LESOTHO

mVAM Bulletin #2: July 2016

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High food insecurity in the southern and eastern districts

Key points:

- Over 60 percent of households in Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka have poor or borderline food consumption.
- Fifty percent more households led by women have poor food consumption than those led by men.
- A higher proportion (48 percent) of rural households are borrowing or buying food on credit compared to urban areas (30 percent), indicating higher stress on food security in rural areas.
- The average price of maize meal decreased by 4.3 percent in June 2016 compared to May 2016.

Seasonal Outlook

El Niño caused low rainfall and high temperatures during the 2015/2016 cropping season in Lesotho, resulting in reduced yields and widespread crop failure. Consequently, production levels have fallen sharply: total cereal production for 2016 is estimated at 30,000 mt, two thirds lower than last year's below-average level. Maize production has fallen by 61 percent to 25,000 mt, while sorghum production is estimated to be less than half of last year's output. The 2016 wheat crop – which will be harvested from November – is forecast to decline by over 40 percent to 4,400 mt (FAO GIEWS). Around 24,000 mt of maize has been imported from South Africa since April, however, high maize prices in South Africa – Lesotho's main source of cereal grain – are restricting further imports.

In 2016/17, food shortages are expected to affect 679,000 people, 476,000 of whom will need immediate assistance. For the period between June and October, all districts are in *Crisis* conditions (IPC Phase 3). The government is subsidizing maize meal and pulses by 30 percent for 12 months until May 2017, but monitoring will be required to determine the effectiveness of the subsidy.

The country is expected to have a good start to the season with normal to above-normal rainfall. Heavy snowfall in July has provided adequate soil moisture, and farmers in the highlands are expected to start agricultural activities in August and September. Lowlands planting is expected to begin in October.

Respondent Household Characteristics

39 **Average Age**
Of Respondents

Head of household
71% Male
29% Female

Food Assistance
97% No
3% Yes

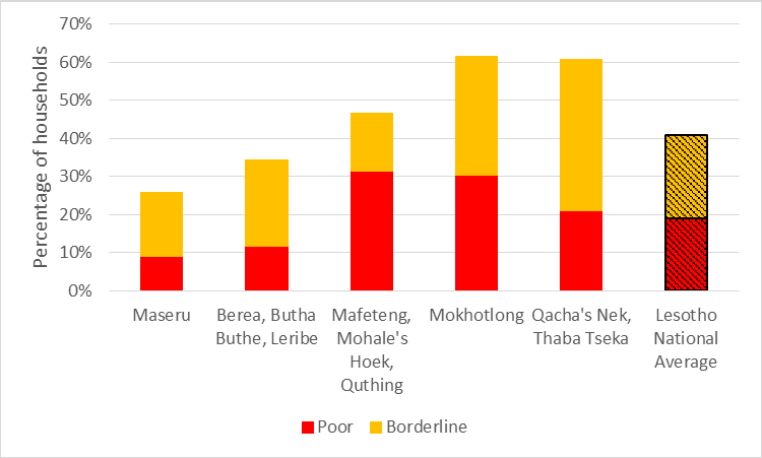
Environment
65% Urban
35% Rural

High prevalence of inadequate food consumption in southern and eastern districts

June mVAM data indicate that a high proportion of households (43 percent) have inadequate (poor or borderline) food consumption all across the country. The lowest food consumption scores (FCS) were reported by households in the southern districts of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing, and the eastern districts of Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka. As seen in Figure 1, the district aggregation of Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing has the highest proportion of households reporting poor food consumption (31 percent). By contrast, just 9 percent of households in Maseru reported poor food consumption.

The highest use of negative food-related coping strategies was reported in the district aggregation of Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka (reduced Coping Strategies Index [rCSI] = 18.42). Here, over 92 percent of households reported having used at least one negative strategy at least once in the preceding week. Maseru reported the lowest rCSI (8.4) with 69 percent of households using coping strategies.

Fig. 1: Inadequate food consumption by district aggregations



Map 1: Food Consumption Score (FCS) by district aggregations

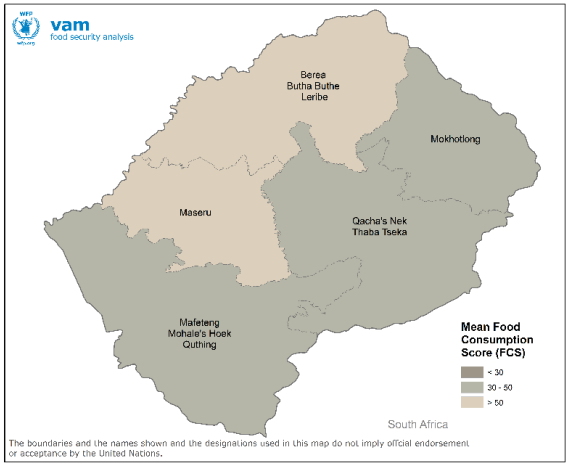
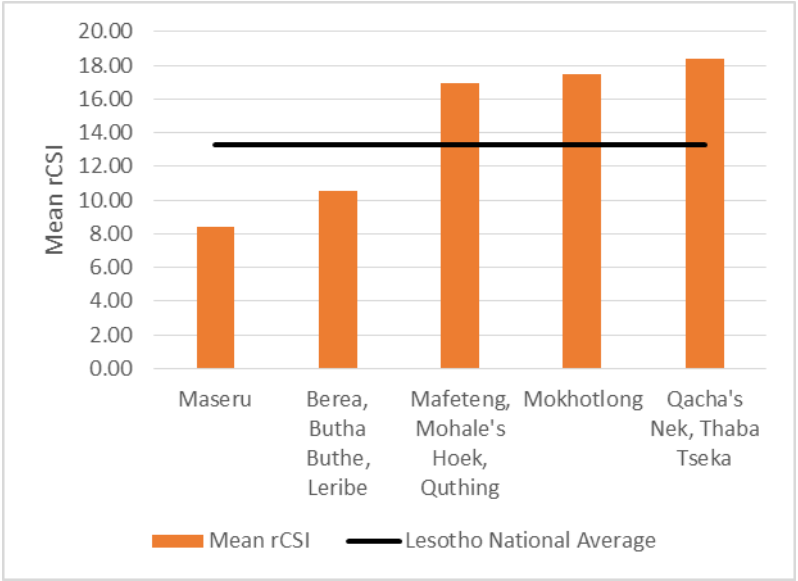
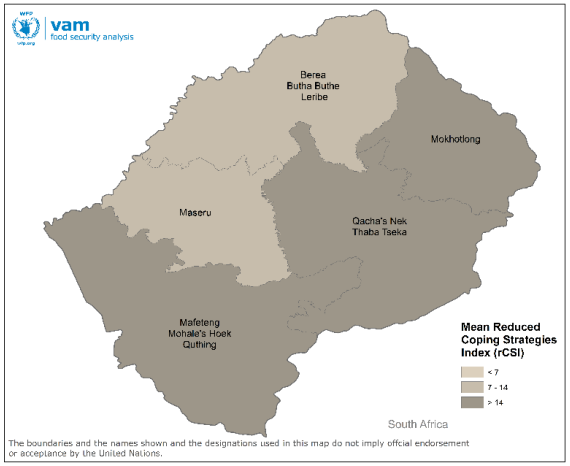


Fig. 2: Mean rCSI by district aggregations



Map 2: rCSI by district aggregations

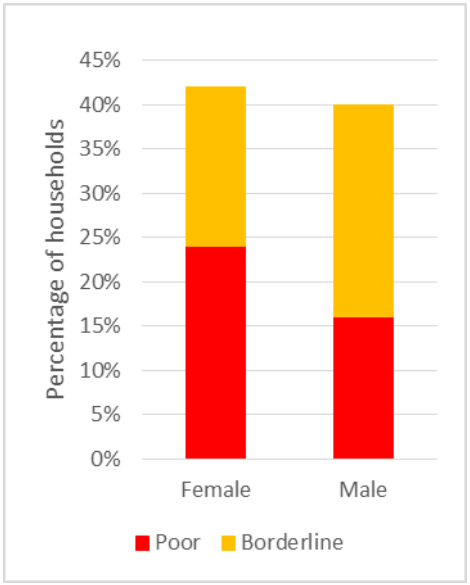


Source (all): mVAM, June 2016

Respondent households led by women are using more extreme negative coping strategies

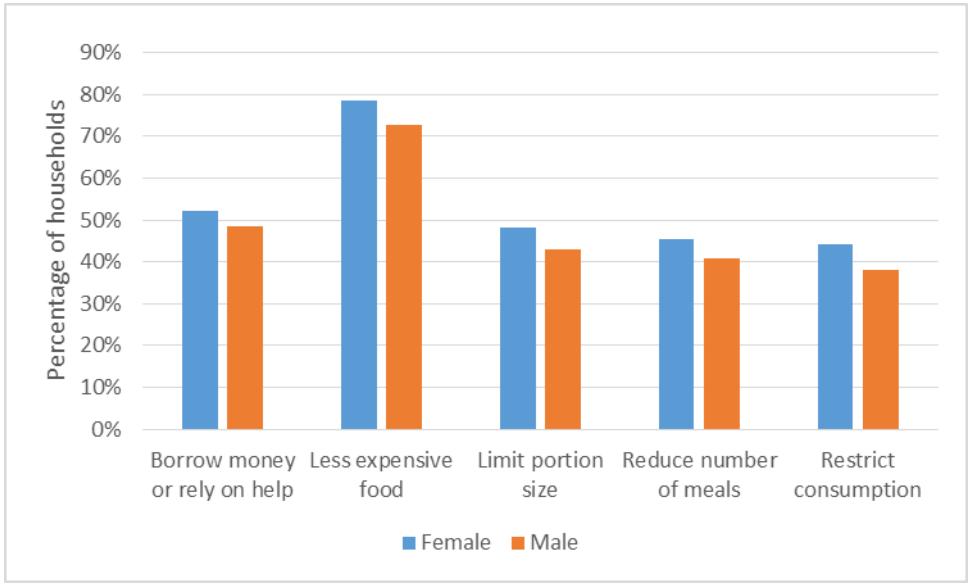
As Figure 4a shows, a higher proportion of respondent households headed by women reported poor food consumption (24 percent) compared to those led by men (16 percent). Furthermore, respondent households led by women reported a higher use of some negative food-related coping strategies, particularly the most severe strategy of restricting adult consumption to allow children to eat (Figure 4b). Nationally, eating less expensive food was the most commonly used coping strategy, employed by almost 75 percent of respondent households across the country.

Fig. 4a:
Inadequate consumption
by sex of household head



Source: mVAM June 2016

Fig. 4b:
Food-related coping strategies
by sex of household head



Source: mVAM June 2016


WFP/Nthabiseng Leeme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WFP/Washi Mokati

More rural households are using livelihood coping strategies

In June, 50 percent of the respondent households in rural areas had inadequate food consumption, compared to 18 percent of urban households (Figure 5a). While both rural and urban households are adopting livelihood coping strategies, a significantly higher proportion of rural households reported using all three livelihood strategies in the survey (Figure 5b). Borrowing or buying food on credit is the most commonly used strategy with nearly 50 percent of rural households using it. In fact, a small proportion of both rural and urban households have even exhausted this strategy, which may force them to use more severe strategies such as selling animals or withdrawing children from school.

Fig. 5a: Inadequate consumption by urban/rural

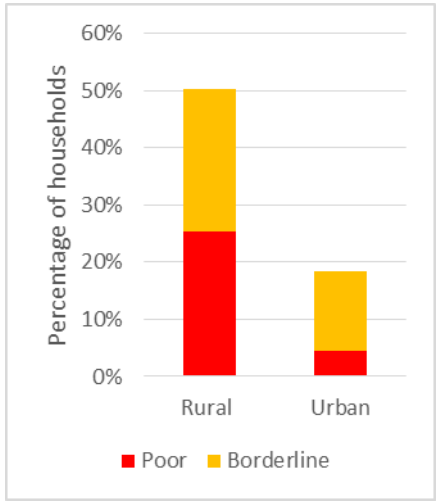
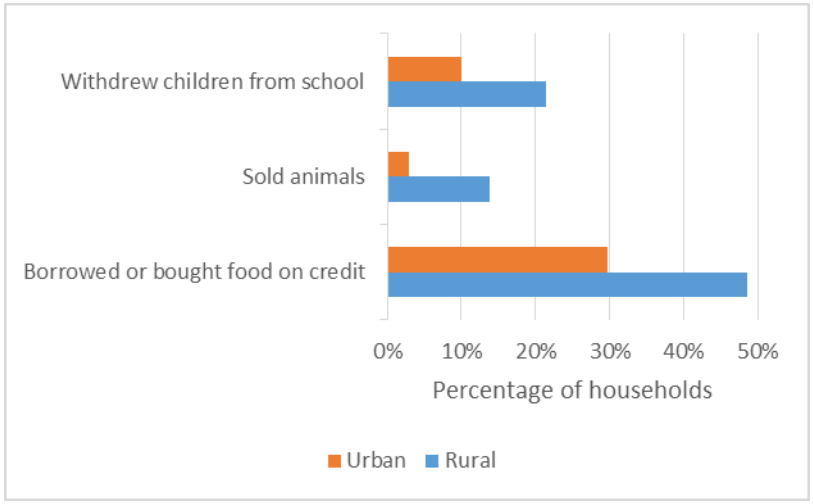


Fig. 5b: Livelihood coping strategies by urban/rural



Source (both): mVAM June 2016

Cows and sheep are most expensive in Maseru

Fig. 7a: Cow prices by district aggregations

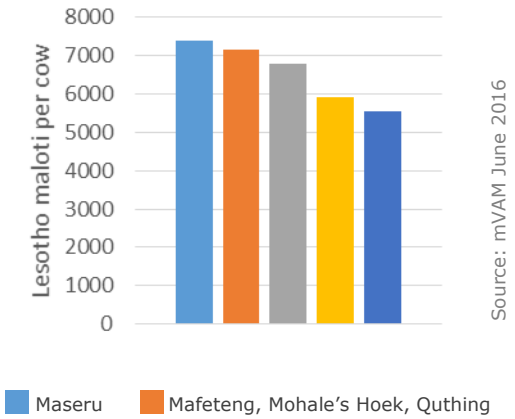
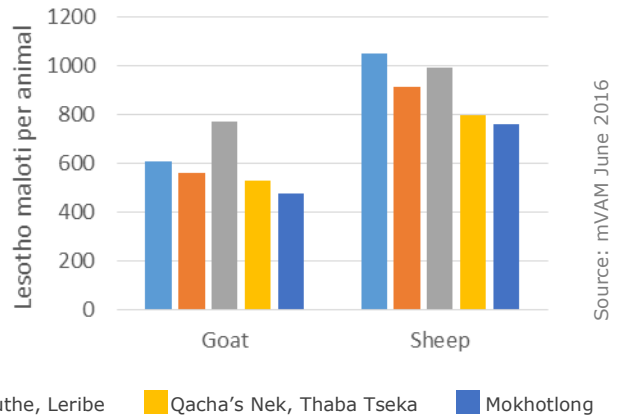
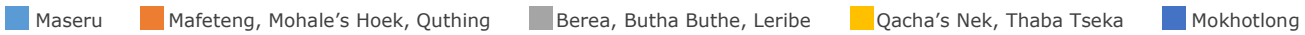


Fig. 7b. Goat and sheep prices by district aggregations





The prices for livestock varied across district aggregations. Cows and sheep were most expensive in Maseru, probably because of high demand in the capital. On the other hand, goats were most expensive in the district aggregation of Berea, Butha Buthe and Leribe.

Staples and peas most expensive in Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka

In June, the average price of maize meal in Lesotho was M86.00 per 12.5 kg. This was lower than the May average of M94.00 reported by the Bureau of Statistics. Maize prices during the second week of data collection were between 4 and 15 percent lower than those of the first week for most districts. Wheat flour prices were relatively stable over the two weeks at M88.00 per 12.5 kg, similar to the May average reported by the Bureau of Statistics.

Fig. 8: Average prices of maize meal (Lesotho maloti per 12.5 kg)

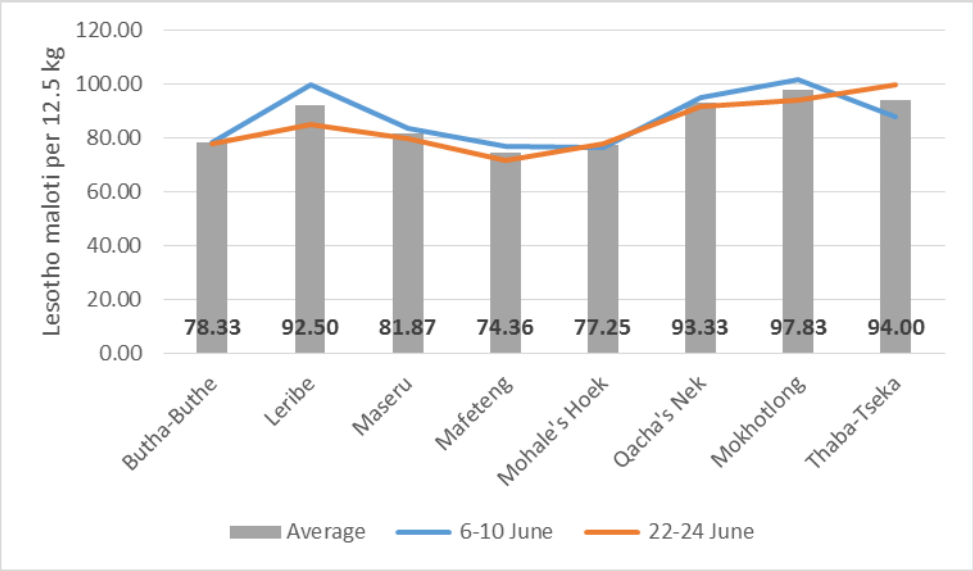


Table 1: Average prices of basic foods by district (in Lesotho maloti)

District	Maize meal (12.5kg)	Wheat flour (12.5kg)	Cooking oil (750ml)	Sugar (500 g)	Salt (500 g)	Cabbage	Peas (500 g)
Butha-Buthe	78.33	87.42	17.96	6.48	6.17	-	10.25
Leribe	92.50	83.75	18.50	7.50	6.00	11.00	11.50
Maseru	81.87	89.33	18.33	6.05	6.17	16.00	11.67
Mafeteng	74.36	82.58	17.00	6.31	6.00	7.00	10.13
Mohale's Hoek	77.25	87.50	17.75	6.38	6.00	12.00	11.50
Qacha's Nek	93.33	87.13	18.83	7.57	6.13	-	11.66
Mokhotlong	97.83	94.83	19.81	7.06	6.00	-	12.75
Thaba-Tseka	94.00	92.50	20.65	6.94	6.38	-	13.56

Source (both): mVAM June 2016

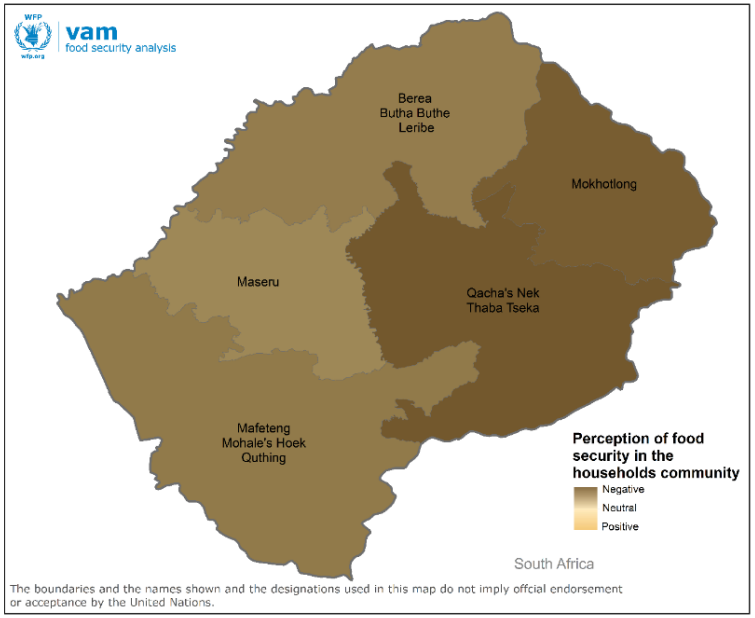
Markets are functioning

No shortages of maize meal, wheat flour, pulses or cooking oil were reported in June. However, traders indicated that they had low levels of stock of at least one commodity, especially in Maseru, Mafeteng, Qacha's Nek, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka. All markets were accessible. Those furthest from the market had to walk an average of two to three hours to reach them. Those living in mountainous districts – Thaba-Tseka, Qacha's Nek and Mokhotlong – reported the longest time to reach the markets (3 to 4 hours). Seventy-one percent of traders said the prices of staple foods were increasing; a further 10 percent mentioned a lack of transport, electricity and financial institutions for credit as major constraints to business.

Low agricultural production and unemployment are major concerns

Respondents were concerned about high food prices and a shortage of food in their communities, largely because of the poor harvest last season and the lack of employment opportunities. Some respondents from Quthing, Berea and Maseru said that people in their communities were growing their own vegetables, thereby improving their food security. There were concerns for the well-being of children – especially orphaned children – in Maseru, Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka. Nationally, the sentiment score for the responses to the open-ended question was negative (-0.4). The most negative perception of food security was in Mokhotlong and in the district aggregation of Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka.

Map 3: Sentiment score



Source: mVAM June 2016

Methodology

In June 2016, mVAM conducted the first round of household food security monitoring using live telephone interviews throughout Lesotho. The data presented here was collected through a call centre from a sample of 931 respondents from 10 districts. Participants were randomly selected from a national database of mobile subscribers. An airtime credit incentive of US$0.50 (M7.00) was provided to respondents who successfully completed the survey. The questionnaire collected data on demographics, food assistance, household food consumption, coping strategies and primary food sources. A final open-ended question gave respondents the chance to share additional information on the food situation in their communities. The data was weighted by the number of mobile phones owned by the household and population estimates. In addition, food price data was collected during the weeks of June 6-10 and 22-24 from a sample of 40 traders across the 10 districts. The survey questions focused on the prices of basic food commodities and indicators of market functioning. There was also an open ended question on traders' perception of the food security situation in their respective areas.

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mVAM Resources:

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