Sustainable production** using a range of climate-smart agricultural practices – such as conservation agriculture – with home gardening, nutrition and food use, and agroforestry, integrates the management of Lesotho's natural resources, especially water and soil, with food production and nutrition.
- **Capacity development** through the promotion of climate-smart agricultural technologies among national, district and community stakeholders increases know-how and knowledge transfer. Special emphasis is given to communication and the development of visual training materials.
- **Policy and information analysis** that integrates food-security challenges and vulnerabilities supports stakeholders to make effective evidence-based decisions.

Expected results in building resilience by 2023

Under this priority area, FAO and its partners will work with the government to achieve the following results within the current programming cycle:

- Capacity of stakeholders strengthened in disaster risk reduction and management, early warning systems for agriculture, food and nutrition security, and emergency response to humanitarian crisis or disaster
- Capacity of households – including those of women and other vulnerable groups – communities and institutions strengthened in climate-change adaptation
- Increased resilience of farming households and communities to shocks and threats
- Technical capacity of national and decentralized institutions and communities enhanced on the management of natural resources.



FAO'S RESPONSE TO THE DROUGHT OF 2015/16

In 2015/16, Lesotho experienced one of the worst droughts in more than three decades. Following poor agricultural performance in the previous season and compounded by the steep prices of food imports, this El-Niño-induced drought led to staggering levels of food insecurity. Over 700,000 people with farming-based livelihoods required immediate support, and the government declared a state of drought emergency.

Livelihood protection

In response, FAO mobilized donor resources totalling US\$9.1 million and designed an emergency and resilience programme to promote climate-smart agricultural technologies – conservation agriculture, keyhole gardens, water-harvesting techniques – and good nutrition throughout Lesotho. Seeds for cereal production and homegrown vegetables, fertilizers and other inputs were distributed to improve production. Training and technical support helped ensure wider adoption of climate-smart technologies.

In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, this project provided urgently needed resources to the most vulnerable households in the country. Through the introduction of climate-smart practices and technologies, food production was improved, and resilience and food security enhanced for the future.

Results in numbers:

24,000 VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED LIVELIHOOD PROTECTION PACKAGES OF SEED, FERTILIZER AND OTHER INPUTS.

400 EXTENSION OFFICERS, **700** SCHOOLTEACHERS AND **200** TRADITIONAL LEADERS RECEIVED TRAINING ON CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE AND WATER-HARVESTING TECHNIQUES.

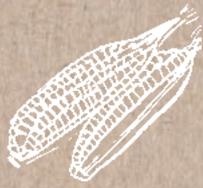
What we learnt

1. The support was instrumental in protecting the livelihoods of the poor. Beneficiaries embraced the new technologies and farmers were able to attain far better yields compared to the previous agricultural season due to a combination of accurate targeting, improved rainfall, training and timely delivery of quality agricultural inputs.
2. Emergency situations such as the drought of 2015/16 demonstrate the importance of FAO's mandate and work in Lesotho. Response partners – United Nations agencies, member states and other stakeholders – relied heavily on FAO to provide information related to food security and nutrition to inform their own interventions. The need for FAO to invest more in information management was clear.
3. For response programmes to be implemented successfully, there is a need for effective coordination mechanisms at all levels.
4. Maintaining a core team to respond to emergencies as part of the country office structure is essential for quick response. Further, having an effective and transparent programme and strategy with demonstrable results aids resource mobilization. Existing relationships with government officers close to the beneficiaries enabled easy access to input points, timely technical backstopping, and improved the sustainability of the project's impacts.
5. Community engagement at the start of implementation minimized community conflict.

Investing in the future

It became clear that we need to invest more in:

- Information management
- Establishing more robust mechanisms for identifying vulnerable households
- Measuring longer-term outcomes and impacts.



CONVENTIONAL TILLAGE HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL ON THE SOILS IN LESOTHO, ACCELERATING SOIL EROSION, REDUCING SOIL PRODUCTIVITY AND NEGATIVELY IMPACTING HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE WITH CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE

“Supporting families and communities to develop and diversify livelihoods strengthens their resilience to future shocks.”

Etienne Juvanon du Vachat, FAO Resilience Expert

Conventional tillage has taken its toll on the soils in Lesotho, accelerating soil erosion, reducing soil productivity and negatively impacting household food security. Furthermore, climate change in Lesotho is noticeable. Temperatures are more extreme; rains are erratic and delayed; and droughts are intense and floods frequent. These have shortened the growing season.

Conservation agriculture allows households to improve their food security in this changing climate. It improves the soil fertility and increases productivity, and has lower costs. It is based on three principles:

- Minimum soil disturbance
- Permanent soil cover with live mulch or crop residue
- Crop rotation and intercropping.

FAO and partners have been supporting vulnerable farming households in Lesotho to diversify and improve their production through programmes such as the Emergency Resilience Programme and the Protection and Restoration of Livelihoods Programme. Working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and with funding from various international cooperating partners, such programmes provide input and capacity development on conservation agriculture, home gardening and nutrition. They target extension staff, lead farmers and other members of the community, such as teachers.

FAO is committed to strengthening the livelihoods of vulnerable people across Lesotho. The organization has supplied 223,645 people in 44,729 households with home-gardening and nutrition complementary packages.



Students at Thabang High School lay dried leaves on their garden as mulch.

© FAO/Rodger Bosch



Mr Neo Liau (71) has a herd of 125 sheep and 20 cows and is delighted that vaccination of his livestock is free. "I am happy ... they will be protected from many diseases," he says. The vaccination of livestock is a crucial health intervention, not only for animals, but also for people, who it protects from contagious diseases such as anthrax.

PROTECTING LIVESTOCK ASSETS, INCREASING RESILIENCE

Livestock herding and rearing – primarily cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry – form a valuable part of the livelihoods of Lesotho's rural population. Outbreaks of animal diseases and a lack of infrastructure to prevent and control the transmission of disease threaten their livelihoods. Agricultural shocks, such as the drought of 2015/16, put further pressure on their livestock resources.

FAO assists the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in carrying out vaccination campaigns and in developing a disease surveillance system, which assists in detecting, responding to and preventing animal disease. Training staff of government and non-government organizations, and farmers, on livestock emergency guidelines and standards, livestock management, animal health, grazing practices and rangeland management is an important part of FAO's work in Lesotho.



LESOTHO RELIES ON ITS VAST RANGELANDS TO SUSTAIN ITS INCREASING LIVESTOCK POPULATION.



© FAO/M Stapleton

REVERSING LAND DEGRADATION

Lesotho relies on its vast rangelands to sustain its increasing livestock population. Severe land degradation is one of the main contributors to declining food security in Lesotho. Inappropriate farming practices and overgrazing have caused excessive soil erosion, exacerbated by erratic rains.

In an attempt to reverse degradation, restore the pastures and biodiversity and promote the sustainable use of natural resources, FAO with the Department of Range Resources Management and local communities have implemented various interventions, including:

- Invasive alien species control
- Stone-line construction
- Rangeland re-seeding
- Appropriate grazing systems.

Portable solar-powered electric fences are used to prevent overgrazing and control the spread of invasive plant species, while facilitating the recovery of the more palatable grasses. Rangelands have shown significant recovery where these movable kraals have been used.

Through capacity-building efforts, range management officers are able to implement and support communities in major areas of sustainable land management and climate-smart agriculture. Training has included range health assessment, remote sensing, rangeland fire management, fodder production, integrated catchment management, rangeland rehabilitation, wetland management and conservation, decentralization and chieftainship, climate-change and conservation agriculture.



ENHANCING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IS CRITICAL FOR GENERATING GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS WHERE POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY ARE PERVASIVE.



PRIORITY AREA 2: ENHANCING PRODUCTIVITY FROM FIELD TO FORK

This programming cycle (2019–2023) has great expectations from agriculture. Lesotho expects employment-generating growth, while the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demands the doubling of incomes and productivity for smallholders.

Enhancing agricultural productivity is critical for generating growth and employment, particularly in rural areas where poverty and food insecurity are

pervasive. Development of agrifood value chains that include smallholders and by modernizing farming through appropriate technologies will be key for creating gainful and attractive employment opportunities in the agriculture and food sectors – including for youth – reducing women’s work burdens and increasing agricultural output. This in turn will reduce the burden of food imports and ensure food and nutrition security.

To improve productivity by integrating smallholders into agrifood value chains, they need access to the following key components:

- inputs and services
- gender-sensitive and labour-saving technologies and innovations
- finance and credit
- markets.

While FAO is not in a position to develop agrifood value chains, nor strategically placed to provide access to inputs, technologies, finance or credit, we are well placed to provide technical leadership in the development of sectoral policies, legal frameworks and strategies. It is critical for Lesotho to create an enabling environment through policy to facilitate its access to resources needed to drive growth in the agriculture sector and rural economy.

FAO will therefore focus its efforts on influencing and assisting the Government of Lesotho to formulate and implement sound policies and programmes that maximize employment opportunities for youth and other marginalized groups. To this end, we helped formulate the Lesotho Integrated Plan for Agricultural Development (2019–2023) to ensure sustainable growth in the agriculture sector, decent jobs, and food and nutrition security for the Basotho people.

Other areas of work will include the following:

- Facilitate prioritization and development of high-potential agrifood value chains
- Support identification of technical bottlenecks in key agrifood value chains and propose strategies for addressing such bottlenecks
- Promote the use of information and communication technology to improve agricultural productivity and market access
- Facilitate partnerships and joint programming for improved agricultural productivity
- Promote water-harvesting and appropriate irrigation technologies
- Generate training packages and participate in the design of formal education programmes for agribusiness development
- Support development of agribusiness training programmes through public–private partnerships
- Support setting of standards and develop capacity for enforcement
- Promote partnerships that facilitate agribusiness finance and aggregation, and ease the cost and risk of doing business with smallholders
- Strengthen sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”
African proverb

Expected results in enhancing productivity and employment by 2023

Under this priority area, FAO and its partners will work with government to achieve the following results within the current programming cycle:

- Value-chain actors equipped with technical and managerial capacities to develop inclusive, efficient and sustainable agrifood value chains
- Appropriate and gender-sensitive, productivity-enhancing technologies demonstrated and promoted
- An enabling environment created for the development of agribusiness.





GOVERNMENT SAFETY NETS AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES ARE NOT NECESSARILY ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS.

PRIORITY AREA 3: SYNERGIZING AGRICULTURE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Government of Lesotho continues to prioritize social protection with about 9 per cent of its gross domestic product being allocated for various social protection programmes, including old-age pensions, cash grants for orphans and vulnerable children, agricultural subsidies and partial grants for tertiary education. Despite this huge investment, the country still grapples with high poverty and food insecurity levels.

Government safety nets and social assistance programmes are not necessarily achieving their goals. Reasons for this are attributed to unsuccessful

delivery mechanisms and failure to link safety nets with productive initiatives. FAO evaluation of a pilot project in Lesotho that sought to link social protection with agriculture has shown that the two complement each other in achieving improved food and nutrition security.

In this programming cycle, FAO will provide guidance and advice on appropriate delivery mechanisms for Lesotho's agricultural subsidy programme. Improved targeting and delivery mechanisms are more likely to reach those who need the support most.

"Children are able to play when they are at school because they are eating well and they are no longer getting sick easily." – beneficiary in Menkhoaneng Community Council.

"I used to struggle a lot with four children. I was only able to buy them clothes once a year, but now ... I am able to buy them clothes a few times a year and then provide them with adequate food." – male beneficiary, Mahlabatheng village.

Expected results in synergizing agriculture and social protection by 2023

Under this priority area of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and social protection, FAO and its partners will work with government to achieve the following results within the current programming cycle:

- Increased awareness and participation of households and communities on sustainable nutrition-informed food production, diversification, post-harvest management, food utilization and consumption.
- Policy and programme support, knowledge generation, capacity development and advocacy provided to enhance synergies between social protection, nutrition, agriculture and natural resources management.
- A functional national farmer registry and electronic voucher system that enables proper targeting and allocation of resources within the agricultural sector.



PILOT PROJECT



Above: M'e 'Malerato is one of the 24,500 participating beneficiaries of the Protection and Restoration of Livelihoods Programme, a collaboration between FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. She, like other beneficiaries under this programme across the country, was assisted with various agricultural inputs. "I love CA [conservation agriculture], I will never let it go because it has made life easy for me ... In my keyhole gardens, I planted cabbage. I pour my dishwater in the beds. My children are able to eat, and I sell some of the cabbage to the school. So far, I have made about 1,000 maloti."

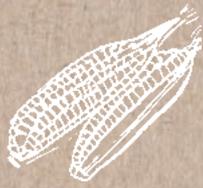
KEY-HOLE GARDENS, A KEY TO NUTRITION

In order to strengthen the impact of the cash grants, FAO partnered with the World Food Programme and other development partners and complemented the government's social protection mechanisms with home gardening kits and training on appropriate labour-saving and climate-smart agricultural methods, and nutrition.

Families receiving this support built keyhole gardens – a technique that optimizes water resources and enriches soil. Just eight weeks after receiving FAO's inputs, families started harvesting vegetables. The families increased their access

to fresh foods, diversified their diet and improved their nutrition. They dispelled the notion that social-protection beneficiaries and labour-constrained families have no productive potential. With the vegetables they produced, they saved money that would have probably been spent on buying food.

FAO is also engaging other stakeholders to influence policy and programme development to create greater complementarity between social protection and agriculture – the impact of the programmes combined is certainly greater than the sum of the parts.



ACHIEVING THE RESULTS AND STATED OBJECTIVES UNDER THE FIRST THREE PRIORITY AREAS WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE UNLESS STERN EFFORTS ARE MADE TO STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONS AND CREATE AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT.

PRIORITY AREA 4: STRENGTHENING POLICY AND INSTITUTIONS

Achieving the results and stated objectives under the first three priority areas will not be possible unless stern efforts are made to strengthen institutions and create an enabling policy environment. Outdated policies and legislations need to be reviewed and updated, including those for sanitation and phytosanitation. Investment needs to be made in developing core competencies for

programme and policy implementation and service delivery, accountability mechanisms and drafting regulatory policies and instruments. Support is also required in developing capacity for surveillance and notification of plant and animal diseases, which pose a threat to human lives, food security and Lesotho's lucrative international trade in wool and mohair.

POLICY SUPPORT

FAO has supported the Government of Lesotho in developing and implementing tailored, cross-sectoral policies and programming responses that identify and aim to resolve major societal problems – particularly hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. Following a multidimensional approach, the organization has assisted the government to develop various policies and strategies, including:

- Lesotho's Agriculture and Food Security Policy of 2006, which emphasizes the dependence of agriculture on a healthy natural resource base and promotes replenishing soil fertility, improved crop varieties and livestock breeds, conservation agriculture, homestead gardens, rangeland management and the need for climate-change adaptation
- Lesotho Water and Sanitation Policy of 2007, which promotes an integrated water management approach that reverses land degradation while ensuring that all Basotho have access to potable water and to the provision of basic sanitation services, and that water is sustainably developed to ensure socio-economic benefits

- National Seed Policy of 2016, which aims to improve crop production and food security in Lesotho and for export by ensuring that farmers have access to quality seed of various crops
- Animal Disease Surveillance Strategy, 2018
- Zero-Hunger Agriculture Investment Plan, 2018
- National Strategic Development Plan, 2016–2018 (chapter on agriculture), which focuses on reversing environmental degradation, promoting climate-change adaptation, developing and adopting appropriate technologies and creating employment
- National Resilience Strategic Framework (in draft), which outlines 11 pillars for improving resilience to climate change and other shocks, including strengthening preparedness, environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management
- National Adaptation Plan (in draft).

FAO will continue to collaborate with various partners to guide Lesotho in outlining the need for greater policy focus and coherence across sectors to improve food security and nutrition.

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STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Developing capacity is at the heart of FAO's programmes, and central to their success. Capacity building targets government departments, national- and district-level, and community and farmer institutions. Partners equipped with skills and knowledge play an essential role in strengthening agricultural institutions. Training has focused on:

- Climate-smart agriculture
- Homestead gardening
- Nutrition
- Post-harvest food handling and preservation
- Integrated pest management
- Agribusiness and value chains
- Agricultural research for development.

Capacity has been strengthened by:

- Training members of the Lesotho National Farmers' Union and government technical officers
- Creating platforms for coordination and collaboration, such as the National Conservation Agriculture Task Force, Sustainable Land Management Working Group and the Home Gardening and Nutrition Group
- Producing educational materials
- Harmonization and standardization of extension messages.



Expected results in strengthening policy and institutions by 2023

Under this priority area of creating an enabling policy environment and strengthening the capacity of agricultural institutions, FAO and its partners will work with government to achieve the following results:

- Agriculture and food-security sector policies and legal frameworks reviewed and updated
- Gender-sensitive information dissemination, data and monitoring and evaluation systems strengthened
- Agriculture and food-security investment planning processes supported.





FAO BOTH CONTRIBUTES TO PARTNERSHIPS AND BENEFITS FROM THEM.

FAO'S READINESS TO SUPPORT LESOTHO

As a specialized United Nations agency, FAO leads efforts internationally to achieve food and nutrition security for all. Its wide-ranging abilities, extended experience in facilitating dialogue and partnerships with and between development actors, unique expertise in the three pillars of sustainable development and long history in Lesotho make FAO well placed to assist this country in implementing its second

National Strategic Development Plan II and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. FAO's strategic framework is broadly aligned with the goals of both, promoting an integrated approach to eradicating poverty and hunger, where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

BUDGET

The estimated budget for the implementation of the Country Programming Framework 2019–2023 is US\$22 million. Current donor commitments and

regular programme resources will meet US\$5 million of this. The remaining US\$17 million will be mobilized from donors and partners.

BUDGET TO IMPLEMENT FAO'S COUNTRY PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK, 2019–2023 (US\$)

Priority area	Total required	Available funding	Mobilization target
1 Building resilience	12,000,000	2,600,000	9,400,000
2 Enhancing productivity	5,000,000	1,100,000	3,900,000
3 Synergizing agriculture and social protection	3,500,000	400,000	3,100,000
4 Strengthening policy and institutions	1,500,000	600,000	900,000
Total	22,000,000	4,700,000	17,300,000

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JOINING FORCES

FAO understands that to be successful in performing its role in the governance and development of agriculture, it must engage with other experts who have the best knowledge and capacities in these fields. FAO both contributes to partnerships and benefits from them.

For implementation of FAO's current programme we will broaden and strengthen partnerships with existing United Nations agencies whose work overlaps and complements our efforts. Special focus will be placed on establishing new partnerships with organizations that are increasingly present in agriculture and natural resource management

sectors, specifically the World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development and European Union. For influencing policy direction we will also broaden our partners in government, including departments and ministries responsible for environment, water, meteorology and home affairs. Not least, FAO will explore strategies that will engage the private sector and build partnerships for the development of agriculture and food systems.

By joining forces, we facilitate partnerships for food and nutrition security, agriculture and rural development between government, development partners, civil society and the private sector.

PAST PARTNERSHIPS

FAO Lesotho has partnered with many and various institutions in the past to ensure that projects and programmes in priority areas were carried out effectively and efficiently.

Resource partners

Catholic Relief Services

Central Emergency Response Fund of the United Nations

European Commission for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ)

Kingdom of the Netherlands

United States Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)

UK Aid

Implementing partners

Lesotho Conservation Agriculture National Task Force

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security

Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation

Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation

Ministry of Social Development

National Agricultural Forum

Collaborating United Nations agencies

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Development Programme

World Food Programme

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