






High food insecurity in southern and mountain districts

Key points:

-  Higher use of negative livelihoods coping strategies among households headed by women
-  Twice as many rural households have poor food consumption than urban households
-  Food insecurity increasing among households who buy food
-  Maize meal prices continued to fall in November but remain higher than last year
-  Prices for wheat flour and pulses remain stable



Seasonal Outlook

The peak of the lean season began a few months earlier than normal. *Crisis* (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to continue in Lesotho throughout the peak period due to below normal off-season incomes and below-average wage rates for agricultural labour, as well as high food prices ([FEWS NET](#)). The number of food-insecure people in 2016/17 is estimated to have increased by 53 percent to 709,394 people compared to 2015/16, according to the latest Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee evaluation. Northern parts of Lesotho, including the main cereal-producing regions of Berea and Leribe, have received heavy rainfall in the past month, following a season that was severely affected by El Niño-related dryness. The Lesotho Meteorological Service has forecasted below-average rainfall for January – March 2017 in the western and south-western parts of the country while the rest of the country is expected to receive average to above-average rainfall. However, the reduced 2016 harvest has limited the seed supplies available for this planting season. By early November, just over halfway through the current marketing year, 75,000 mt of maize had been imported from South Africa – 50 percent more than in the same period of the previous marketing year ([FAO GIEWS](#)).

WFP/Richard Lee

1,024 Interviews
Food assistance
Beneficiaries: 9%
Non-beneficiaries: 91%

45
years
Average
age of
respondents

Head of household
Female: 22%
Male: 78%

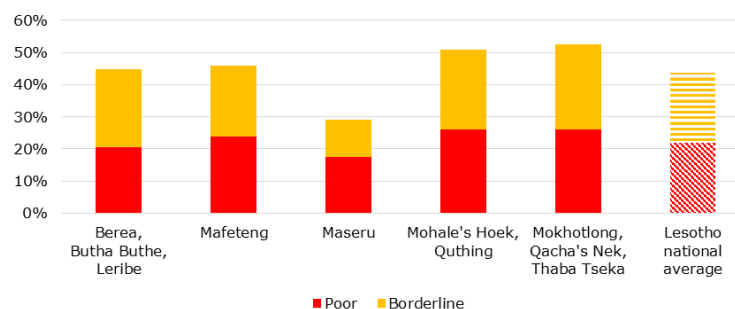
Environment
Urban: 18%
Rural: 82%



Households in the south and in mountain districts are more food insecure

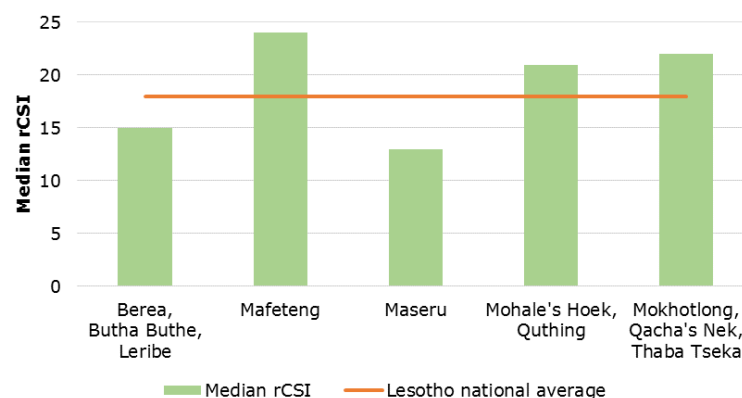
In November mVAM data shows that the food security situation deteriorated considerably since June 2016. However, only 9 percent of the respondent households were beneficiaries of food assistance. While the national average food consumption score (FCS) decreased slightly to 49.35, the level of negative coping has increased since June 2016: the national median rCSI increased from 8 in June to 18 in November, showing increasing stress on households. The lowland districts of Maseru, Berea, Buthe-Buthe and Leribe fared better than the mountain districts of Mokhotlong, Qacha's Nek and Thaba-Tseka, and the southern districts of Mafeteng, Maseru, and Quthing, with better food consumption (Map 1) and lower coping levels (Figure 2). In Maseru, 88.5 percent of the households were employing negative food-related coping strategies, whereas in Mokhotlong, 96 percent of the households were using coping strategies in November.

Figure 1: Inadequate food consumption by district aggregation



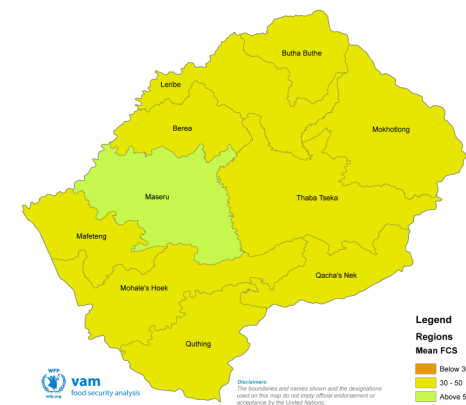
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 2: Median rCSI by district aggregation



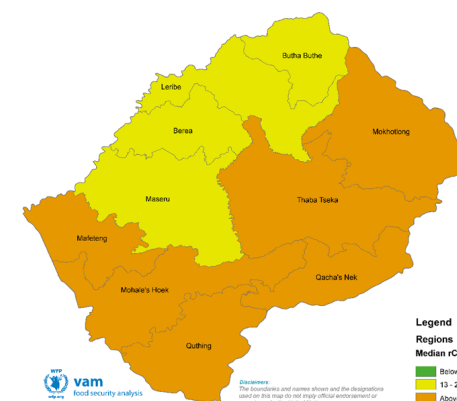
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Map 1: Food consumption score by district aggregation



Source: mVAM, November 2016

Map 2: Median rCSI by district aggregation



Source: mVAM, November 2016



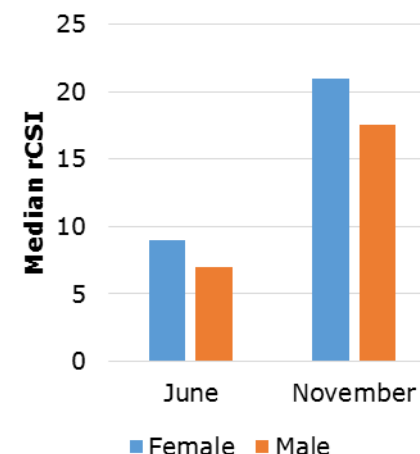
Higher food insecurity among households headed by women and those in rural areas

Households headed by women showed more signs of stress compared to those headed by men, on a number of indicators. The mean (average) FCS for households headed by women (48) was slightly worse than for those headed by men (49.9). While the median rCSI has deteriorated for both groups since June 2016, households headed by women continue to employ more frequent and more severe food-related coping strategies than those headed by men (**Figure 3**). For example, the most severe coping strategy of restricting adult food consumption to allow children to eat was used by 61 percent of households headed by men and 71 percent of households headed by women.

In addition, households headed by women reported a higher use of livelihoods coping strategies, which have a much longer term economic impact than food-related coping strategies. In the past month, more than half of these households had borrowed food or purchased it on credit, and a quarter had withdrawn children from school.

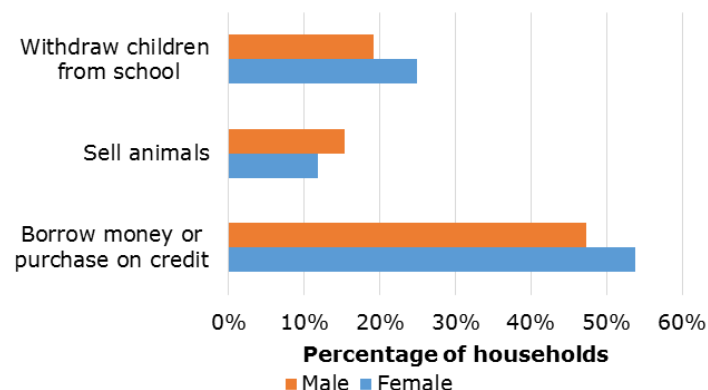
Similarly, rural areas reported higher food insecurity than urban areas. Rural areas show a higher rCSI (rural rCSI=21, urban rCSI=11) and had almost double the proportion of households with inadequate food consumption compared to urban areas (**Figure 5**). There was greater use of both food-related and livelihoods coping strategies (**Figure 6**) in rural areas. Close to 60 percent of rural households borrowed food or relied on help to obtain food, compared to 43 percent of urban households, and almost 70 percent of rural households restricted adult food consumption so children could eat, compared to 50 percent of urban households.

Figure 3: Median rCSI by head of household sex



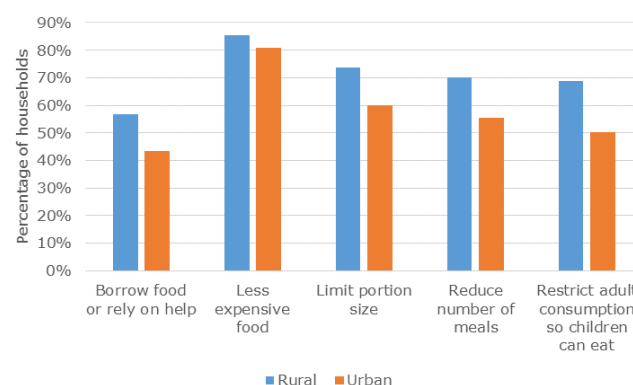
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 4: Use of livelihoods coping strategies by head of household sex



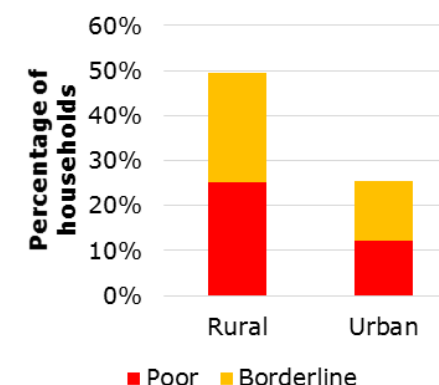
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 6: Use of negative food-related coping strategies by urban/rural



Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 5: Inadequate food consumption by urban/rural



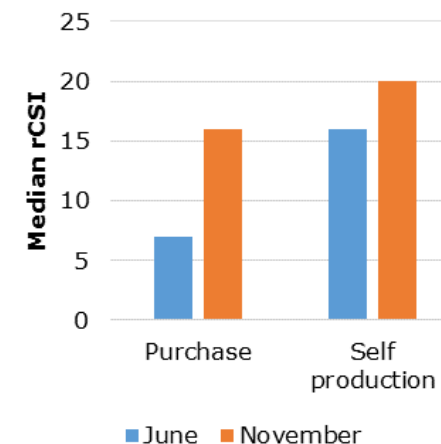
Source: mVAM, November 2016



Increasing food insecurity among households buying food

Households whose main food source is their own production and households who mostly buy their food saw an increase in rCSI, indicating a higher use of negative coping strategies among both types of households in November compared to June. However, those buying their food saw a much larger increase in rCSI. Additionally, in November a higher proportion (16.7 percent) of households who purchase their food reported poor food consumption than in June (12.5 percent). This could indicate the increasing stress caused by continuing high food prices.

Figure 7: Median rCSI by main food source



Source: mVAM, November 2016



Markets are functioning well

In November, markets seemed to be functioning well with high availability of food and 78 percent of traders reporting no major constraints to business. However, the remaining 22 percent reported rising prices, a lack of access to financial institutions for credit facilities, and a lack of transport facilities as the main constraints to business. Three quarters of traders interviewed did not have stock shortages of maize meal, wheat flour, beans, peas, cooking oil, sugar or salt. Most traders continued to order their stock weekly, while the rest were ordering less frequently. Maize meal continued to be sourced within the districts of operation by the majority of traders, followed by those who sourced in other districts within Lesotho.

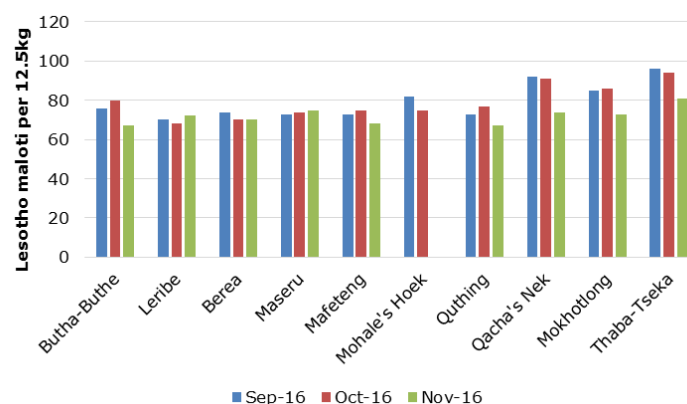


Maize meal prices fall slightly while prices for wheat flour and pulses remain stable

November mVAM data shows that maize meal prices were stable for most districts. Prices fell between 16 and 19 percent in mountain districts compared to October (**Figure 8**), although they remained slightly higher than in lowland districts. The average price of maize meal decreased from 79.00/12.5kg to M72.00/12.5 kg. Even so, November maize meal prices are 22 percent above the five-year average (2011–2015) and 7 percent higher than in November 2015 (**Figure 9**).

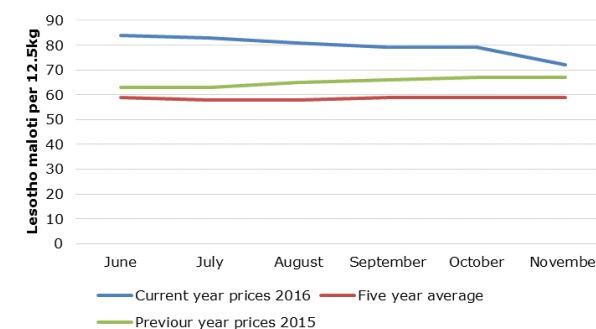
The national average price of wheat flour remained stable in October and November at M88.00/12.5 kg. The average prices of beans and peas ranged between M7.00 and M11.00 per 500 g (**Figures 10a and 10b**). Although some districts showed a decline in the price of pulses, national average prices remained stable in October and November at M9.00/500 g.

Figure 8: Average prices of maize meal (in maloti per 12.5kg)



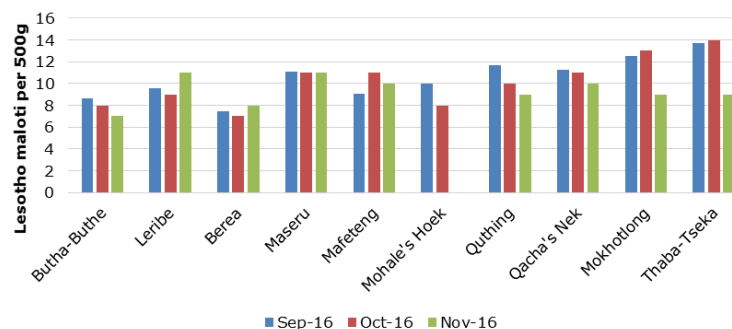
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 9: Average prices of maize meal (in maloti per 12.5 kg), compared to 2015 and the five-year average



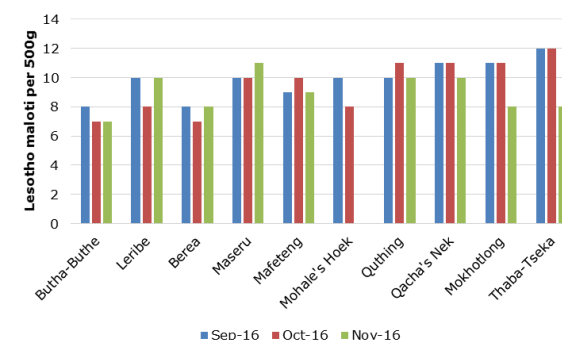
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 10a: Average prices of beans (in maloti per 500 g)



Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 10b: Average prices of peas (in maloti per 500 g)



Source: mVAM, November 2016

District	Wheat (12.5 kg)	Beans (500 g)	Peas (500 g)	Cooking oil (750ml)	Sugar (500g)	Salt (500g)	Cabbage (1 head)
Butha-Buthe	85	7	7	17	8	4	7
Leribe	88	11	10	19	9	5	11
Berea	86	8	8	18	8	5	15
Maseru	88	11	11	19	8	5	11
Mafeteng	86	10	9	16	8	5	8
Mohale's Hoek				-	-	-	-
Quthing	95	9	10	19	7	6	15
Qacha's Nek	84	10	10	17	8	5	-
Mokhotlong	87	9	8	19	8	4	7
Thaba-Tseka	93	9	8	22	8	6	10

Source: mVAM. November 2016



The biggest concern for households was the ongoing drought, which has led to a severe shortage of food and water, and interfered with their planting activities. Respondents were also worried about high unemployment in their communities, which is eroding purchasing power.

Source: mVAM, November 2016



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