

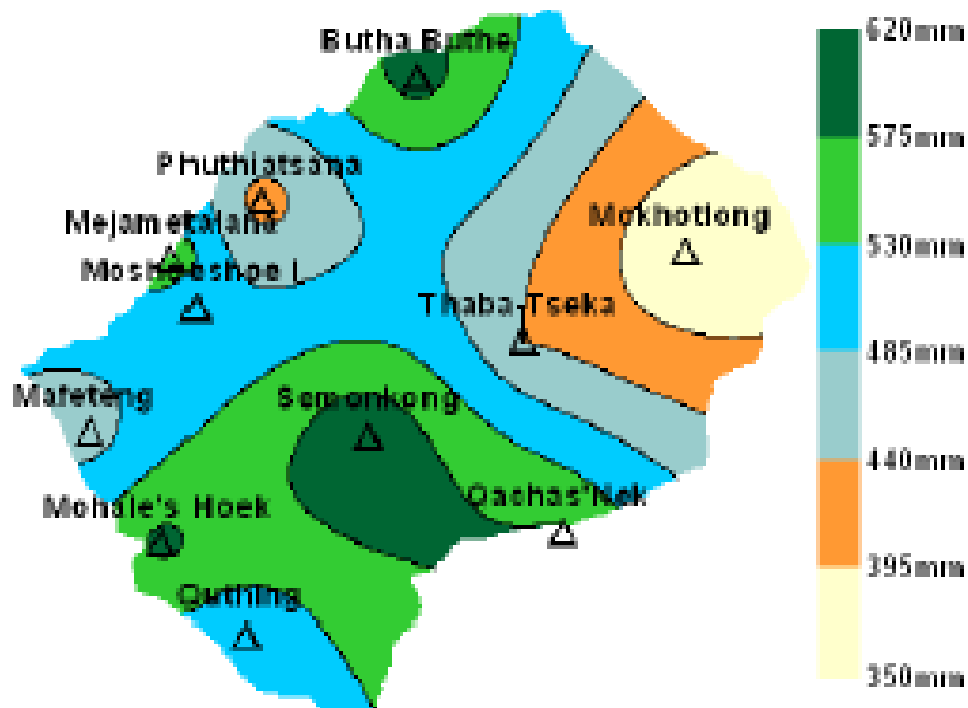
Report on the Agriculture situation and Food Security condition, March 2010.

Highlights

1. Sufficient rainfall has been received during 2009/2010 planting season. The Agro-meteorological report for January produced by Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS) indicates crop conditions as satisfactory.
2. Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) reported area planted in 2009/10 to be 123,051.4 hectares. This is 43% of estimated available arable land.
3. Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) estimates maize production for 2010 to be 72,398 MT. This represents an increase of 16% over 2009 production.
4. According to the price monitoring report produced by the World Food Programme (WFP) , on average , in January 2010 urban maize prices increased by 8% from December 2009 prices, while rural prices increased by only 0.2% in the same period.

On set and rainfall distribution during the planting season outlined.

The agriculture production is dependant on rain fed. For the 2009/10 planting season which started in August 2009, onset of rainfall was experienced on time which allowed planting activities to start on time as well. The rainfall was sufficient except for the dry spell which occurred in December. The cumulative rainfall since September 2009 to January ranges from normal in Mokhotlong district and Phuthiatsana recording station to above normal in the rest of the country. The highest cumulative rainfall has been observed at Semonkong, parts of Qacha's Nek and Butha Buthe.



Map 2: Sept 2009 - Jan 2010 Cumulative Rainfall

The rainfall performance is in contradiction with what was forecasted in August 2009. The forecasting had indicated that below normal rainfall should be expected in the west and southern parts of the country and normal to below normal in the Northern parts from October to December 2009. The prevailing rainfall has maintained the soil moisture to be favourable for the growth of crops. Weeding has been completed in most parts.

The LMS reports show that the crops are at late vegetative stage to reproductive stage. Reproductive stage includes flowering, cob formation and grain filling. The question of whether the crops will reach physiological maturity on time can only be forecasted at the end of March.

Input supply and prices

Majority of the farmers in the rural areas use seeds kept from the previous harvest and kraal manure. However, the report from Ministry of Agriculture indicates that unlike in the last cropping season 2008/09 where inputs prices were exceptionally high, this cropping season prices were relatively low. The Government of Lesotho effected inputs **subsidy from 30% to 50%**. The report further shows that the inputs were procured in time and were brought close to the farmers for easy access.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) also contributed to easy access of inputs by carrying out Input Trade Fairs (ITFs) where selected 22,551 farmers were given vouchers amounting to M800 to purchase inputs. The ITF were conducted in all the 10 districts.

The rainfall performance coupled with accessibility of the inputs has had positive increase in the area planted. However, it should be noted that a significant proportion of farmers still use seeds kept from the previous harvest and the kraal manure. Therefore, yield is not expected to change much from the normal average of the past years.

Ploughing is done by draught power especially in the mountains and Foothills. Of late, farmers have experienced stock theft which compromises planting activities for the poor as they had to wait for the better off to finish planting their fields. In the lowlands most of the farmers use tractors and have benefited from MAFS revised prices of **M600 to M500 per hectares** for planting operations.

Estimates of Area planted

The MAFS through the department of Crops have estimated area planted as early as beginning of February 2010. This follows FAO support where a consultant was engaged in 2009 to help the agriculture extension officers to estimate area planted prior to the detailed statistical estimations produced by Bureau of Statistics (BOS).

The report shows that there is an increase in area planted in 2009/10 cropping season as result of both sufficient rainfall and subsidized farming inputs. However, when comparing MAFS area planted estimates for 2009/10 with 2008/09 estimate from BoS, there is a decline in the area planted except for Berea and Thaba Tseka districts. See Table 1 below. But for now the discrepancies should not be considered much as the methodologies used to estimate area planted by these two institutions are not similar. The actual comparison can only be done when BoS estimates are out at the end of February. An estimated total of **123,051.4** hectares have been planted for 2009/10.

Table 1 below compares area planted in 2008/09 and 2009/10 estimated by BoS and MAFS respectfully.

Table1

Districts	Area planted in 08/09 est. by BOS	Total Utilized(area planted)	Difference
Mokhotlong	10094	2762.1	-7331.9
Botha-Bothe	4353	4315.5	-37.5
Leribe	17417	12953.0	-4464
Berea	17556	43987.6	26431.6
Maseru	28227	6127.9	-22099.1
Thaba Tseka	22682	24655.3	1973.3
Mafeteng	26285	2420.7	-23864.3
Mohale's Hoek	22670	16706.8	-5963.2
Quthing	7128	1159.4	-5968.6
Qacha's Nek	8171	7963.0	-208
Total	164583	123051.4	-41531.6

Table 2 below outlines area planted by crops in different districts

Table2

District	Wheat	Maize	Sorghum	Beans	peas	lentils	potatoes	Sunflower	Fodder	veggies	Total/district
Mokhotlong	705.3	999.0	5.0	826.0	160.0		38.3			28.5	2762.1
Botha-Bothe	44.4	3200.4	503.6	465.0	23.0		43.1		15.6	20.4	4315.5
Leribe	3000.0	6818.2	823.2	2072.6			167.2	54.0		17.5	12953.0
Berea	409.5	30450.0	4350.0	8700.0	56.0					22.1	43987.6
Maseru	638.1	3208.6	915.4	826.6	122.6		377.8		13.5	25.4	6127.9
Thaba Tseka	7020.0	11200.0	3020.0	900.0	1500.0	90.0	800.0		100	25.3	24.655.3
Mafeteng	348.5	1022.0	105.4	667.3	217.4		47.8			12.3	2420.7
Mohale's Hoek	297.0	10257.7	4462.9	1556.3	100.6					32.3	16706.8
Quthing	144.1	511.6	69.3	336.4	12.5		15.5			70.0	1159.4
Qacha's Nek	362.0	4730.0	2400.0	362.0		71.0	12.4			25.6	7963.0
Total	12968.9	72397.5	16655.1	16712.2	2192.1	161.0	1502.1	54.0	129.1	279.4	123051.4

Source: MoAFS Crop and area planted estimate report February 2010)

The total arable land as indicated on the below table is **283,198** ha. When deducting the area planted on the arable land it leaves **160,146.60** ha of fallow land. This fallow land amount to more than 56% of the arable land and is still very high despite all the efforts that were implemented.

Table 3 below shows area planted against fallow land.

Table 3

Districts	Total Utilised(area planted)	Estimated available land	Difference(fallow)
Mokhotlong	2762.1	14629	11866.9
Botha-Bothe	4315.5	13284	8968.5
Leribe	12953.0	52114	39160.98
Berea	43987.6	42293	-1694.61
Maseru	6127.9	47300	41172.06
Thaba Tseka	24.655.3	26560	1904.70
Mafeteng	2420.7	37156	34735.27
Mohale's Hoek	16706.8	24989	8282.20
Quthing	1159.4	15256	14096.60
Qacha's Nek	7963.0	9617	1654.00
Total	123051.4	283198	160146.60

Source: MoAFS Crop and area planted estimate report February 2010)

Production

The average yield was applied on the area planted for different crops to estimate the production. The forecasted production for the three main crops is **25,937.80mt of wheat, 72,397.54mt of maize and 24,982.6mt of sorghum.**

Water Situation

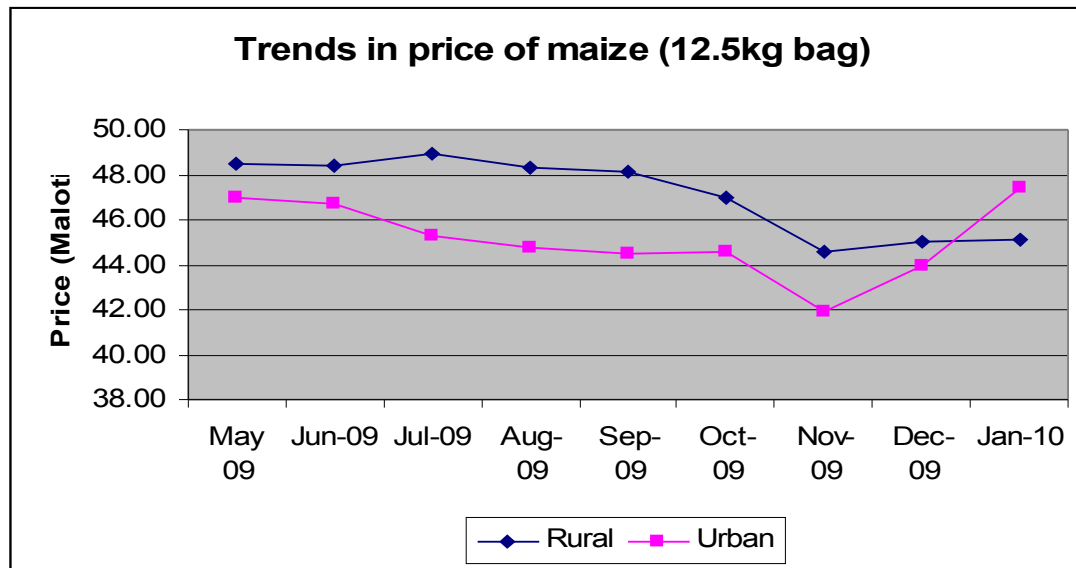
The water levels in both the dams and rivers have improved. The rains have recharged the springs and the underground water tables.

Livestock Situation and pastureland

The rainfall received has improved the pastureland. As a result, livestock are perceived to be in good condition. Recent studies such as LVAC are showing a decline in livestock quantities due to stock theft and livestock sales. There are no livestock disease outbreaks reported.

Food prices

The WFP report indicates that on average, in January 2010 urban prices increased by 8 percent from December 2009, while rural prices increased by only 0.2 percent. As of January 2010, there was an increase of 5% from January 2009 prices in urban shops and a decrease of 2.8% in rural shops. The South African Crop forecast committee projects a bumper harvest in South Africa and this may result in lower maize prices which will benefit Lesotho.



Conclusions

1. Crop production is expected to be higher than 2009 by 16% if the current favourable wealth conditions continue. Crop stand /situation reports expected from MAFS and BoS in March will update this conclusion.
2. The price of maize is fairly stable over the past 6 months and Maize prices in South Africa are expected to fall due to the projected bumper harvest. This is likely to result in lower prices for Lesotho as well.
3. The price of diesel has fallen by approximately 2.8% in the past one year and this could potentially result in lower price for maize given the lower costs of transportation to remote areas of the country.

The Disaster Management Authority would like to thank the following for providing valuable information for this report;

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) provided Crop production and area planted information, **Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS)** provided Meteorology information, and the **World Food Programme (WFP)** provided food Price data.