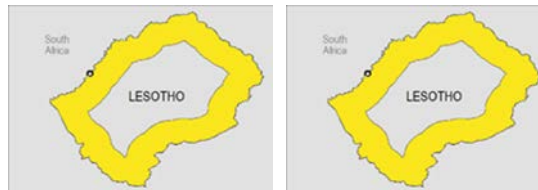


*A later than normal start of seasonal rains experienced across most of the country*

**KEY MESSAGES**

- The start of the rainfall season was delayed by 10 to > 40 days in several parts of the country. This later than normal start of rainfall has delayed planting activities, resulting in reduced incomes for casual-labor dependent households for the months of November and December. Delays in weeding opportunities are also expected in the coming months.
- Maize meal prices in Maseru appear to be following normal seasonal patterns and is slightly above the four year-average, but much lower than prices during the same time last year. Increasing prices during the December-March period will reduce purchasing power for many poor households, contributing to some livelihood protection and marginal consumption gaps.
- Income sources for poor households usually comes mainly from agricultural labor opportunities, but with the delayed start of season, household income levels are lower than normal in November and December and this will probably not be enough to meet all household demands (including festive season, school fees, and inputs). Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected in these areas through March 2018, with a chance of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes among households in isolated areas.

Projected food security outcomes, December to January 2018 (left), and February to May 2018 (right).



Highest estimated level of food insecurity in significant areas of concern using IPC 2.0 Area Reference Tables:

- Phase 1: Minimal
- Phase 2: Stressed
- Phase 3+: Crisis or higher

! Severity significantly mitigated by assistance

Source: FEWS NET

This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. To learn more about this scale, visit [www.fews.net/ipc](http://www.fews.net/ipc)

these areas through March 2018, with a chance of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes among households in isolated areas.

DISTRICT	CURRENT ANOMALIES	PROJECTED ANOMALIES
Mafeteng, Butha Buthe, Leribe, Mokhotlong, Mohale's Hoek, and Quthing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Later than normal start of seasonal rainfall.</li> <li>• Below normal livestock body conditions due to poor pastures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in green harvest that usually starts in February.</li> <li>• Reduced income and food from casual labor for December.</li> <li>• Increased possibility of below-average 2017/18 harvests due to poor crop development due to late start.</li> </ul>

**PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2018**

Typically, seasonal rainfall begins in October and allows enough time for cultivation and maturation of crops before the start of winter during the months of March and April. Since Lesotho is an upland country, colder winter temperatures and snow usually begin as early as March and can negatively affect crops that may still be in fields. The 2017/18 start of season

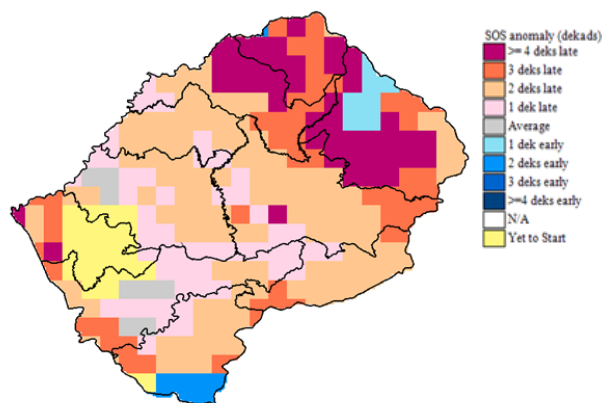
rainfall anomalies across the country range from 10 to > 40 days late (Figure 1). In addition to delays in planting, the later than normal seasonal start has also reduced poor household access to cash and food that is usually earned through casual labor opportunities during the months of November and December. As the season progresses, weeding activities (a very labor-intensive activity) will likely be delayed as well.

The start of the green harvests during the peak lean period is also expected to be late due to the erratic rainfall patterns. If the winter begins in March, this could adversely impact the size of the 2018 harvest since crops will not have enough time to mature before temperatures drop and the snow arrives.

In December, poor and very poor farming households typically depend on income from remittances, on-farm labor, some off-farm labor, self-employment (smearing, brewing, selling crafts, etc.), livestock sales, remittances, shearing wool, and social safety-net programming. Food sources for the majority of households include own produced stocks and local market purchases once food stocks have been finished. In-kind labor is also a possible source of food for poor households during this time.

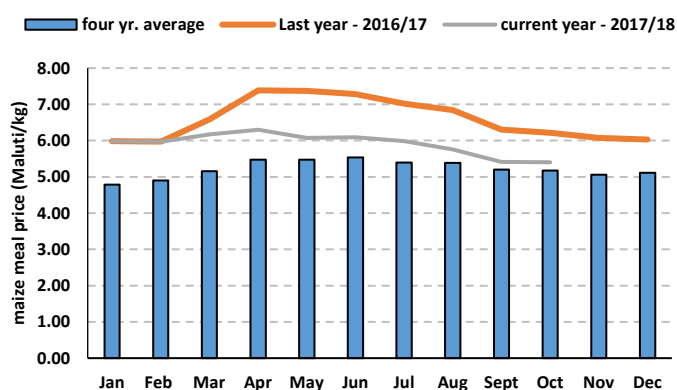
Staple prices continue to be stable. The latest maize meal prices in Maseru appear to be following normal seasonal patterns and is slightly above the four year-average, but much lower than prices during the same time last year (Figure 2). Prices will gradually increase as the lean season peaks and as household demand picks up and households become more market-dependent. Increasing prices during the December-March period will reduce purchasing power for many poor households, leading to some livelihood protection and marginal consumption gaps. Food access for households during the lean season period is projected to be constrained because they will be vulnerable to market-related shocks. Income sources for poor households usually comes mainly from agricultural labor opportunities, but with the delayed start of season, household income levels are lower than normal in November and December and this will probably not be enough to meet all household demands (including festive season, school fees, and inputs). A later than normal green harvest in 2018 is also possible, as well as a smaller 2018 harvest if crops do not have sufficient time to mature before the winter season begins in March. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected in these areas through March 2018, with a chance of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes among households in isolated areas.

**Figure 1.** Start of season anomaly (compared to average) 2017/18 season, as of 3<sup>rd</sup> dekad of November 2017.



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

**Figure 2.** Maize meal prices for Maseru.



Source: WFP/FEWS NET

**ABOUT REMOTE MONITORING**

In remote monitoring, a coordinator typically works from a nearby regional office. Relying on partners for data, the coordinator uses scenario development to conduct analysis and produce monthly reports. As less data may be available, remote monitoring reports may have less detail than those from countries with FEWS NET offices. [Learn more about our work here.](#)