

Use of negative coping strategies falls among households producing their own food

Key points:



Food prices remain stable



Households in the south are under more stress than those in the north



The use of some food-related negative coping strategies has fallen in rural areas



Fewer poorer households are using negative coping strategies



Situation update

According to the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, national cereal production for 2017/2018 is forecast to be higher than the agricultural reference year (2008/09), the previous year and the five-year averages. It is set to be the highest in the last ten years. However, some districts such as Berea are expected to fall below the reference year production. Prices are still above the five-year average, although prices are expected to fall in most districts until November 2017. According to IPC analysis carried out during June and July 2017, most districts are in IPC Phase 2 Stressed or worse. Around 224,000 people are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance until March 2018 as they are facing Phase 3 Crisis or Phase 4 Emergency food insecurity. The Lesotho Meteorological Services predict normal-to-above-normal rainfall in some areas between June and August 2017.



950 Interviews



Average
age of
respondents



Head of household

Female: 32%

Male: 68%



Environment

Urban: 19%

Rural: 81%



Southern households remain stressed despite encouraging cereal production forecasts

The national median reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)¹ was 16 in June, and the Food Consumption Score (FCS)² was 41. The southern districts and the mountain districts continue to record higher proportions of households with poor food consumption compared to northern parts and Maseru (Figure 1). rCSI was also higher in the south and the mountain districts than in the north (Figure 2).

Map 1: Median rCSI by district aggregation

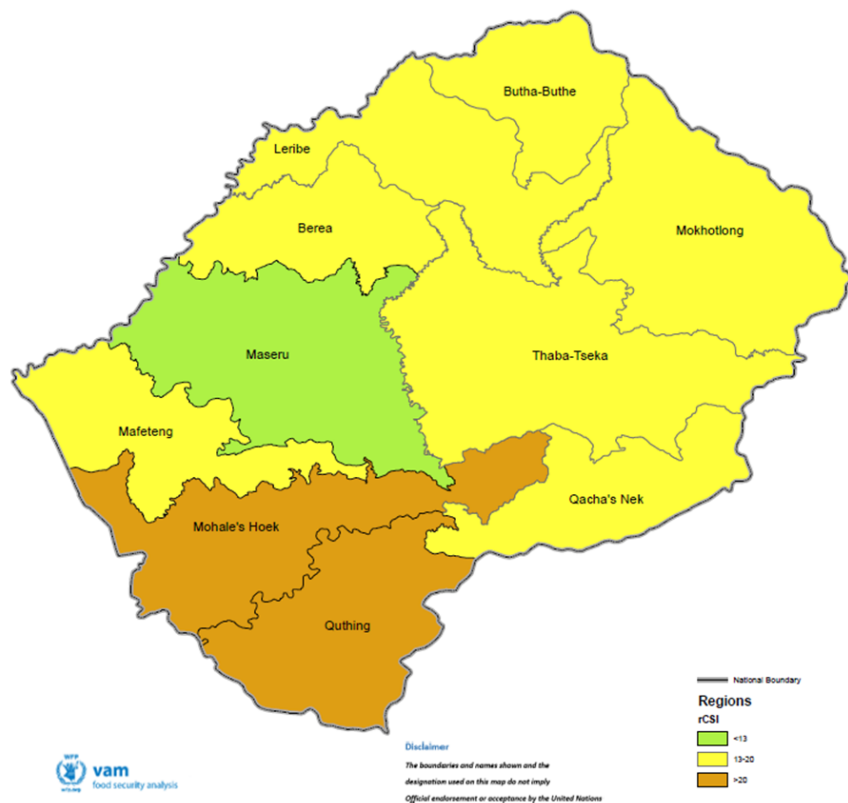


Figure 1: Food consumption by district aggregation

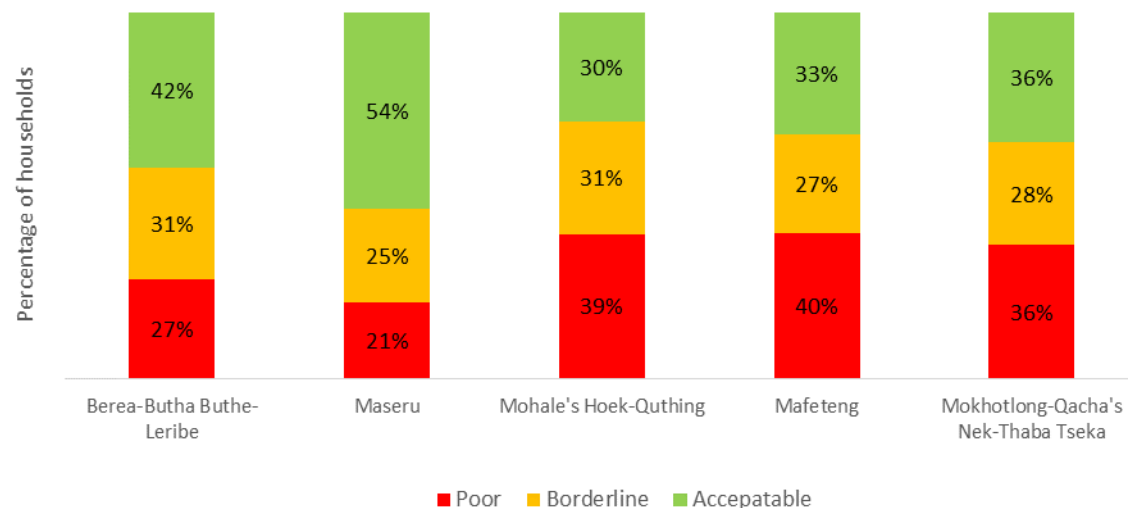
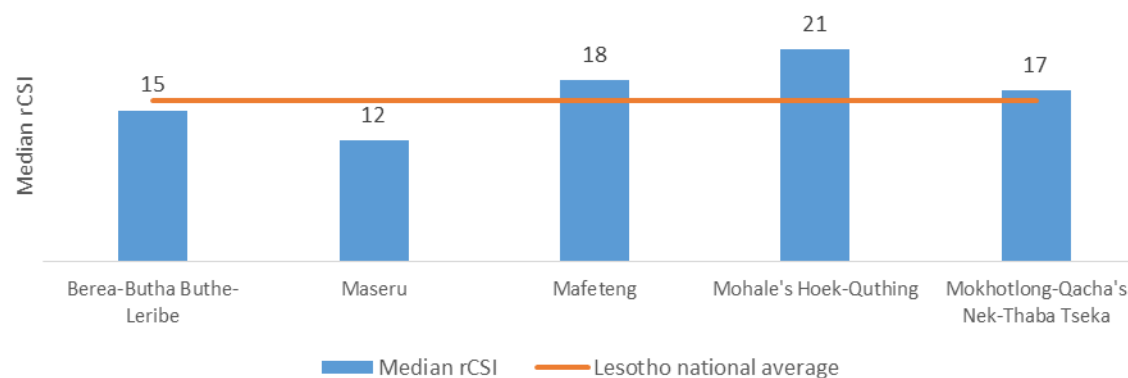


Figure 2: Median rCSI by district aggregation



¹ The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) indicates the frequency and the severity of coping strategies used by households: a lower rCSI indicates less stress on the households.

² The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a composite of dietary diversity and food frequency. Poor food consumption refers to a diet composed mainly of maize on a daily basis and vegetables for a maximum of four days per week. 'Borderline' food consumption is classified as a diet made up of cereals and vegetables on a daily basis plus oils/fats for five days and sugar/sugar products for three days per week. 'Acceptable' food consumption is classified as daily intake of cereals, vegetables, oil and sugar, and at least one day's consumption of foods rich in protein.



Decrease in the use of some negative coping strategies in rural areas

Across Lesotho, the use of three of the five surveyed food-related coping strategies fell in June compared with May (**Figure 3**). There was also a fall in the use of certain coping strategies among rural households and poorer households (those with mud walls and unbaked brick walls). The share of households with mud walls who consumed less preferred but cheaper foods fell from 86 percent in May to 78 percent in June, while the share of those with unbaked brick walls who ate fewer meals a day fell from 61 percent in May to 57 percent in June. Similarly, for rural households the proportion who ate less preferred food fell from 77 to 74 percent, and those eating fewer meals fell from 67 to 65 percent.

For households whose main source of food is their own production, the proportion who borrowed food or relied on help for food dropped by 19 percentage points (**Figure 4**). The proportion of households who bought food on credit in the rural areas fell by 8 percentage points compared with May, and those selling animals decreased by 3 percentage points (**Figure 5**). This could signal the positive impact of current harvest.

Figure 3: Food-related negative coping strategies

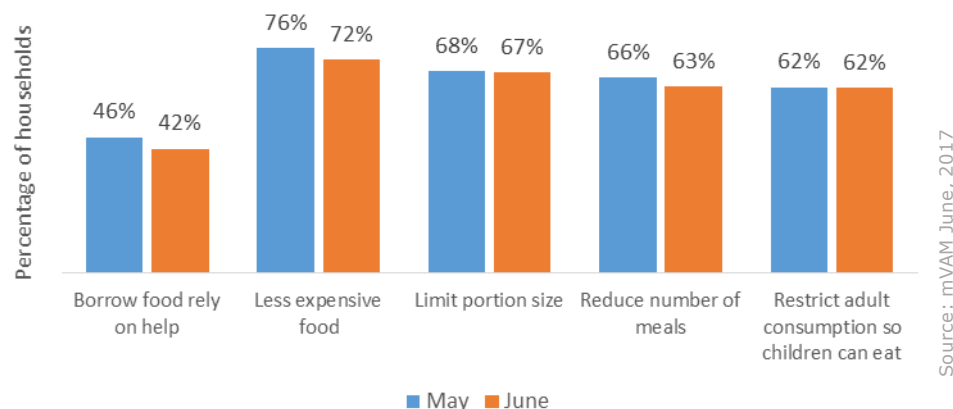


Figure 4: Food-related negative coping strategies by main food source

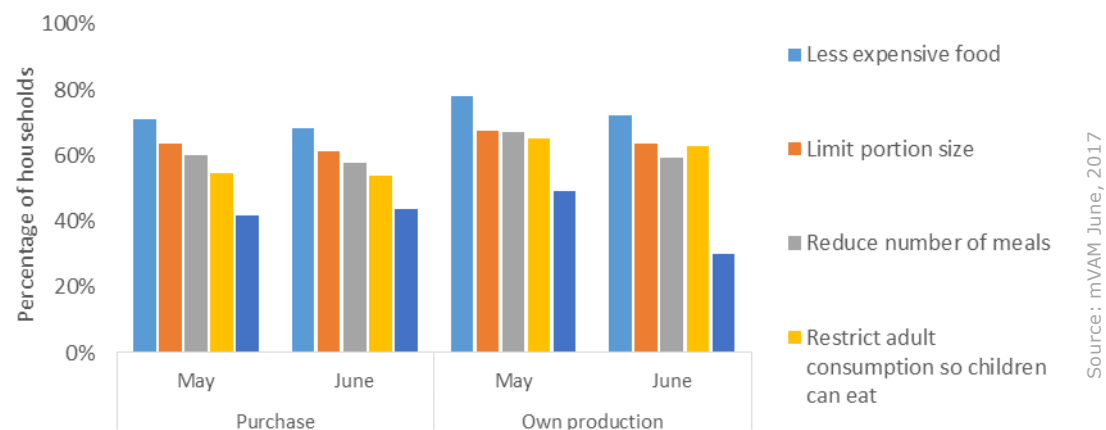
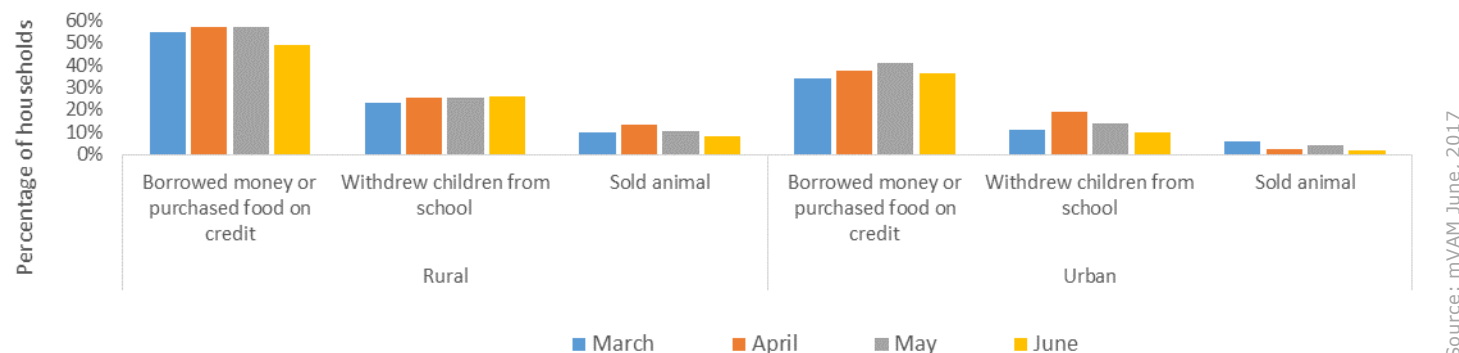


Figure 5: Use of livelihood-related coping strategies by rural/urban

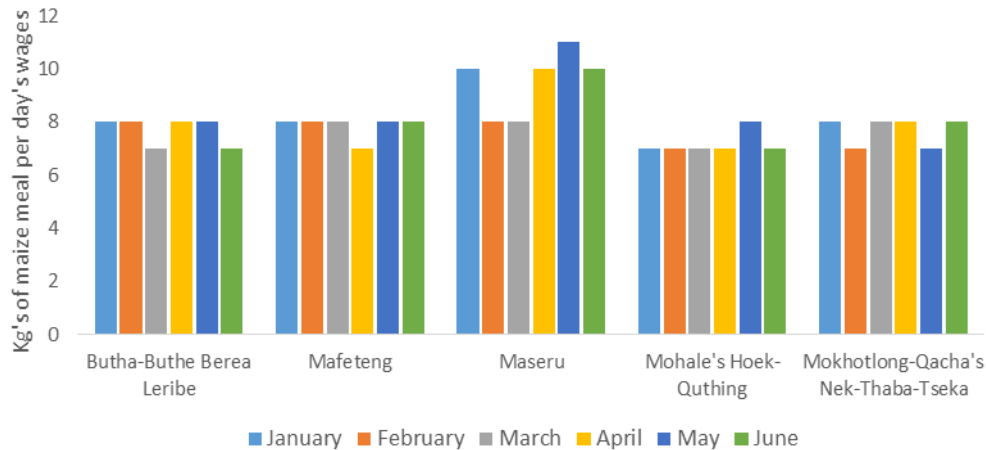




Purchasing power remains stable

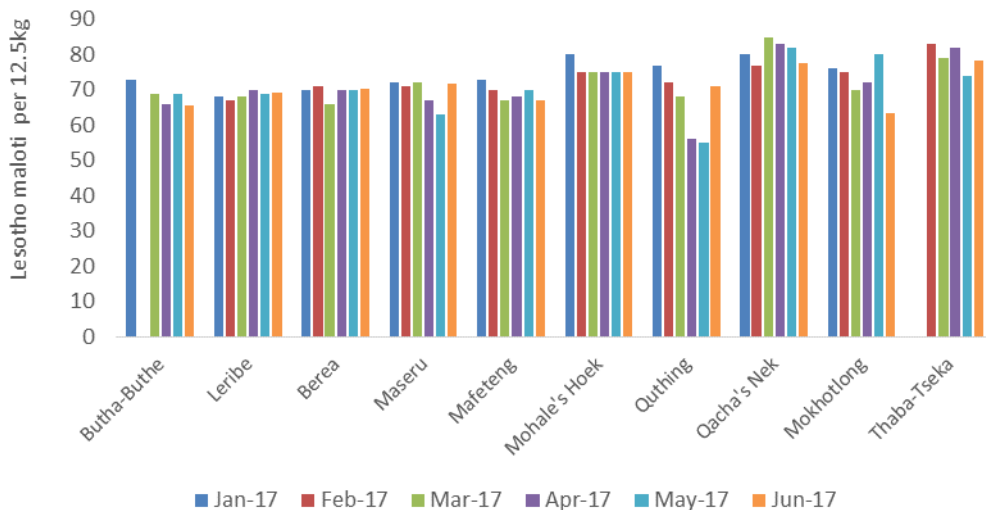
Purchasing power – measured by the quantity of maize meal a household can buy with a day’s earning from manual labour – has remained stable in most

Figure 6: Purchasing power by district aggregation (kg of maize meal per day’s labour)



Source: mVAM June, 2017

Figure 7: Average prices of maize meal (in maloti per 12.5kg)



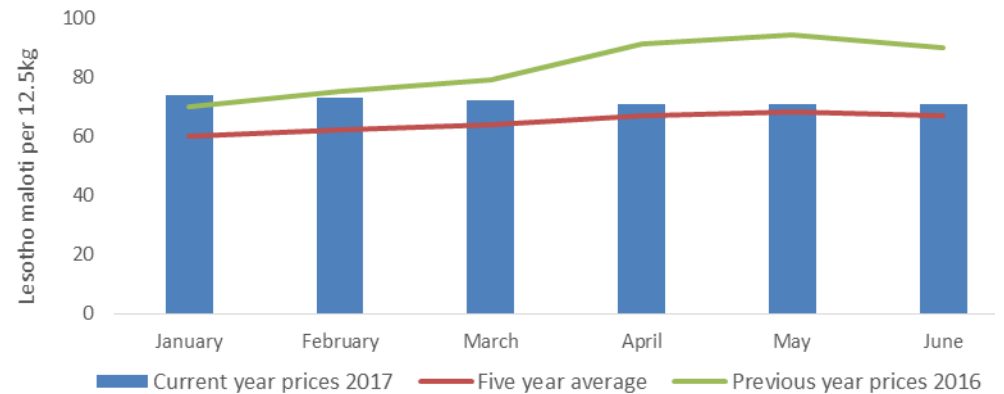
Source: mVAM June, 2017



Maize meal prices remain stable

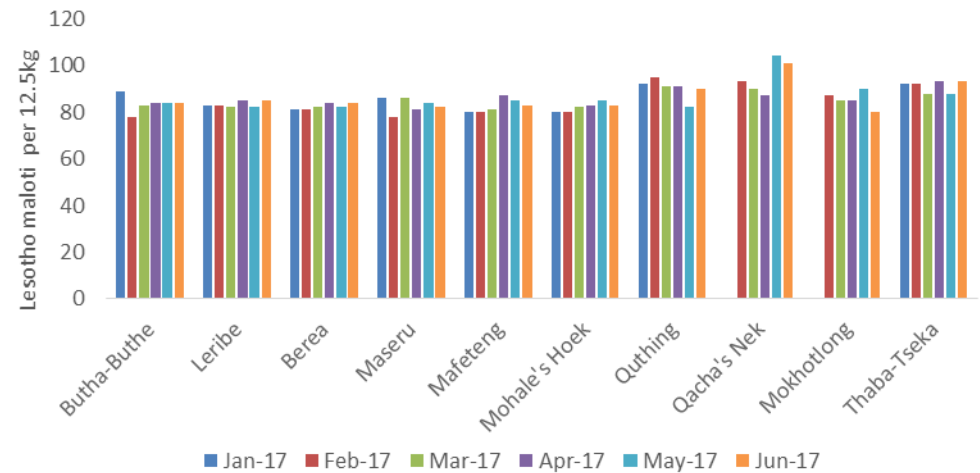
Average maize meal prices remained stable over May and June at M71/12.5kg (Figure 7). In June 2017, prices were 21 percent lower than in June 2016 but still 6 percent higher than the five-year average (2012–2016) (Figure 8). The national average price of wheat flour was stable at M87/12.5kg over May and June (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Average prices of maize meal (in maloti per 12.5 kg), compared to 2016 and the five-year average



Source: mVAM June, 2017

Figure 9: Average prices of wheat flour (in maloti per 12.5 kg)



Source: mVAM June, 2017



Difficult road conditions remain a challenge for traders

In June, markets were accessible although 54 percent of traders maintained that road conditions were poor. Demand is low because of customers' lack of money due to unemployment, as well as the good harvest enjoyed by most households. Competition with foreign-owned shops was another limiting factor mentioned by some traders. Stock shortages of maize meal, wheat flour, pulses, cooking oil, sugar and salt were reported by 33 percent of traders. Maize meal continued to be sourced within the districts of operations by the majority of traders (54 percent). Around 87 percent of the traders continued to receive their stock after 1-2 days of placing an order; 56 percent ordered stock weekly and the remainder ordered less frequently.

Table 1: Prices of basic foods (in maloti)

District	Cooking oil (750ml)	Sugar (500g)	Salt (500g)	Cab- bage (1 head)	Dried peas (500g)	Sugar beans (500g)
Butha-Buthe	14	8	3	11	8	9
Leribe	17	8	4	9	10	11
Berea	18	8	6	11	8	9
Maseru	17	10	6	15	10	13
Mafeteng	15	9	3	8	7	8
Mohale's Hoek	20	8	5	10	7	8
Quthing	17.82	4	5	12	19	20
Qacha's Nek	19	10	7	9	11	12
Mokhotlong	17	8	5	9	8	10
Thaba-Tseka	21	7	6	6	7	8

Source: mVAM June, 2017



WFP/Leonie Marinovich



In the words of respondents

"The soil is dry to do winter planting, however children get food at school through school feeding" - **Female respondent from Berea**

"We stay in the mountains. Our crops are usually caught up by frost" - **Female respondent from Thaba-Tseka**

"There are no jobs and school fees are expensive" - **Female respondent from Mokhotlong**

"People do not have money to start their own business" - **Male respondent from Berea**

"There are no jobs and there is not enough land to plant" - **Male respondent from Mokhotlong**

Figure 10: Word cloud



Source: mVAM June, 2017

Methodology

In June 2017, mVAM conducted household food security monitoring in Lesotho using live telephone interviews. The data presented here were collected through a call centre from a sample of 950 respondents from 10 districts. Participants were randomly selected from a national database of mobile subscribers. An airtime credit incentive of US\$0.50 (M7) was provided to respondents who successfully completed the survey.

The questionnaire collected data on demographics, food assistance, household food consumption and coping strategies. A final open-ended question gave respondents the chance to share additional information on the food situation in their communities. The data were weighted by the number of mobile phones owned by the household and district population estimates. In addition, food price data were collected between 14 and 27 June from a sample of 46 traders across the 10 districts. The survey questions focused on the prices of the basic foods eaten by an average household in Lesotho and indicators of market functioning.



For further information:

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