Priority Support Programme, Lesotho

Promoting food security in Lesotho: issues and options

S.D. Turner

April, 2009.

Preface

Staff of the Priority Support Programme engaged in countless discussions between 2006 and 2009 about how best to work towards food security in Lesotho. Deep issues were often debated within the team and with colleagues in government, NGOs and other projects. While many words were spoken, there were few opportunities to write them down. The daily dynamics of programme implementation made it difficult to produce more than brief progress reports. Programme evaluations were restricted to abbreviated checks of performance against logical framework targets. There has been no deeper final evaluation of the food security component of the programme.

It was therefore agreed that I should produce this wider-ranging review of the issues and options in promoting Lesotho's food security. This report is not a PSP deliverable and does not represent the views of the Department for International Development. It is a voluntary effort by the programme to set down some thoughts and experiences in a way that may help government and development agencies think about their future strategies for the sector. It is not a conventional final report from the food security component, although there are chapters that summarise what the programme did and achieved between 2006 and 2009 and what its operational experiences were. In addition to the main text of the report, five more detailed, shaded sections discuss selected instances of what we and our colleagues did and learned.

I am grateful to all my PSP colleagues for the opportunity I was given to write this review. I owe them much deeper thanks for all our good work and team spirit over the last three years. I am also grateful to the management and staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, to my other colleagues in government and to all those with whom we worked in NGOs and development agencies, for the progress that we managed to make together. Between us, despite obstacles and setbacks, we did enhance Lesotho's programmes and strategies for promoting food security.

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April, 2009.

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Abbreviations

ALC	Action Learning Cycle
APCBP	Agricultural Policy and Capacity Building Project
APR	Annual Performance Report
BASP	Basic Agricultural Services Project
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBEW	community-based extension worker
CBO	community-based organisation
CCPP	Co-operative Crop Production Programme
CHW	Community Health Worker
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DAO	District Agricultural Officer
DDCC	District Development Co-ordinating Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DMA	Disaster Management Authority
DPPA	Department of Planning and Policy Analysis
DPU	District Planning Unit
DRO	District Resource Officer
EOP	end of project
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FEF	farmer extension facilitator
FSISG	Food Security Information Steering Group
FSSP	Food Self-Sufficiency Programme
GOL	Government of Lesotho
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Co-operation)
ha	hectare
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LRAP	Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme
LVAC	Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MFLR	Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation
MOLGC	Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs
MTEF	medium-term expenditure framework
MTICM	Ministry of Trade and Industry, Co-operatives and Marketing
NAPFS	National Action Plan for Food Security
nd	not dated
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
OVCs	orphans and vulnerable children
OVI	objectively verifiable indicator
PCP	Participatory Council Planning
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PSP	Priority Support Programme

PY	programme year
RHVP	Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme
SANReMP	Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Programme
SDA	Serumula Development Association
SMARTD	Southern Mountain Association for Rural Transformation and Development
t	tonne
TEAM	Training for Environmental and Agricultural Management
TOU	Technical Operations Unit
UES	Unified Extension System
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Summary

The primary purpose of this report is to offer a brief review of strategic issues and options in support for food security in Lesotho. It is not a comprehensive review of agriculture or food security in this country. This review is based largely on the experience of the food security component of the DFID-funded Priority Support Programme (PSP), which operated from June 2006 to March 2009.

Food insecurity remains a major challenge for Lesotho. It derives from the nation's structural poverty. The nature of the challenge is evolving as livelihoods change. Growing numbers of Basotho can achieve some or all of their food security by buying food rather than growing it. But there are decades ahead in which many hundreds of thousands of Basotho will still have little or no off-farm income with which to obtain food. Many of those with some such income will still need other ways to complete their food security: they will need to grow some of what they eat. Few of those unable to earn food will be able to grow all they need. Many will fall into the weaker and more vulnerable sectors of a society whose every element is ravaged by the AIDS pandemic. Lesotho's social protection system must therefore evolve to help assure the nation's food security. Strategies to promote food security through food production must recognise the specialised needs and capacities of poorer, vulnerable households (often with HIV positive members) that are best served by small-scale, highly nutritious crops.

During the earlier part of this decade, Lesotho went through an intensive period of policy development, whose results included the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the national food security policy. The PSP was intended to provide technical assistance to the Government of Lesotho in implementing these policies.

Those considering external support to the promotion of food security in Lesotho must avoid the misleading assumptions that have often been made about rural Basotho being farmers, or rural Lesotho being an agrarian society. They must understand the more complex and steadily evolving livelihood realities that frame poverty and food insecurity in Lesotho. They may choose to support enhanced food production initiatives and/or strengthened social protection programmes. They must also consider the possible modes of intervention: straightforward bilateral co-operation and project implementation with a government whose management and delivery capacity seems to be dwindling, or work with a broader range of partners including NGOs and the private sector. Another option is to channel support through multilateral agencies rather than through bilateral programmes, although this requires tight monitoring and management to ensure adequate performance by such agencies.

Many agencies have supported the development of food security and related policy in Lesotho. One of the commonest weaknesses of policy in developing countries is a lack of realism about how it will be implemented. Strong analytical content is followed by weaker, less thorough proposals about institutional and implementation arrangements. Lesotho's food security policy is guilty of this. While there can be some justification for policy that takes the longer-term view as well as addressing immediate concerns, it is all too common for policy not even to be implemented in the short term because the necessary capacity is lacking. The active management and monitoring of policy are important prerequisites for it to be effective. These challenges have not been successfully met in the case of Lesotho's food security policy.

In assessing the prospects for support to food production, it is important to understand the domestic perspective, which looks from the underused and unproductive Lesotho lowlands across to the high-yielding farms of South Africa and feels compelled to find ways to achieve similar levels of production at home. The economics of grain crops in Lesotho are unpromising, but government remains committed to a block farming programme for larger-scale grain production that consumes large amounts of money and of which donors have been understandably wary. Conventional field cropping now receives little focused support from either government or donors. The latter have focused more on a smattering of small-scale

strategies that are mostly aimed at reinforcing the livelihoods of the rural poor rather than effecting a market-oriented transformation of the rural cropping sector.

Some of these homestead food security strategies, such as the keyhole garden, have proved highly successful. PSP is among the programmes that have shown how popular such techniques are and how much they can enhance the food security of poor and vulnerable people. There is only local scope for support to conventional irrigated production. Water conservation as part of integrated conservation farming practices has significant potential, on the other hand. Government has yet to achieve a convincing conservation farming programme that outside agencies might support, but the need and the potential for such approaches are clear.

Efficient extension systems are an important prerequisite for the effective enhancement of food security. Despite much earlier effort, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security's Unified Extension System is not functioning effectively at present. Management and motivation are major challenges for the agricultural extension service. PSP and other programmes have demonstrated the valuable complementary input that community-based extension workers (CBEWs) can make. The challenge to the ministry now is to make support and modest funding for these workers a regular part of its work plan and budget. The same is true of NGOs' often important contributions to agricultural extension. Although the strength of the NGO sector in Lesotho should not be exaggerated, these bodies can bring technical expertise and social commitment to the promotion of food security. The ministry acknowledges this, but has not yet felt ready to contract NGOs with its own budget. It should do so.

There are clear linkages between strategies to enhance food security for the poor and vulnerable and strategies to reinforce social protection. To be food secure, many people in Lesotho must benefit from effective social protection. Lesotho has valuable indigenous mechanisms for this purpose, but these must now be complemented by state social protection systems. So far, despite some encouraging signals, Lesotho has not managed this integration successfully. Development and effectively co-ordinated delivery of a comprehensive social protection strategy is a priority for promoting food security and alleviating poverty.

Lesotho's current local government reform and decentralised development planning initiatives are highly relevant to the food security sector. All efforts to promote food security should now take the existence and mandate of local authorities into account. Community and District Councils' development planning and management mandates mean that they are a potentially important agency for food security interventions. Their administrative and budgetary responsibility for agricultural extension means that their involvement is inevitable. Furthermore, the community-based planning approaches of the Unified Extension System need to be integrated with those of the local authorities. PSP has tried to promote this, although progress was difficult and slow. It is hard to contradict a recent analyst's finding that central government is not seriously committed to the devolution that the Local Government Act instituted, or to the genuinely participatory planning that the new Community and District Council processes represent. Much well-meaning effort has been devoted to building these approaches over the last four years. So far they have yielded few material benefits for the people of Lesotho and little sign of the sustainable institutional progress that could in theory make a real contribution to the country's food security. Support to local government reform and building decentralised development planning and management should in theory be useful sectors for contribution by Lesotho's development partners. But in current conditions it is hard to be sanguine about what such contributions can achieve.

The food security component of the PSP was based on a three-part intervention logic: ensuring that well-informed and appropriate policy is in place, building appropriate capacity and procedures, and then proceeding to enhanced field implementation of extension programmes. Most of its effort was devoted to the third stage of this process, including the replication (at government's request) of earlier successful homestead food security approaches through a range of community-based extension workers and NGOs as well as the field staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS). A beneficiary assessment and

a formal scoring of performance against the targets in its logical framework showed that the programme succeeded at all three levels. Working within a largely existing policy framework and embedded within the structures of the ministry, the PSP food security component was not expected to pose major sustainability problems at its termination. The policies, programmes and resources of government remain in place. But various priorities and strategies will require continuing attention in order to build momentum towards enhanced food security in Lesotho.

- MAFS, in collaboration with the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Food Security, should intensify its policy monitoring and programme and budget management for national food security, tracking the funding and implementation of the food security policy and the National Action Plan for Food Security and assessing the need for revisions to the latter. As chair of the National Food Security Task Force, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning should play its intended strong role in co-ordinating food security action by line ministries.

- Linked to the necessity of stronger policy and programme management for the food security sector is the obligation to continue enhancing Lesotho's food security information systems. MAFS should continue proactive hosting of the Food Security Information Steering Group. The Cabinet Sub-Committee should ensure adequate co-ordination between the information activities of the Disaster Management Authority, MAFS and external agencies.

- GOL and its development partners should sustain and strengthen the contributions of NGOs in the food security sector. MAFS should finally commit some of its own resources to this purpose. The next opportunity for this will arise in a few months as preparation of the 2010-11 budget begins.

- The Director of Field Services should give priority to the monitoring, support and expansion of the community-based extension worker network across the country, and ensure that District Agricultural Officers do the same in their respective areas. MAFS should collaborate with NGOs for this purpose, and with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in order to maintain and build on the collaboration with community support groups and Community Health Workers that PSP promoted. Once again, the next part of the challenge should be tackled during preparation of next year's budget. MAFS should allocate resources to basic support packages for CBEWs, perhaps consisting of basic training materials.

- The work of the PSP Food Security Advisory Group should be continued through revival of the National Extension Working Group, which should include representation from NGOs and other relevant ministries. Revival of the District Extension Working Groups would play a complementary role at that level and help to support DAOs and District Extension Officers in co-ordinating CBEW and NGO activities.

- Through their extension programmes and budgets, MAFS and the NGOs with which it collaborates should continue active promotion of homestead food security techniques.

- MAFS should use the coming months to design an integrated and comprehensive conservation farming extension programme, and budget to implement it with effect from April 2010. This programme would implement a major component of the National Action Plan for Food Security and, with a focus on smaller-scale producers, complement Programme 1 of the block farming scheme for larger-scale commercial grain production.

- As a PSP-sponsored study showed, block farming does have a role to play in enhancing food security, although it will always be a risky enterprise in Lesotho conditions. But there is an urgent need to reformulate the programme along more rational lines, and to arrange to implement it more efficiently.

- A vital strategy to continue building progress towards food security is to make the GOL budgeting and development planning processes more meaningful and effective. This means MAFS giving more thorough attention to the content of its budget framework papers, and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning managing the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF) process in a manner that gives at least as much weight to strategic content as it does to budgetary accounting mechanisms. What it also means is delivering on the initially promising preparation of a new national development plan that would give equal weight to combating poverty and promoting growth. MAFS MTEF priorities for promoting food security should be convincingly argued in its budget framework paper and in the relevant sections of the new national plan.

- The new national development plan should integrate the enhancement of food security in a convincing and comprehensive set of measures to alleviate poverty, complementing initiatives to stimulate growth and employment. These measures should also incorporate a comprehensive and effectively co-ordinated social protection strategy. Government and civil society have not yet succeeded in formulating such a strategy. It is urgently needed and should be one of the cornerstones of any future national development plan.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Priority Support Programme

The Priority Support Programme (PSP) has been funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) in support of the two top priorities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy drawn up in 2004 by the Government of Lesotho (GOL). Those priorities are job creation and food security. The programme began with a six month inception period (December 2005 – May 2006). Implementation was then scheduled to run from 1 June 2006 to 31 May 2009. However, DFID informed GOL in October 2008 that it wished to close the food security component 'on schedule' on 31 March 2009. A no-cost extension has been agreed for the job creation component, which will continue until November 2009.

1.2. Purpose and structure of this report

The primary purpose of this report is to offer a brief review of strategic issues and options in support for food security in Lesotho. It is not a comprehensive review of agriculture or food security in this country. This review is based largely on the experience of the PSP food security component. The report's secondary purpose is to provide a fuller outline of the food security component's activities and experience than is entered into DFID's Project Completion Report template (see section 9.5). The report is not a formal part of DFID's assessment process for PSP, but it may be of interest to those in government, NGOs and external agencies who are concerned with further support to the promotion of food security in Lesotho.

The next chapter of the report outlines the background to food security challenges and responses in Lesotho, and to the launch of PSP in 2005. Subsequent chapters discuss various strategic and delivery issues that were important during PSP implementation and that remain significant as Lesotho and its development partners continue work in the sector. Chapter 9 then sums up the approach, structure, activities and results of the PSP food security component, and chapter 10 outlines some of the key implementation issues that arose. The report concludes with some thoughts on future strategies for the promotion of food security in Lesotho.

2. Background

2.1. Food security in Lesotho

Decades of development planning for Lesotho assumed that this is an agrarian economy whose development challenge is primarily one of agricultural and rural development. Criticisms of this superficial understanding – most notably Ferguson's 1994 attack on the 'anti-politics' of the World Bank – have been circulating for almost as long, but have still only partially been heard. These simplistic views of Lesotho as an agricultural and rural development challenge often translate into an assumption that food security is about adequate food production by the agricultural sector. In fact, as Lesotho's food security policy makes clear, the concept spans the availability of enough food for the nation; access for all to that food; stability of access over time; and effective use of the food so that proper nutrition is assured (GOL, 2005a: 7).

Basotho were originally admired for their industry as farmers of what was seen as a wonderfully fertile land (see box below). Since the kingdom ceased to be a net food exporter in the 1920s, the reality has been that most apparently rural households depend for much of their livelihoods on income from outside the rural sector. Through the 20th century, the mainstay of the rural economy was migrant labour to the South African mines. The number of Basotho men working in those mines has halved since the early 1990s, and until recently was almost equalled by the number of women working in the garment factories that have sprung up in Maseru and other towns over the same period. Livelihood strategies have had to become more diverse, and now depend at least as much on women's wage-earning ability as they do on men's (Boehm, 2002, 2003).

The Basutos

Of the Basutos I have said something in my attempt to tell the story of the Orange Free State; but the tribe still occupy so large a space in South Africa and has made itself so conspicuous in South African affairs as to require some further short mention for the elucidation of South African history. They are a people who have been moved, up and down, about South Africa and have thus travelled much, who have come to be located on the land they now hold partly as refugees and partly as conquerors, who thirty years ago had a great Chief called Moshesh of whom some have asserted that he was a Christian, and others that he was a determined Savage, who are still to be found in various parts of South Africa, and who perhaps possess in their head-quarters of Basuto Land the very best agricultural soil on the continent. There are supposed to be about 127,000 of them settled on this land, among whom there would be according to the general computation about 21,000 fighting warriors. The fighting men are estimated to be a sixth of the whole tribe, - so that every adult male not incapacitated by age or misfortune is counted as a fighting man. To imagine, however, that if the Basutos were to go to war they could bring an army of 20,000 men into the field, would be to pay an unmerited compliment to their power of combination, to their commissariat supplies, and to their general patriotism. But as in late years they have bought a great many ploughs, as they are great growers of corn, and as they have become lovers of trade, lovers of money, growers of wool, and friends of the English, -as they are loyal English subjects, - we will not be indignant with them on account of any falling off in their military capacity…

Anthony Trollope, *South Africa* (1878)

Lesotho's prospects for sustainable economic development remain poor, but those prospects – and consequently the food security of the Basotho nation – look more promising outside the agricultural sector than in it. Natural conditions are not favourable for the production of most foods; nor are the economics of most crops in Lesotho, given the current configuration of economic parameters in southern Africa. This means that, for a growing proportion of Basotho, food security must be sought largely or entirely outside the agricultural sector. In other words, people will not grow their own food, as development strategies conventionally assumed they would. They will buy it. The two top priorities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy are more closely linked than its authors recognised. Job creation is likely to be one of the most effective ways to promote food security – given, as we may continue to assume, that food will be available (largely from South African farms) for income earners to buy.

Current reality is more complex and difficult than this simple inversion of the food security challenge implies. Even on the shaky assumption that recent growth in off-farm employment continues, there are decades ahead in which many hundreds of thousands of Basotho will still have little or no off-farm income with which to obtain food. As in the earlier days of migrant mine labour, many of those with some such income will still need other ways to complete their food security: they will need to grow some of what they eat. Few of those unable to earn food will be able to grow all they need. Many will fall into the weaker and more vulnerable sectors of a society whose every element is ravaged by the AIDS pandemic.

There are four further consequences for the food security of the Basotho nation. First, social protection – the traditional backbone of the community – must evolve to help assure it through the rapidly shifting challenges of the 21st century. Some of that social protection will still be provided within the local community. More and more of it will be sourced from the state. (Old age pensions are already playing a significant role in this regard.) Secondly, as part of that social protection, direct public transfers such as school feeding programmes and drought relief will remain important. Thirdly, many very poor people will earn at least some of their food requirements in kind, usually as payment for agricultural or domestic work that they do for those who are better off. Finally, strategies to promote food security through food production must recognise the specialised needs and capacities of poorer, vulnerable households (often with HIV positive members) that are best served by small-scale, highly nutritious crops.

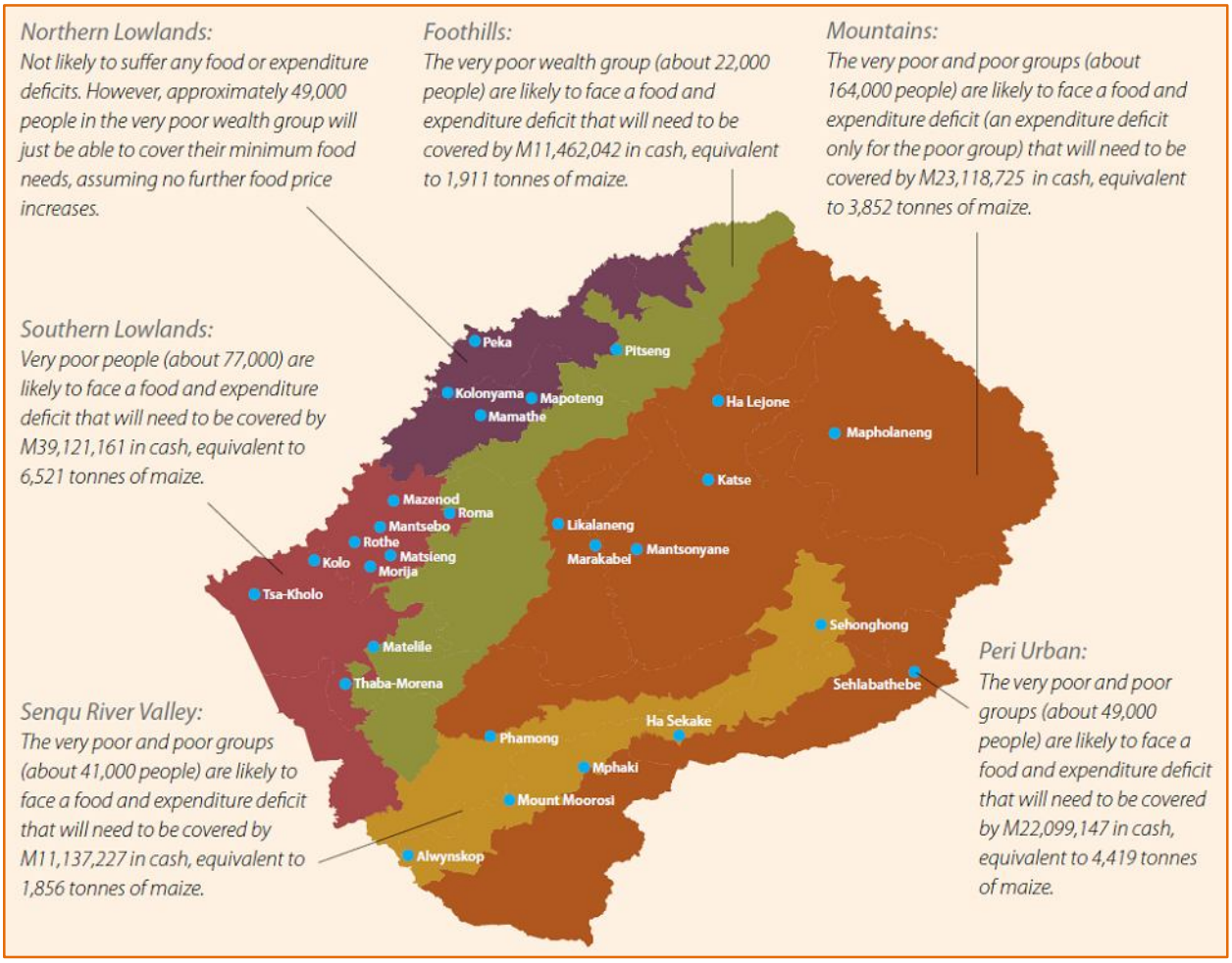


Figure 1. Levels of vulnerability in the six rural and peri-urban livelihood zones, 2008

LVAC, 2009: 3.

Food insecurity remains a major challenge for Lesotho (see Figure 1 above). From the narrow production perspective, it is striking that the kingdom grows only about 30% of its food requirements. Over its short three year life, PSP was not expected to have much direct impact on the problem. As is explained in section 9.1, it was meant instead to help government to strengthen its strategies for tackling it. Meanwhile, a national state of food emergency was declared in July 2007 following the inadequacy of the 2006/07 production season. The hardship was exacerbated in 2007 and 2008 as food prices rose rapidly. Production was also low in 2007/08, although somewhat better than the year before. However, it was anticipated that, through commercial imports that would supply 78% of total national needs, "there should be enough food available in the country although the question will be who will and who will not be able to access the food through purchases" (LVAC, 2008: 5). The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) went on to estimate that about 353,000 people would need humanitarian assistance for periods ranging from four to eight months in 2008/09. It found that the very poor would

> *The strongest underlying cause of poverty in Lesotho is... that poverty has been built into the economic structure and character of the country by historical and modern forces. These political and economic forces have 'underdeveloped' Lesotho. From this perspective, 'sustainable livelihoods in Lesotho' is a contradiction in terms. Lesotho was designed, as a labour reserve, to be unsustainable: to depend on outside economic interests that would profit from its dependence. Cynics would say that AGOA and contemporary investors in Lesotho garment factories are replicating such relationships.*
>
> Turner, 2005a: 5.

suffer a food deficit of 33% in the foothills, southern lowlands and Senqu valley, 37% in the mountains and 31% in the peri-urban areas.

Lesotho's food insecurity derives from its structural poverty. Having been deprived of much of its best farm land in the 19th century, the kingdom was so successfully marginalised from the mainstream of southern African economic development by colonial and apartheid policies in the 20th century that it has little immediate prospect of sustainable growth. Instead, it will remain a subordinate element of that regional economy, struggling to find and exploit niche opportunities to compete successfully with South African agriculture and industry (see box above) while losing many of its best skills and managers to its all-powerful neighbour.

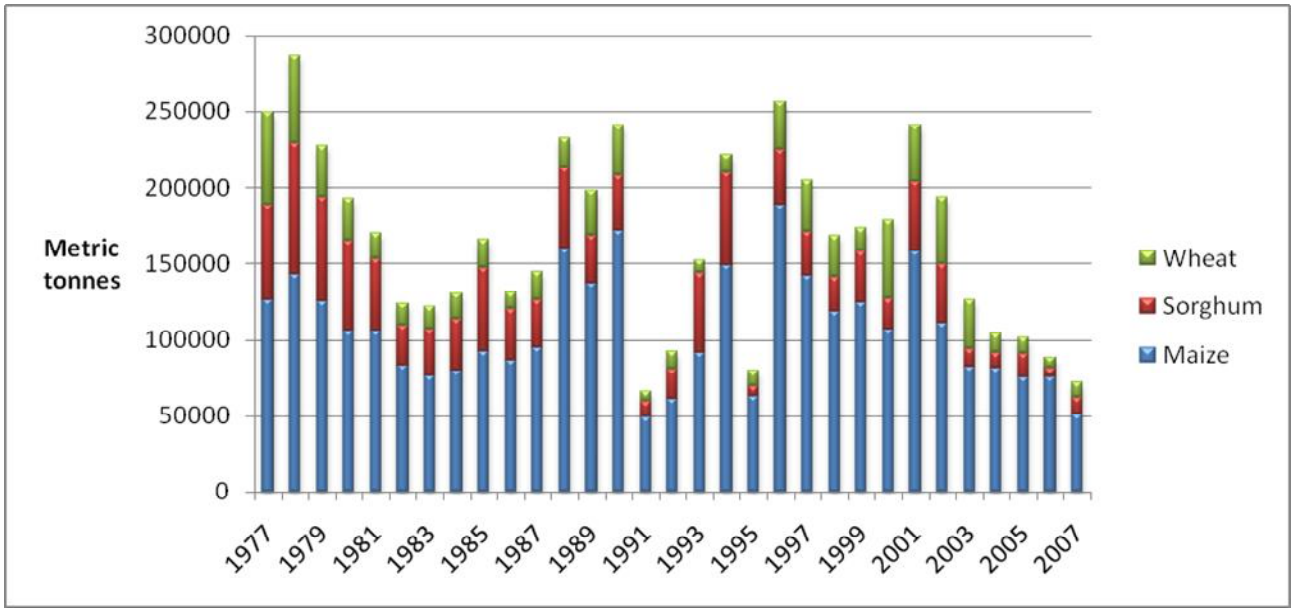


Figure 2. Production of major cereals in Lesotho, 1977-2007

Source: FAO.

2.2. Policy development

Since the establishment of the colonial Department of Agriculture in 1911, Lesotho has never been short of policy for tackling poverty and food insecurity. Not enough of that policy has been based on accurate appraisal of the challenges, however, and much of it has therefore been unrealistic. Partly for that reason, it has always been easier to develop policy than to implement it.

Much earlier policy was implicit in economic, environmental and agricultural legislation, in five year development plans and in the strategies adopted by government and donor-funded programmes and projects. In the current decade, however, there has been a series of explicit policy statements. Overarching these have been the Vision 2020 (GOL, 2003a) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS; GOL, 2005b). DFID helped to fund preparation of the PRS, as well as intensive work on land policy and legislation. The latter effort included a 2001 draft White Paper, a draft national land policy, a Land Bill and other draft legislation – none of which has been taken forward, although a new version of the Land Bill is currently being prepared.

Meanwhile, through its support for the Agricultural Policy and Capacity Building Project (APCBP), DFID also helped fund preparation of an Agricultural Sector Strategy (GOL, 2003b) and a policy statement on subsidies in the agricultural sector (GOL, 2003c). Building on the sector strategy, MAFS went on to prepare a national food security policy in 2004/05 (GOL, 2005a), with support from DFID and FAO. This work included a wide-ranging diagnostic analysis (GOL, 2004) and a study of the links between land tenure, land reform and food security in Lesotho (Adams and Turner, 2005). The policy was in turn used as the basis for the National Action Plan for Food Security (NAPFS; GOL, 2006a). FAO took the leading role in support for NAPFS preparation, although PSP undertook the final editing and layout of the document.

Why a food security policy for Lesotho?

The food security policy refers to the need for an overarching framework that can tie various relevant initiatives together, and to the need for more clarity about what food security really means. It adds that

The food security context for Basotho has changed markedly over the last decade and this demands a fresh approach... increasingly, Basotho are "living on the edge", living in other words perilously close to a situation of chronic and increasingly irreversible food insecurity, poverty and deprivation... Since 2001-02 Lesotho has experienced levels of acute food insecurity not seen since 1990-92. What is different is that whilst Basotho were, in general, able to "bounce back" from the 1990-92 bad years (and the subsequent bad year of 1994-95), resilience a decade or more later is much reduced and vulnerability to chronic livelihood failure increased. Rather than being seen as a food crisis, the current situation is better thought of as a "tipping point" i.e. a situation in which it has become clear that underlying poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity have reached unacceptable levels, necessitating a re-think of development and food security strategies.

GOL, 2005a: 2.

Lesotho's food security policy begins by explaining why it is needed (see box). It adopts the 1996 World Food Summit's definition of food security:

> *All people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.*
>
> *...a number of conditions are to be fulfilled at the same time in order to achieve a state of food security; namely:*
>
> - *Availability: food supplies must be sufficient adequately to feed the population,*
> - *Access: all people must have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food,*
> - *Stability: access and availability must be ensured at all times,*
> - *Effective utilisation: the food consumed must be safe and nutritious.*
>
> GOL, 2005a: 7.

These four themes have been central to subsequent work on food security in Lesotho, although it is not always clear that the breadth and scope of the food security concept is fully understood. The policy sets out a number of basic principles, including the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS and gender concerns. Most significantly, it emphasises that food security is about more than just food production and that it concerns not just MAFS but many other ministries and agencies. MAFS and PSP have repeatedly emphasised this principle over the last three years, but there is little evidence that it has been understood, and still less that it has been put into practice, elsewhere in government.

The national food security policy is expressed in terms of a livelihoods framework that identifies four groups: the extremely poor; those who are chronically vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity; those who are vulnerable to transitory food insecurity; and those who are not usually vulnerable to food insecurity. The heart of the policy document is a set of nine 'strategic fields of action for food security'. These range from enhanced access to food through public works programmes, through the promotion of increased food production by techniques appropriate for poor and vulnerable households, to social

protection measures and food security information systems. Shorter and weaker sections of the policy outline the proposed institutional framework and monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

Three years later, little of the institutional framework is in place. The proposed Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee remains the former Cabinet Sub-Committee, although it is now called the Sub-Committee on Food Security. The intended Stakeholder Technical Committee became the National Food Security Task Force, which has not met since 2006. The policy's proposal for a Food Security Policy Unit was not taken forward. This function remains, appropriately, with the MAFS Department of Planning and Policy Analysis (DPPA). The proposed District Food Security Co-ordinating Committees were not created. The planned institutional framework also emphasised the role of NGOs. PSP, like its predecessor the Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme (LRAP – see section 2.3), has emphasised this role with some success.

The policy's chapter on M&E is just over one page long. It recommends the drafting of a logical framework for the food security policy (which has not been done) and the establishment of a data bank of all relevant food security interventions. During PY 1, PSP worked with the World Food Programme (WFP) to produce a mapping study of humanitarian assistance in Lesotho. No other elements of a data bank have yet been put in place. The policy envisaged that a food security M&E system would be linked into "the emerging Poverty Monitoring System (PMS) for the PRS". The PMS did not emerge. Food security monitoring continues to revolve around the annual surveys of LVAC and the Bureau of Statistics, part of a fragmented range of activities that also includes FAO crop assessments and the Community and Household Surveillance system linked to WFP.

Although parts of it are inadequate, many of its proposals have not been implemented and the rest of government gives it far too little attention, the food security policy remains central to the work of MAFS. At the time of its preparation and approval – which was the time that PSP was being designed – it was one of the key and apparently promising steps forward in the range of GOL policy developments that DFID and others had supported over the first half of this decade.

2.3. Food security interventions

As was noted in section 2.1, job creation may be the most effective intervention to promote food security in Lesotho over the medium to long term. Although increasing GOL efforts to facilitate job creation (supported since 2006 by PSP) have had some success, they are not generally seen as food security interventions. Programmes to stimulate food production have a long history, of course, stretching back to colonial times. A third type of intervention recognises the important role of social protection in helping poorer and more vulnerable people to assure their food security.

The food security policy identifies nine 'strategic fields of action'. **The first** is to strengthen the linkages between employment and food security, and is seen as including labour-intensive public works programmes in which payment modalities (in cash and/or in food) are appropriately selected.

The second field of action is the promotion of food production. This understandably longer section of the policy makes the key distinction between the production of field crops and production of vegetables and fruit (but sometimes also grain) in homestead gardens – which, in Lesotho, do typically offer space for enough food production to make a material difference to household nutrition.

In fact, there are three scenarios for crop production in Lesotho. The first is the production of staple crops – mostly maize, with some sorghum, wheat, beans, peas and occasionally fodder – in fields. This is the conventional, largely subsistence agriculture on which most policy and programmes have focused since colonial times. The second scenario is homestead gardening. The third is commercial grain production, practised by only a small minority of farmers, who often consolidate a number of fields into larger blocks through various sharecropping and rental arrangements. Over the last decade, there has been a gradual evolution and divergence in development strategies for these three scenarios.

Perhaps frustrated by the general ineffectiveness of countless projects in support of enhanced staple crop production – stretching back at least to the Tebetebeng Pilot Project of 1953-1960 – MAFS and its development partners have given steadily less attention to the first scenario. Their declining interest is matched by that of Basotho field owners, who – in the lowlands at least - use this land less and less as production costs rise, some land degrades, the climate remains erratic and other livelihood opportunities appear more attractive. Leaving this large central scenario of Lesotho agriculture behind, there has been increasing emphasis on the other two. GOL, especially, has poured substantial effort and resources into block farming programmes aimed at stimulating commercial grain production. While these programmes have generated important lessons (GOL, 2008a), the main result so far has been substantial losses for government. Since the mid 1990s a number of development partners, notably DFID, have supported a series of interventions focused on homestead gardening. This support is linked to these agencies' increasing use of livelihoods analysis in seeking ways to combat rural poverty; their recognition that many poor and vulnerable people cannot use fields productively (if they have any such land); and their concern that a growing number of rural Basotho households, afflicted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, are either too weak to farm fields or too burdened with caring for the sick to find the time for field crop production. MAFS, too, has shown steadily stronger commitment to promoting this kind of food production – although this is not reflected in its budgets.

The third 'strategic field of action' identified by the food security policy is the promotion of support services and infrastructure: extension services, micro-credit schemes, marketing and processing systems and infrastructure such as rural roads and the rail link through which bulk grain imports can reach Maseru. **The fourth field of action** is land reform, which the policy explores cautiously. **The fifth** is social protection, described as 'public transfers/social safety nets' and including food aid, school feeding schemes, cash transfers and possible voucher systems. **The sixth** comprises a series of measures to promote the food security of households afflicted by HIV/AIDS, including appropriate food production techniques and enhanced social protection at community level. **Next,** a series of actions to manage national food supplies – imports, domestic production and food aid – are identified. **The eighth field of action** concerns proper food utilisation and nutrition, and **the ninth** outlines measures to enhance food security information systems.

The National Action Plan for Food Security made more specific recommendations for food security interventions over the period 2007-2017. It did not directly mirror the fields of action identified by the policy. Instead it proposed five programmes:

- 'Household and commercial food security' focused on the two divergent scenarios identified above. Homestead-based activities were prominent in the 'conservation agriculture-based household food security' sub-programme, although this did also include conservation farming practices that would be promoted in field cropping. Commercial block farming was the focus of another sub-programme. The programme also included promotion of various more specialised commercial crop and livestock sub-sectors, as well as enhanced support services such as extension and credit. MAFS was to lead implementation of this programme.

- The second programme addressed watershed protection and management. These natural resource conservation concerns were thus given greater prominence than they were in the food security policy, which included them in the first of its nine 'strategic fields of action'. On-farm land management, range management, other communal land management and water harvesting and management were to be promoted primarily by the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation (MFLR).

- The 'social protection and safety nets' programme was described much more briefly and comprised public works programmes to create livelihood assets and transfer-based programmes to strengthen safety nets for specified vulnerable groups.

- Programme 4, 'food supply stability and national availability', roughly corresponded to the seventh 'strategic field of action' in the food security policy: better management of commercial food imports and food stocks, and very scantily defined initiatives for enhanced management of food aid.

- Programme 5 offered an equally brief outline of institutional arrangements, including the 'Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee' and the National Food Security Task Force (see section 2.1 above). Just under two pages were devoted to a sub-programme on food security information systems, and just over one to monitoring and evaluation arrangements, with no explanation of how these two functions would be linked.

The NFSTF was meant to be chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP). This did not happen, and there seems to have been little reaction to this omission from any quarter of government. As was noted above, the Task Force has not met since 2006, although one of its working groups – now renamed the Food Security Information Steering Group – remains active. Partly because of the demise of the Task Force, the NAPFS has not been consistently managed or co-ordinated. Although some of its elements, such as block farming, are receiving active attention from MAFS, there is little sense that the Action Plan provides any framework for national food security efforts – for example the deliberations and decisions of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Food Security. There has been no noticeable involvement of the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation since 2006, and although there have been some measures to improve food security information systems there is no co-ordinated monitoring of progress against the Action Plan.

2.4. Preparation of the PSP

As originally conceived, PSP had a broader remit than just job creation and food security. The overall Priority Support Programme as agreed by DFID and GOL in 2004 was designed to support various aspects of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (which DFID considered "an excellent document") and had as its goal that the PRS would be implemented effectively (GOL and DFID, 2004: 7, 5). It comprised a PRS Foundation Programme "addressing fundamental issues such as public financial management, poverty monitoring and donor harmonisation" and a PRS Priority Support Programme, on which the 2004 agreement focused. That PSP had four intended outputs:

- *effective and co-ordinated implementation of national strategies to prevent and mitigate the impacts of HIV and AIDS;*
- *private sector jobs created through improved investment climate and increased market access for the poor;*
- *food security increased by improved national policy and strengthened livelihoods for the poor; and*
- *security and justice systems more accessible to the poor…*

GOL and DFID, 2004: 5.

Support to HIV/AIDS programmes was in practice managed and delivered separately by DFID. A five year justice programme had already been started in 2003 and was also implemented separately until it was closed ahead of schedule in 2007. 'PSP' became the label for the jointly tendered and contracted job creation and food security elements of the original package. This 'PSP' was scheduled to comprise an inception phase (1 November 2005 – 31 May 2006) and an implementation phase (1 June 2006 – 31 May 2009). The total budget was GBP 3.9m (about M45m at 2005 exchange rates). Of this, the job creation and food security components were allocated GBP 1.05m (then about M12.2m) each, with the balance used for 'management costs' that included the salaries of the only two full time expatriate staff, a Technical Team Leader and a Programme Manager as well as the supervision costs of the three consortium partners (see section 10.2).

As contracted, this 'PSP' was meant to include support for monitoring and evaluation of the whole, broadly defined PSP, but it was agreed at an early stage that the team's M&E responsibilities would be restricted to the job creation and food security components.

The logic of DFID's support for the various policy initiatives outlined in section 2.2 above was that satisfactory progress with a better framed and integrated approach to GOL development strategy was a necessary condition for the general budget support towards which the organisation, like many other development partners, was trying to work (see box). By the time the PSP was launched, it seemed fair to assume that government did indeed have a convincing set of policies and strategies in place. From the food security perspective, these focused on the food security policy, guided by the PRS and to be implemented through the food security action plan that was then under preparation.

Although Poverty Reduction Budgetary Support (PRBS) would be the instrument of choice for DFID support, Lesotho currently performs very weakly in relation to the benchmarks of fiduciary risk as set by DAC... In this regard DFID will pursue a 'platform approach' towards reform over the next 3-4 years: the priority being supporting transformational programmes at the centre of Government...

The PRS is a fundamental change in the way that GoL will plan and manage its own resources, and the efforts of its development partners, behind a shared PRS... GoL established a successful process of consultation with donors, the private sector and civil society, in the preparation of the PRS, and will need to strengthen this to develop detailed implementation plans and to establish robust management and impact monitoring arrangements.

DFID has played a significant role in supporting Government to prepare the PRS and seeking harmonised working amongst donors. The twin PRS programmes; of support for building the capacity and structures for programme implementation and support for specific priority issue implementation, will maintain this approach, assisting GoL's strategy development and building capacity to manage a complex process and to deliver a number of specific initiatives.

This programme represents a transition period for DFID from disparate projects to sector support under a PRS management structure. Processes and structures are expected to evolve throughout the programme to develop links, both between DFID's activities and to strengthen joint donor working within a government led framework.

GOL and DFID, 2004: 6-8.

It therefore seemed appropriate to design PSP as an innovative kind of development intervention – by Lesotho standards, at least. Its rationale – ideologically attractive to DFID and to many other development partners – was that GOL had developed the required policies and strategies and was making progress towards more efficient and effective budget co-ordination through the public sector reform and enhanced public finance management initiatives that DFID and other agencies were supporting. PSP would therefore provide technical assistance to facilitate and support policy directions and programme strategies that GOL had put in place. It was not intended to develop significantly new policies or strategies. That work had been done. It was not intended to provide capital finance for food security activities. Capital funding, it was hoped, would increasingly be channelled through budget support mechanisms and would be better administered through enhanced budget management systems.

The intention, therefore, was that PSP would be oil to the already functioning machine of GOL programmes for promoting job creation and food security. For the food security component, of course, this facilitating support would be provided primarily to MAFS. In keeping with the innovative approach just outlined, senior officers in MAFS would be nominated to manage each of the outputs in the food security section of the programme's logical framework (see section 10.1 below).

Detailed design of the job creation and food security components of the PSP took place during the programme's inception phase, from November 2005 to May 2006. A series of intensive consultations between the programme team and GOL, supplemented by short-term consultancy inputs, led to a planning workshop of GOL and programme personnel in Mohale's Hoek in April 2006 that helped to agree the outputs and activities subsequently presented in two logical frameworks – one for each component. While

the 2004 PSP programme memorandum had contained a logical framework for the overall PSP and a separate one for the job creation component, it did not include one for the food security component. During inception, the programme team argued successfully that there should be a separate framework for each component rather than a single, integrated one for them both.

During this design period, the national food security policy was in place and approved, but the food security action plan was still in preparation. However, one area of implementation was already a clear priority for MAFS. As noted above, DFID had been supporting homestead food security initiatives in Lesotho for some years, culminating in the Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme (LRAP) that CARE Lesotho implemented with MAFS and a number of sub-grantee NGOs from 2002 to 2006. Displaying a common reluctance to absorb donor-funded activities into the domestic budget and work programme, MAFS made a strong request for PSP to replicate what it considered LRAP's successful technical approaches to small-scale homestead gardening across broader areas of Lesotho. As will be seen, this request had to be squared with the PSP approach of focusing on technical assistance rather than capital funding for field implementation.

3. Modes and roles in support to Lesotho's food security sector

3.1. Points of intervention

As has been pointed out, promoting job creation may be the most effective way of enhancing Lesotho's food security in the medium to long term. Meanwhile, however, it is essential to support the country's food security in more direct ways – as recognised by the national food security policy. There are several potential points of intervention. Some of these are outlined here. A fuller discussion of ways to promote food security in Lesotho is presented in chapters 4 - 8 below.

The most obvious way to support food security is by promoting food production (chapter 5). For decades, development interventions were based on loose assumptions about rural Lesotho being an agrarian economy and about rural Basotho being 'farmers'. They concentrated on staple field crop production, linked in the more imaginative cases to livestock production and/or the conservation of soil and water on cultivated land. For decades, these interventions achieved disappointing results. Especially in the lowlands, and despite more recent efforts by government to promote larger-scale commercial grain production, field cropping is in steady decline and national harvests are falling (see Figure 2 on page 4). Being quite capable of calculating their crop budgets, lowland field holders who must increasingly depend on mechanised traction and chemical fertilisers can see that the economics of this risky mode of production do not add up to much of a profit (Orr, 2008).

Natural and socio-economic conditions in Lesotho mean that the promotion of livestock production for meat, milk, wool and mohair can in theory benefit minority groups in the rural population and enhance the food security of larger numbers of people. In practice, however, a long series of livestock, dairy and wool/mohair interventions – sometimes linked to natural resource management efforts to enhance pastures - have also achieved only modest results.

The old reality in rural Lesotho was that the population were not conventional 'farmers'. They depended at least as much on migrant labour to South African mines as they did on local food production. The new reality is that, while South African migrant opportunities have dwindled, the productivity of the rural resource base is no higher, and has arguably declined as well. Meanwhile, livelihood opportunities have diversified, although they still rarely add up to much more than poverty. Many households depend on members earning and remitting at least some non-agricultural income through accelerating and increasingly permanent migration to urban and peri-urban areas. Often the wage earners and remitters are now women instead of men (Boehm, 2002), although women's Lesotho factory wages are much lower than men's South African mine earnings. Growing numbers earn a steadily larger proportion of their income from non-agricultural activity in their rural or peri-urban homes.

Food production opportunities – and the opportunities for supporting food production – are diversifying. Staple field crop production still has a role to play, although external interventions have rarely found ways to support it effectively. In the interstices of the rural and peri-urban landscape, and especially in homestead gardens, there are important ways in which households can improve their food security through smaller-scale production of fruit, vegetables and sometimes staple grains. This kind of food production is an increasingly relevant point of intervention for external support, as recognised by PSP and its predecessor LRAP. It rarely provides households with the means to feed themselves completely, but it makes a significant and much appreciated difference to their nutrition, and sometimes generates income when there is a surplus for sale. This enhancement is particularly relevant to the growing number of households with members who are HIV positive and for whom good nutrition is especially important.

Traditionally and in modern Lesotho, social protection is an essential part of food security strategy (chapter 7). Only recently has it been seen as a point of intervention for external support, from the perspective of food security or any other sectoral concern. Indeed, Lesotho's most significant social protection innovation, the introduction of the old age pension, was developed with only modest external advisory inputs and is funded from domestic resources. With its potential benefits for the poor and disadvantaged, social protection could be a deserving target for donor budget support, and poses significant conceptual and strategic challenges that technical assistance may be able to help address.

Social protection initiatives by the community and the state blend into the provision of safety nets and emergency relief. At its crudest, the food security challenge has three elements: helping people to buy food, helping people to grow food, and giving food to those who can do neither, for various reasons, in the short, medium or long term. For decades, the third element, food aid provision, has been a significant point of external intervention in Lesotho's food security system, and this is unlikely to change – although debate continues about the politics, economics and logistics of food 'emergencies'.

3.2. Modes of intervention

The conventional approach to food security interventions in Lesotho, as elsewhere, was that these were a government responsibility, to be supported where appropriate by external agencies (which often erred in establishing independent project implementation units and hiring separate cadres of staff who operated in partial isolation from GOL systems). Government obviously retains a central role in this regard, although the food security policy rightly emphasises that this is not just the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Agencies responsible for trade, employment, natural resource management, emergency relief, health and social welfare all have important roles to play, and external support for food security may in some cases be more appropriately channelled through them.

Implicit in this conventional approach has been the use of the project as the unit of funding and implementation. This is not the place to discuss the well known strengths and weaknesses of this mode of intervention, beyond pointing out that it is now often less favoured because of the limits it typically sets on the recipient government's authority and discretion in sector management, as well as the sustainability challenges that it poses. Instead, many development agencies now aim for sector support or general budget support, transferring funds to their partner governments on variously defined conditions and allowing those governments to apply those funds to their own programmes. As was explained in section 2.4, DFID hoped that the PSP would be a step in this direction.

The increasingly apparent challenge to both these modes of intervention is government's apparently dwindling capacity to fulfil its roles with regard to food security – and many other functions. External agencies are often required to deal with nation states on a bilateral or multilateral basis, and to make often unfounded assumptions about the competence and capacity of state systems. In many areas of GOL operations, including agriculture and food security, the ability of those systems to plan, manage and implement recurrent or development activities is shrinking. The conventional mode of intervention in food security assumes that outside development agencies will be able to collaborate with government structures

that are able to give direction and effect to the agreed programmes. This assumption is increasingly risky in Lesotho.

It has therefore become more important to consider alternative modes of intervention in food security, while recognising the paramount authority of the state and its failing systems and often blending these alternatives into continued collaboration with government. One option is to direct food security interventions through NGOs, as PSP and its predecessor LRAP did. The strengths and weaknesses of NGOs as development agencies are well known and clearly apparent in Lesotho. They may be more committed, take a more professional attitude to their work, and be somewhat better managed than government agencies. Their finances tend to be erratic and their sustainability is often questionable. They can often add value to food security and other programmes. The question is how long that value can last. The strength of the NGO sector varies from country to country. In Lesotho, despite the good work and reputations of some organisations, the sector is not strong. NGOs have an important role to play in promoting food security, but it does not help to exaggerate it.

From the perspective of an external bilateral development funding organisation such as DFID, an important question is whether to continue with bilateral support or to channel all aid through multilateral agencies such as the European Commission, the World Bank, UNDP and the World Food Programme. Traditionally, each bilateral agency had its own country office and projects. Now, these agencies are increasingly concerned about the cost of this mode of intervention and about the confusion that decades of poor inter-donor co-ordination have typically sown. While striving to harmonise their activities in accordance with the Paris Declaration, the bilaterals may now find it more appropriate to deliver their funding through the multilaterals. This reduces the number of agencies with which the developing country government has to collaborate, which ought to be a good thing – but raises increasingly important questions about the capacity and competence of the multilateral agencies, many of which – because they are multilaterals – are slowed and confused by complex bureaucracy.

The private sector has many roles to play in assuring a nation's food security, notably through the production, distribution and marketing of food – roles that many governments, including Lesotho's, sometimes unwisely try to play too. But private agencies also constitute an increasingly significant mode of intervention in the sector, offering various means of delivering domestic and external public funding for food security. It has become standard practice for national and international development agencies to contract their activities to private firms for implementation (as DFID and GOL did with PSP), and a range of food security and social protection functions – such as food aid and pension deliveries – may be more efficiently implemented by the private than the public sector. Although generally defined as not for profit organisations, NGOs otherwise behave much like private firms in competing for publicly funded contracts to deliver food security interventions. Again they may be more committed and locally knowledgeable than their private sector competitors – but they are likely to be less efficient, as PSP has found at the international and domestic levels (section 10.2).

Much of this chapter has been written with external development interventions in mind, assessing the implications for agencies like DFID or the European Commission. But new questions are arising about domestic arrangements as increasing attention is given to the autonomy and budget management of governments like Lesotho's. Implicitly or explicitly, PSP has raised many of these questions. Not surprisingly, it has found few clear or satisfactory answers. Although it obviously procures various goods and services from the private sector, GOL still largely assumes that it will implement its core programmes itself, rather than contracting, say, the block farming scheme (chapter 5) to a private company. At the same time, it still falls too readily into the mindset of donor funding and delivery for 'development' activities. The notion that such activities should be integrated into domestic capital budget management and funding still seems difficult to accept. MAFS has given clear examples of this during PSP implementation with its automatic assumption that the National Action Plan for Food Security would be externally funded (see sections 2.4 and 9.4). One of the clear challenges that have emerged from the PSP food security component is that

NGOs, which have proved their real if limited worth in the sector, should in future be contracted by GOL to deliver specified extension services. MAFS does not yet seem ready to contemplate such an innovation.

4. Support for food security and related policy

4.1. Developing policy

Appropriate policy is a necessary foundation for effective action to promote food security. The development partners of Lesotho and many similar countries have rightly emphasised this, although they have sometimes been too quick to assume that all the required policy has to be developed from scratch. They have also often been too uncritical about the likelihood that appropriate policies will result in appropriate action.

The development of policy typically involves analysis of the sector or issues; consultation within government and interest groups, and sometimes with the general public; an iterative process of drafting, review and revision; and the approval of a final policy statement by the relevant authorities. Depending on the theme, the process may be technical and relatively straightforward, or political and correspondingly complex. External agencies can make major contributions to the earlier stages of the process by providing technical expertise and funding for consultation processes. They can do less to help a draft policy through the final stages of approval, although lobbying, advocacy and sometimes naked political pressure may have an effect.

The final stage in developing policy may involve its conversion into legislation. South Africa has followed the British parliamentary system of developing white papers (usually not the preliminary, consultative green papers) that present the final policy statement to the legislature and to civil society for review and debate. Lesotho has not normally followed this practice, although DFID supported the preparation of a white paper on land reform that government did not take forward.

Lesotho's policy experience has been similar to that of other developing countries. Over the decades, a combination of domestic and external initiatives has led to a wide range of policy processes. Section 2.2 above outlined the particularly intensive spate of policy development that preceded the launch of the PSP in 2005. In the early part of this decade, DFID was among the agencies making the understandable assumption that a series of policy reforms were needed in order to make development interventions more effective in the kingdom.

4.2. The value of policy

Policy development is often an attractive activity for developing country governments and their external partners. It enables them to address the obvious need to clarify issues and determine direction before substantive action can proceed. It enables politicians and technocrats to feel that they are doing something useful. Of course, how useful policy actually is depends on what happens to it after it is approved. Policy development sometimes becomes a substitute for action.

Depending on its theme or focus, policy may be intended to lead to altered recurrent practice by government and society in, for example, health systems, budget management or land administration, or to enhanced development implementation such as tackling poverty or enhancing food security. The fundamental assumption is that policy will be reflected in action. In Lesotho as in many other places, this assumption is often proved false. Policies are approved but not implemented. Sometimes their general principles are reflected in government practice but their more specific provisions are ignored. Sometimes they lapse into almost total obscurity. Wheels are reinvented. New consultants are appointed a few years later to work on the policy area in question, and may or may not rediscover what their predecessors did. Lesotho's 2005 food security policy, for example, notes that

> *...there are other statements of policy and strategy which exist, but which have been largely forgotten. The most important of these are the Food Aid Policy (2000) and the National Plan of Action for Nutrition (1997).*
>
> GOL, 2005a: 2.

What happens to policy partly reflects its management by government (section 4.3). It also reflects the capacity of government (and other institutions) to implement it. One of the commonest weaknesses of policy in developing countries is a lack of realism about how it will be implemented. Strong analytical content is followed by weaker, less thorough proposals about institutional and implementation arrangements. Lesotho's food security policy is guilty of this. While there can be some justification for policy that takes the longer-term view as well as addressing immediate concerns, it is all too common for policy not even to be implemented in the short term because the necessary capacity is lacking.

4.3. Managing and monitoring policy

Policy must be actively managed if it is to be effective. This means that the relevant authorities must keep approved policy principles, priorities and directions in the forefront of their decision making and resource allocation. The commitments and approaches identified and approved during the development of policy must be sustained through the annual and multi-annual processes of budgeting and through the daily management of recurrent and capital programmes.

In some cases, this policy management is strictly sectoral and is the responsibility of a single agency. Policy on road maintenance standards or on the distribution of antiretroviral drugs, for instance, must be sustained and implemented by the relevant line ministries, although part of their management challenge is to keep the finance ministry and possibly higher authorities aware of the principles and strategies to which government has committed itself. In other sectors, including food security, the challenge is more complex. In these cases, responsibility for implementing policy is spread across a wide range of governmental and non-governmental agencies. Maintaining and co-ordinating broad and integrated understanding and commitment across all these agencies is essential. Ministries responsible for environmental conservation and social welfare, for example, must be regularly reminded and encouraged to fulfil their respective roles in the promotion of food security. Part of this broad policy management challenge is therefore the monitoring of how effectively the various parties are doing what policy requires them to do. Co-ordinating structures are needed for this management and monitoring. The latter function should feed the former with periodic reports on how effectively the various functions and roles are being fulfilled, and therefore how effectively the nation is moving forward towards achievement of policy goals.

Since its approval in 2005, Lesotho's management and monitoring of its food security policy has been weak. As was noted in section 2.2, the National Food Security Task Force has not met for three years. The appropriate intention was that the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning should chair this body, as it has (or ought to have) the authority to co-ordinate line ministries, partly through its influence over budget planning and management. MFDP has not fulfilled any such role, while remaining strongly critical of MAFS' ability to fulfil its sectoral mandate. MAFS itself has been even less able than expected to co-ordinate other agencies' work towards food security. At Cabinet level, policy management has been equally unconvincing. The original Famine Relief Sub-Committee (later Agricultural Sub-Committee) of Cabinet was renamed the Food Security Sub-Committee, as intended, but does not achieve integrated management and direction of the food security policy. Instead, it is mainly concerned with two issues: the mostly ill-fated block farming programme (chapter 5) and the real or imagined food security emergencies that are declared from time to time.

Within MAFS, the Department of Planning and Policy Analysis should be responsible for the policy monitoring function that was outlined above. It should be checking systematically on the strengths and weaknesses in food security policy implementation and its co-ordination, and reporting on these through its Director and Principal Secretary to the responsible authorities. For example, it should be actively aware

of developments (or lack of them) in the development of social protection strategies, or in the progress of the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation towards the sustainable land management on which food security depends. DPPA is not fulfilling these policy monitoring functions. Furthermore, of course, the co-ordinating structures through which any policy monitoring reports might be delivered, such as the National Food Security Task Force, are either completely inactive or unprepared to receive and act on them.

These problems of policy management and monitoring are not unique to the food security sector or to Lesotho. Nor is the deeper malaise of which they are symptomatic. This is the inability of the various levels of government to manage their affairs in a co-ordinated, structured and purposeful manner. The exigencies of politics affect every government's daily decision-making. The briefest review of the British press, for example, will reveal that well-resourced country's many failings with regard to 'joined-up government'. Donors are not very good at co-ordinating their own activities, either – witness the current travails of the group trying to harmonise three different agencies' support to decentralisation in Lesotho, and DFID's unconvincing series of decisions about support to social protection in this country (chapter 7). But Lesotho's ministries often seem to lurch from crisis to crisis – real or self-inflicted – so that an erratic series of ad hoc decisions quickly submerge the policy priorities and steady policy direction that effective governance demands. Senior government managers are repeatedly required to drop everything and respond urgently to the latest directive. Management by crisis then afflicts their subordinates as well. In this atmosphere of perpetual emergency and stress, it is hardly surprising that policy fails to play its guiding role in the affairs of government.

DFID was among the external agencies that assumed in the middle of this decade that, with a series of basic policies in place, Lesotho would now be able to move forward with their integrated and purposeful implementation, working towards achievement of the Poverty Reduction Strategy's targets. Implementation of the food security policy, with the advisory support of PSP, would be a key part of this 'joined-up' approach to development management, in which Lesotho's own government would deploy its own and donors' resources to implement its own agreed priority programmes. These were meant to be strong foundations for budget support. The weaknesses just outlined have meant that, so far, little could be built on them.

It seems difficult for external interventions to help address such challenges. Development partners can support various public sector reform programmes, but it seems hard for them to help the top levels of government to manage their operations more consistently. This could easily be seen as interference. Without effective high level policy management, however, external investment in policy development has little value.

4.4. Informing and advising policy

The subordinate functions of informing and advising policy are safer ground for external support, and PSP made some contributions in these areas with regard to food security in Lesotho (sections 9.4, 9.6). Intermittent and recurrent activities are needed.

Short-term advisory and analytical inputs are typically required in the development of policy and to enhance its implementation. A number of background studies were undertaken, for example, during preparation of Lesotho's food security policy, and PSP has supported analytical work on crop production economics and decentralisation in 2008 and 2009. Large-scale empirical, consultative or baseline surveys are often important too. For example, Lesotho undertook extensive public consultations in advance of the Vision 2020 and PRS exercises (Leboela and Turner, 2002), although it has done very little to report back to the communities that contributed to what could have been a valuable baseline for subsequent monitoring.

The value of these advisory and analytical inputs depends, of course, on how thoroughly they are taken up in approved policy and then on how effectively policy is managed (section 4.3). As in policy development, such work sometimes ends up as a substitute for more substantive action, whose achievement is a much more elusive target for development agencies. From the Lesotho perspective, DFID's investments in the

Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme can be seen to have produced a series of high quality studies and to have proposed various enhancements to national and regional data management, but not to have made much material difference to the management or implementation of food security policy. In other scenarios, policy analysis may be well targeted and its recommendations practicable. Indeed, the work may have been directly requested by government. But for various reasons the recommendations are not implemented and, again, the investment achieves few or no tangible results. So far, this has been the fate of the analysis and guidelines that MAFS requested PSP to prepare on the block farming programme.

Policy management and implementation obviously need to be serviced with recurrent flows of relevant data. Food security is a good example, and PSP has worked with MAFS and other GOL agencies on enhancing the relevant systems and procedures (see below). Again, these are technical areas where external support is often feasible and welcome. For instance, DFID has been providing technical assistance to the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee. The challenge with this kind of support to enhanced information systems is less one of policy management and more one of local capacity and recurrent resourcing. Despite decades of external support, Lesotho's Bureau of Statistics is less effective than it was two or three decades ago. The accuracy and harmonisation of its food security data and those from other sources still leave much to be desired. The best agricultural census report to date is the one produced for the colonial authorities by the renowned Mosotho statistician C.M.H. Morojele in 1960.

Food security information

The national food security policy says that

> *A well-functioning food security information system needs to provide information on food availability, food access, stability and utilisation to the correct decision makers, on time and in a form which allows decisions to be made. The current state of the information systems in Lesotho is such that these attributes are only partly met.*

GOL, 2005a: 60.

> *Unfortunately, the DMA somehow finds itself competing with its implementing partners in the distribution of food aid instead of coordinating and monitoring their performance.*
>
> Mahosi, 2007: 2.

There are a number of agencies and processes generating food security information of various kinds, but they have been poorly co-ordinated and their data have sometimes conflicted – most notably in the annual assessments of crop production that are meant to indicate whether there will be shortages that should promote emergency response (see box). FAO and WFP undertake Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions; LVAC undertakes its own annual field assessment, and the Bureau of Statistics undertakes crop forecasting. These studies sometimes differ in their estimates of the gravity of food shortages, and the FAO/WFP assessments have sometimes been accused of exaggerating the amount of food aid that will be needed. Lesotho also has a National Early Warning System and a National Nutrition Surveillance System, both of which have suffered gaps in their operations in recent years, although the latter is now functioning again. A scoping study on food security information that was commissioned by PSP in 2008 summarised these many systems and structures with the diagram shown in Figure 3 below.

PSP's first initiative in this sub-sector aimed to help promote better co-ordination of the various humanitarian assistance agencies and programmes in the country, and of their related information systems. This was an initial response to the recommendation of the National Action Plan for Food Security that a spatial food security data base be developed (GOL, 2006b: 95-96). The result was an operational and activity mapping exercise that provided a basic spatial inventory and proposed a number of steps towards better co-ordination (Mathule *et al.*, 2007; see Figure 4 below). One of these recommendations was that

> *...programming responses among GoL and international organisations should be more responsive to actual needs (in terms of location and volume of effort) as defined by a well structured information system. The present situation shows overcoverage and undercoverage of food activities in some areas. While DMA is in the process of gazetting LVAC, acting on this recommendation will necessitate a critical*

rationalisation of the multiplicity of systems, duplication of effort and respondents' fatigue currently allocated to gathering and disseminating intelligence on food security situations at district and national level. In particular, although the Bureau of Statistics has the right to provide guardianship over the data and a set of common standards, it lacks the capacity to perform this function. An alternative coordinating arrangement for food security data may have to be found as an interim measure.

Mathule et al., 2007: 5-6.

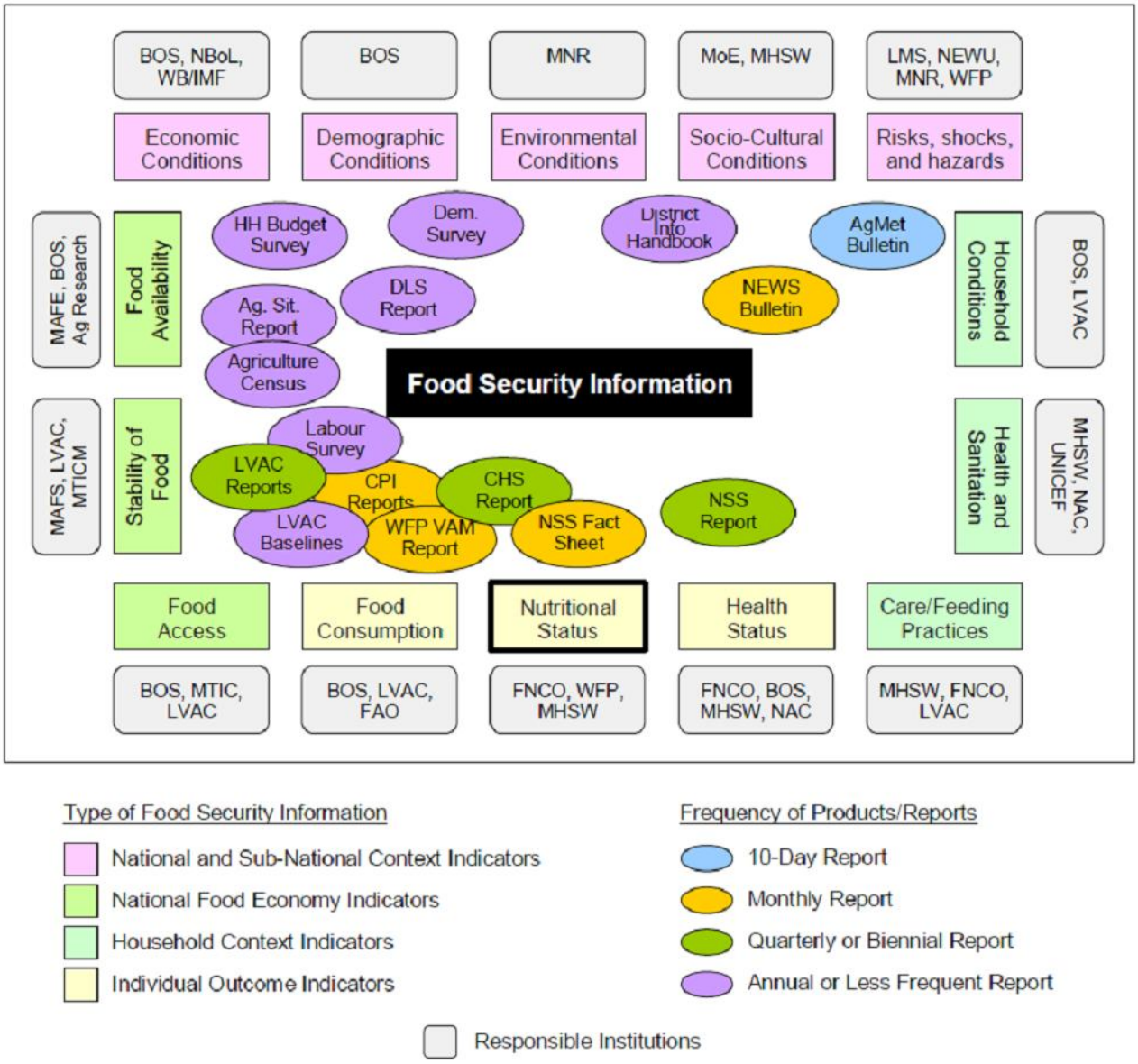


Figure 3. Mapping of food security information systems in Lesotho

Isaacson, 2008: 15.

Later, PSP sponsored a broader scoping study of food security information systems overall (Isaacson, 2008). This study made 14 recommendations, organised around four themes:

1. *Institutional Roles and Responsibilities: Aiming for Better Coordination*
   - *1.1 Change the roles and responsibility of the NFSTF WG for Programme 5*
   - *1.2 Revitalise the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU)*

2. Food Security Information Exchange: Getting the Word Out
2.1 Convene Monthly Meetings to Exchange Information
2.2 Initiate Information Exchange at the District Level
2.3 Develop a Web-Based Information Exchange
2.4 Use the Media
2.5 Effective communication and reporting of food security information
2.6 Make products user friendly within the Lesotho context

3. Data Quality, Harmonisation and Analysis: Getting it Right
3.1 Harmonise methods and build consensus on crop forecasts and estimates
3.2 Build food security databases for market and livestock information
3.3 Develop analytical skills for market and livestock information

4. Using Food Security Information: Empowering Decision-Makers
4.1 Help parliamentarians understand food security information
4.2 Introduce food security information at district level
4.3 Work with donors to harmonise understanding of food security and related issues

Isaacson, 2008: 23-24.

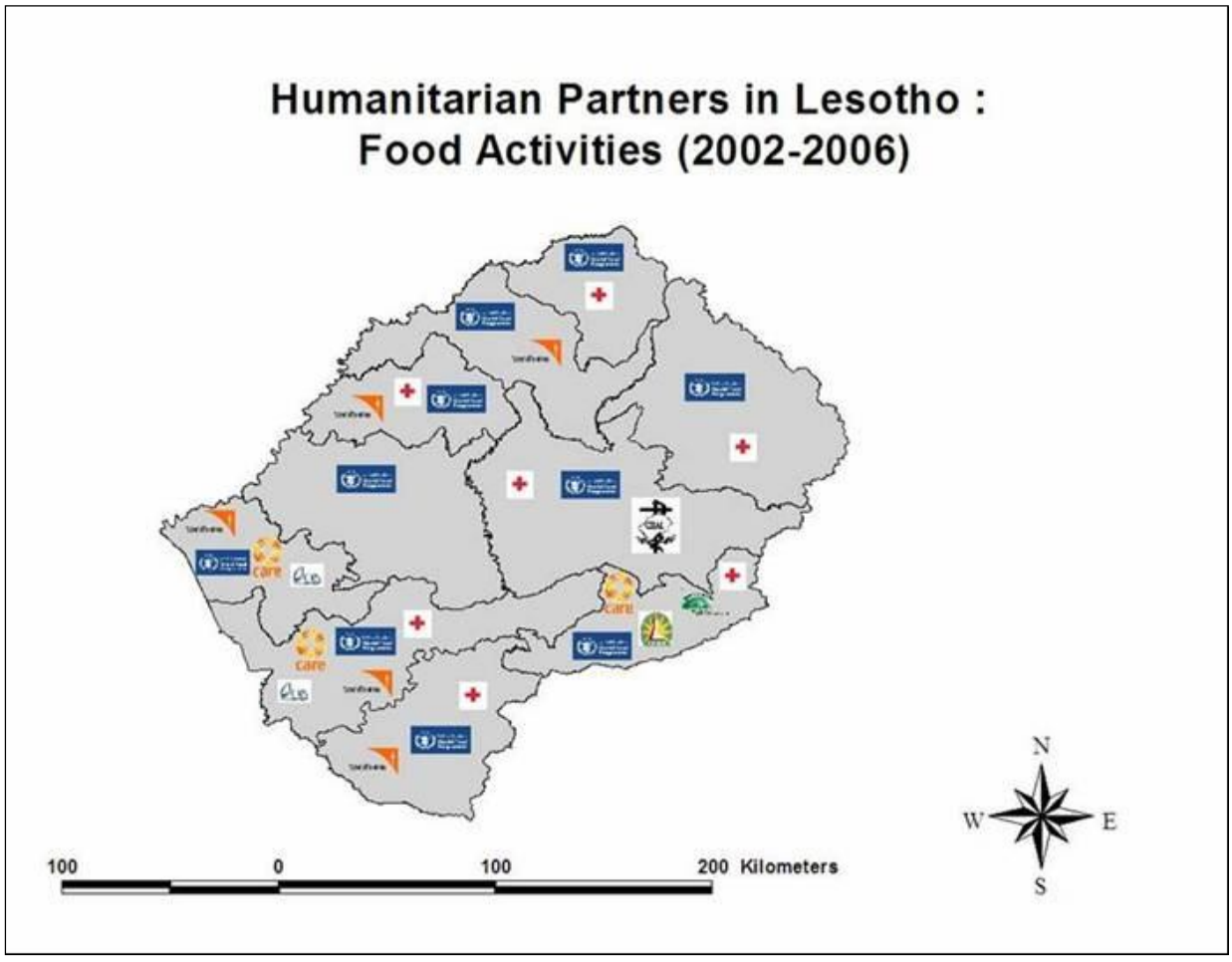


Figure 4. Humanitarian partners in Lesotho: food activities (2002-2006)

Mathule *et al.*, 2007: 21.

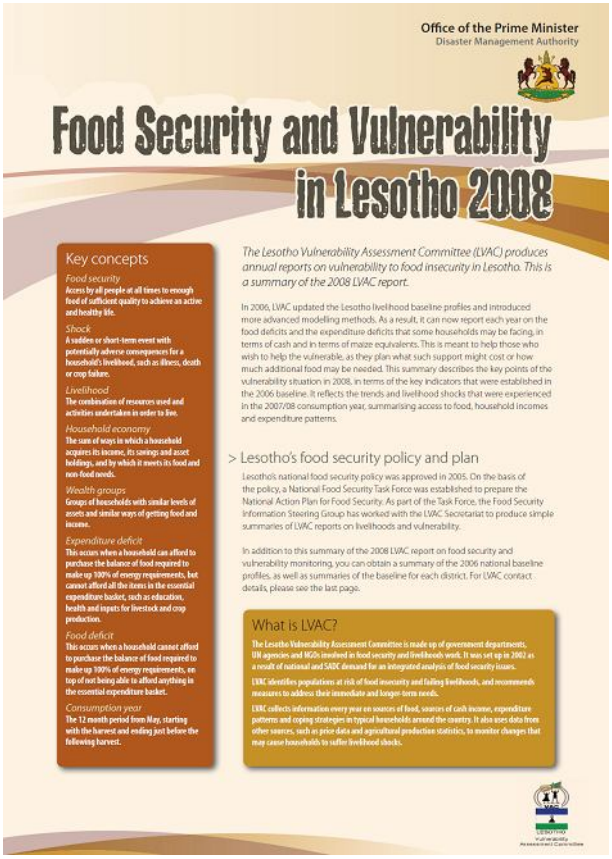


Figure 6. Popular version of an LVAC report

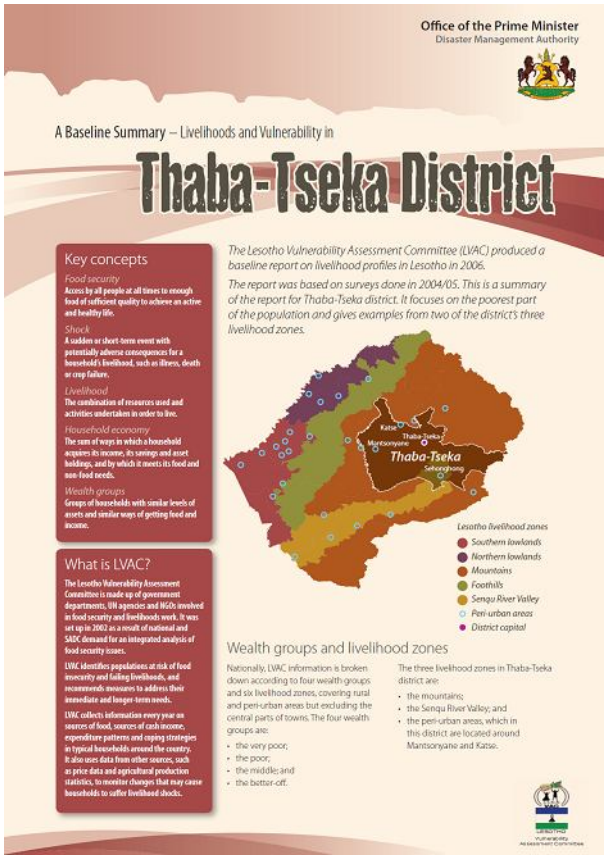


Figure 5. Popular version of an LVAC report

The study went on to propose nine activities that could accomplish these 14 recommendations:

> *ACTIVITY 1:* ***Establishing new structures at the central level for coordinating and sharing food security information in Lesotho*** *(Recommendations 1.1 and 2.1)*
>
> *ACTIVITY 2:* ***Revitalising the National Early Warning Unit*** *(Recommendation 1.2)*
>
> *ACTIVITY 3:* ***Harmonising methods and building consensus on crop forecasts and estimates*** *(Recommendation 3.1)*
>
> *ACTIVITY 4:* ***Launching a web-based information exchange*** *(Recommendation 2.3)*
>
> *ACTIVITY 5:* ***Building food security databases for market and livestock information*** *(Recommendation 3.2)*
>
> *ACTIVITY 6:* ***Building capacity for food security information analysis and reporting*** *(Recommendations 2.4, 2.5, and 3.3)*
>
> *ACTIVITY 7:* ***Introducing food security information and information systems at the district level*** *(Recommendations 2.2 and 4.3)*
>
> *ACITIVITY 8:* ***Empowering decision-makers to use food security information*** *(Recommendations 4.1 and 4.3)*
>
> *ACTIVITY 9:* ***Making products user friendly in the Lesotho context*** *(Recommendation 2.6)*

Isaacson, 2008: 24.

One of the easiest activities to implement was the first, which led to the conversion of the food security information working group that had operated under the National Food Security Task Force into the Food Security Information Steering Group. That group has since held a number of active meetings, although its continued value will depend on

the ongoing commitment of its members. PSP made protracted efforts to interest DMA in potential support from USAID to revitalise the National Early Warning Unit through a linkage with the regional Famine Early Warning Systems Network, but these attempts were unsuccessful. It supported the introduction of an enhanced database for the MAFS Department of Livestock Services, and worked intensively with LVAC on activity 9: publishing more user-friendly food security information products. This led to the printing and dissemination of popular versions of the LVAC 2006 baseline report on livelihoods and vulnerability; ten district summaries drawn from that baseline; and a summary of LVAC's 2008 annual report on food security and vulnerability in Lesotho (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). Much more remains to be done to upgrade and harmonise Lesotho's food security information systems, but the 2008 scoping study has identified a clear set of actions for the Steering Group to follow over the next few years.

5. Support for food production

5.1. Commercial and subsistence production

Understanding the history of agricultural development in Lesotho, and the current prospects for support to it, requires insight into two perspectives and the way they in turn have evolved.

The first perspective is that of the Basotho, and especially of Basotho decision makers in government today. The nation's history and earlier agricultural prosperity were briefly mentioned in section 2.1 above. The Basotho lost extensive areas of fertile farmland to white settlers in the 19th century. Using the crowded strip of lowlands that was left to them, they were nevertheless able to remain net agricultural exporters until the 1920s. Since then they have seen their own cropping sector impoverished to sub-subsistence levels and its natural resource base degraded, while heavily subsidised white commercial agriculture prospered across the border on land they used to own. While the poor rural majority may have little time to philosophise about such things as they struggle to piece their livelihoods together, there is an understandable frustration at senior levels about the pathetic state of Lesotho's crop sector. Comparing the endless expanses of commercial corn in the Free State with the often stunted, wilting or completely abandoned little fields of lowland Lesotho, decision makers in this government feel compelled to do more with the land that the nation still has, and to show that Basotho are as capable of high-yielding commercial grain production as their South African neighbours. Many factors militate against this, but many senior Basotho still see the cross-border comparison as a national affront that must be addressed.

The second perspective, also touched on in section 2.1, is that of external analysts and development agencies, who mistakenly assumed through most of the 20th century that rural Lesotho – or the whole country – was an agrarian economy whose growth should be spearheaded by conventional processes of agricultural development. This would involve gradually enhancing field crop and livestock production techniques and infrastructure to transform the sector from peasant subsistence to a more commercial orientation and higher standards of living. Only since the 1990s have some – but still not all – development partners' strategies come to recognise, explicitly or implicitly, how unrealistic such expectations are. Rural Lesotho livelihoods were and are much more complex, and are evolving at an accelerated pace. Like the rural economy, development agencies' perspectives and strategies have been fragmenting in recent years. Several have closed their Lesotho programmes altogether, but among those that remain some have abandoned all support for crop production, disillusioned by decades of 'agricultural development' after which average yields are lower than they were before. Others have restricted their support to specialised commercial crop production or, like DFID, to homestead garden production and related small-scale strategies.

An uncomfortable dichotomy has thus developed. On the one hand, the flagship agricultural development strategy for GOL and MAFS is block farming, aimed at (re)building a convincing commercial grain crop sector in Lesotho. External agencies have been wary of funding this venture, partly because of its political undertones and scope for corruption and partly because of the unpromising economics. On the other hand,

donors and lenders have supported a smattering of small-scale strategies that are mostly aimed at reinforcing the livelihoods of the rural poor rather than effecting a market-oriented transformation of the rural cropping sector. Many of these projects, including LRAP, did consider the potential for surplus production and hence for enhanced marketing arrangements. But they made little sustainable progress in stimulating more efficient or extensive market systems and structures (LRAP, 2006b). A few have contributed to specialised commercial farming ventures that are more in tune with MAFS technocrats' ambitions and that have so far achieved few tangible results.

In between these two largely opposing sets of priorities lies the mainstream (sub-)subsistence field cropping still practised by hundreds of thousands of rural Basotho. As was pointed out in section 3.1, growing numbers of lowland field owners have done their sums and decided that this kind of production is too risky to continue. More and more land in this zone lies fallow, which may at least have some environmental benefits (although it upsets those who believe that the country can and should produce more grain). In the mountains, however, where mechanisation and external inputs are less feasible or necessary, field cropping remains robust and most arable land is still vigorously cultivated. Government extension programmes do not focus much on this kind of field crop production in either zone. Nor do the rural livelihoods and agricultural programmes of NGOs and donors. For different reasons, both GOL and external agencies have left conventional field cropping to fend for itself. For different reasons, mountain farmers struggle on with it, and many lowland farmers are giving up. The two groups are united, however, in their addiction to maize. One of the many paradoxes in Lesotho agriculture is farmers' determination to grow such a challenging crop. Despite the introduction of early-maturing varieties that have largely replaced wheat and peas in the mountains, and despite modern Basotho's dietary preference for it, maize is not a very suitable grain crop for Lesotho. The indigenous and more nutritious sorghum does better under this country's erratic rainfall regime, although it is admittedly more labour intensive as it nears maturity and birds have to be scared away.

5.2. Grain and gardens

Although it is only part of the food security challenge, enhanced food production is still an appropriate field of development intervention for GOL and its partners. But both the government and the donors need clear rationales and strategies for the kinds of support they give. As explained above, the starkest choice at the moment is between government's most visible priority of promoting larger-scale commercial grain production and many other agencies' emphasis on small-scale garden crops.

Like most other analysts, the designers of the PSP food security component saw little potential in promoting grain crop production – either the conventional approaches or the block farming programmes discussed in more detail below. Furthermore, they were specifically requested by GOL to put resources into the replication of LRAP's homestead gardening achievements. Unlike most other rural food security or livelihoods programmes, however, PSP ultimately decided to engage proactively with government's commitment to commercial grain production through the block farming programme. PSP's close integration within MAFS at headquarters and district levels gave it a better insight into the ministry's concerns and led it to conclude that this was one field of policy and operations that it could at least help to clarify and refine. That led to the analysis and guidelines described below. But the policy management failings discussed in section 4.3 have so far prevented this work from having any practical effect. At the time of writing, the block farming guidelines – although reportedly accepted at technical level in MAFS – have yet to be presented to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Food Security, and MAFS plans for block farming continue to be made without reference to them. At the closing national food security event sponsored by PSP on 26 March 2009, there were repeated calls for the guidelines to be put into use. It remains to be seen whether this will ever happen.

The main text of the report continues on page 29.

Block farming

As has been noted above, grain crop production is not easy in Lesotho. Production of the nation's favourite grain, maize, is especially difficult. Analysis commissioned by PSP in 2008 reinforced some uncomfortable realities. For smallholders, adopting new (mechanised) farming technologies instead of traditional practices actually reduced the gross margin for maize. Under traditional technologies, the gross margin for maize, as calculated by the 2008 study, was M291/ha. For sorghum it was M1,041/ha, and for wheat it was M407/ha. To break even, the small-scale farmer with traditional technologies would need to produce 0.34 t/ha of maize, 0.15 t/ha of sorghum or 0.16 t/ha of wheat. With new, tractor-driven production methods, the gross margin for sorghum increased to M2,635/ha. For wheat it went up to M1,909/ha. But for maize, the more advanced farming technologies reduced the gross margin from M291/ha to M35/ha. The analyst noted that one of the factors influencing maize crop production budgets in Lesotho is the proximity of the efficient, large-scale South African maize industry, which drives Lesotho maize prices down. He also pointed out that, although sharecropping has always been an option for land holders who lack the working capital to plant their fields themselves, the economics of doing this under modern sharecropping arrangements are discouraging. The analysis shows that tractor operators who make sharecropping contracts for maize are likely to lose money. This, he argued, helps to explain the large numbers of lowland fields that are left unused (Orr, 2008: 2-4).

The perspective of Basotho decision-makers on large-scale grain production referred to in section 5.1 has a long history, as the following extract from a 1985 study shows:

> *Implementation of BASP [the Basic Agricultural Services Project] was complicated by [one of the] principal policy concerns of the 1970s…: that of self-sufficiency in the basic grains… agriculture policy is often complicated by political considerations about the production of food. This began to be the case in Lesotho in the mid 1970s, when the two concepts of food self-sufficiency and food security gained currency and then paramountcy in agriculture policy. It should be noted that the concepts differ. Food self-sufficiency implies that the nation can feed itself. Particularly for basic grains and for an apparently agricultural country like Lesotho, this is an attractive concept and one that has political significant in terms of national pride and self-reliance. Food security implies that the nation has enough food at appropriate points within its borders to withstand periods of crisis… In the period of worsening relations with South Africa in the latter 1970s, and with the closure of Lesotho's southern border with the Transkei Bantustan in 1976, food security took on great political importance. Agriculture policy responded accordingly. But in the design of programmes to increase basic food production, the self-sufficiency and security concepts have tended to be used interchangeably. This has led to confusion and uncertainty as to what actually is meant to be achieved.*
>
> *Government response to food production concerns took the form of the Co-operative Crop Production Programme, which was initiated in 1976 and ran to 1980 when it was replaced by the Food Self-Sufficiency Programme, supported by a Technical Operations Unit. The latter programme and agency continue to function, but there have been a number of changes since 1976. The CCPP began as a sharecropping programme for winter crops – principally wheat – in various parts of the lowlands and foothills (neither programme has entered the mountain zone). Government provided all farming inputs and adopted a mechanised approach that necessitated the consolidation of blocks of farmers' fields into areas large enough for operation by combine harvesters and other heavy equipment. Some of this equipment was provided by the government LEMA agricultural machinery service and some was contracted from South Africa – as part of a programme of technical assistance, in some seasons. The farmer was supposed to provide some manual labour, but often did not. Yields were divided half and half between government and farmer. This in fact implied heavy subsidy of the farmer by government. Reasonable yields were achieved in some years, and some progress was made toward the target of increasing national production of basic grains (summer crops were added when the CCPP was converted to the FSSP). But calculations that the programme could yield enough to cover government's costs – based on certain Chinese experimental results – proved optimistic. Despite this, the programme was expanded in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with as much as 24,000 ha under cultivation in some years. There was much political capital to be gained from progress towards higher food production in the adverse regional political climate, and the programmes were popular with farmers who had very little to do except claim their share of the yield at the end of the season: some labelled it the 'sit and eat' programme. After heavy losses in the 1981/82 programme, the sharing formula was changed so that government retained two thirds of the harvest, and the land holder one third. A further change in the 1983/84 season meant that the government's inputs were considered a loan to the farmer, to be repaid*

at harvest. But the drought that year was so disastrous that all farmer debts arising from the programme were cancelled. Political considerations may have influenced this decision, together with the realisation that the farmers would not have been able to replay these debts even with normal yields.

Effectively the CCPP/FSSP have constituted government's most blunt realisation that dryland farming in Lesotho, with the present number of land holders, requires heavy subsidy. It is not an economic proposition at the higher levels of management that are typically assumed to accompany agricultural development and that the food production programmes adopted. This is the largest problem with the theoretically integrated interventions in traditional farming with which the Lesotho authorities have tried to help rural land holders. They are a serious economic risk for the farmer, who is more likely to lose money than to raise his standard of living and for whom the traditional, low yielding systems remain the only economically rational ones in most circumstances to date. For the 1984/85 FSSP, government has accepted that its mechanised farming approach was not financially viable and that it was bound to involve an element of subsidy. This element of subsidy is currently accepted as the price to be paid for enhanced self-sufficiency, or food security – it remains unclear as to which the actual target is. The programme itself now consists essentially of the sale or rental of packages of inputs to interested farmers who are required to make more of a labour input than previously. A credit component has been included to make it easier for farmers to pay government for the inputs provided.

The CCPP was accorded high political priority in the late 1970s, as the BASP agricultural infrastructure programme was supposed to be mounted throughout the lowlands and foothills with support from a variety of donors. (Most of the CCPP/FSSP subsidy came from domestic sources.) The food production programmes constituted a heavy drain on trained agricultural personnel, and conditions of service were substantially better than those in the Ministry of Agriculture. Many staff therefore transferred to the CCPP/FSSP, which made BASP implementation more difficult. This and differences over whether CCPP/FSSP were an appropriate philosophy for agricultural development in Lesotho effectively stymied BASP, from which the donors withdrew in the early 1980s and which has now been absorbed into the regular extension service of the Ministry of Agriculture... The high priority accorded to the upgrading of agricultural infrastructure in the 1970s has thus quietly faded away in the first half of the 1980s.

Such was the political significance of the food production programmes that they were placed from the outset under the Prime Minister's Office rather than the Ministry of Agriculture. This led to major discontinuities in the design and implementation of agricultural development as a whole, since the predominant component of government's agriculture policy from the mid 1970s was not controlled by the Ministry of Agriculture and the latter was outbid in terms of personnel by the CCPP/FSSP programme under the Prime Minister's office. It is in these circumstances not surprising that agricultural development planning in the late 1970s and early 1980s has been less coherent and less effective than the amount of resources poured into the relevant section of the Ministry would otherwise have led one to expect, and that clashes sometimes arise between the agriculture policy of the Ministry and the agriculture policy of the government (controlled, of course, by the Prime Minister's Office). It was only because the food production programmes were so centrally placed politically that the enormous subsidies they entailed were sustained for so long. Since early 1984 responsibility for the FSSP has partly been handed back to the Ministry, although its capital budget and control of the TOU remain with the Prime Minister's Office.

Turner, 1985.

This text of 24 years ago is quoted at such length in order to show how long government has been committed to subsidising grain production, against all the economic odds. The political subtext remains important, as was explained in section 5.1. During the period of PSP implementation, the commitment and the subtext have found expression in the block farming programme. Now, just as a quarter of a century ago, this is government's flagship agricultural programme (section 5.1) and, although MAFS has more control over it than it did over the CCPP/FSSP, Cabinet maintains a strong influence through its Sub-Committee on Food Security.

The block farming programme is a prominent part of the National Action Plan for Food Security, constituting Sub-Programme 1.2 ('commercial agriculture-based block farming') (GOL, 2006a: 35-37). Indeed, formulation of the NAPFS led to a reformulation of the block farming approaches that, as shown above, have been an evolving part of national policy for more than 30 years. In the current approach, those responsible for production on a particular block take out

loans with Standard Lesotho Bank. The bank is fully guaranteed by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning against default on these loans.

At present, there are three block farming sub-programmes. In all three, the block leader or co-ordinator arranges with a group of people holding contiguous fields to combine them into one area that can be worked by tractors (and possibly other agricultural machinery). This may be on the basis of traditional sharecropping agreements or more formal leasing. The profits, if any, are then shared between the leader and the field holders on terms that they agree. Many of the inputs are procured and delivery to the participating blocks around the country arranged by MAFS. Some of the tractors and other machinery are also supplied by the ministry, although most come from commercial operators, who are in some cases the block farmers themselves. MAFS is also responsible for facilitating block formation, registering the participants, location, block area etc. and arranging the loan finance with the bank.

Programme 1 is meant to be the most commercial and 'scientific', involving a relatively small number of farmers with the expertise and resources to undertake a comparatively highly capitalised production process (including ripping and liming in the first season). It began on a pilot basis in 2006/07 with three farmers working a total of 246 ha. Despite poor rainfall that year, an average yield of 2.2 t/ha was achieved. But this was not enough to break even, and the farmers only paid back 24% of the total M1.03m loans they had received. Nevertheless, programme 1 was expanded in 2007/08 to cover all except the three mountain districts of the country and about five times as much land.

Programme 2 was meant to increase the coverage of the block farming programme beyond the skilled commercial operators who were assumed to be able to work independently. It began in 2006/07 with four 'mentors'. The 'mentors' were members of parliament who were expected to guide local committees that would in turn co-ordinate operations on the block. They included two cabinet ministers. The programme 2 approach is not as intensive or expensive as that of programme 1, involving lower levels of inputs and no preliminary ripping or liming. Only three mentors went through with the programme in that first year, with poor results. Two of the four blocks produced nothing. One of the four did well. Overall, the average yields were only 0.6 t/ha. As in programme 1, output was significantly below the level needed to break even. Responsibility for loan management and repayment seemed to be confused, and only a small part of the M4.3m in programme 2 loans was reported as repaid. With the same four mentors (although one later withdrew), programme 2 was also expanded in 2007/08, so that the four blocks covered about twice as much land. PSP analysis estimated that, for the budgeted cost of programme 2 that year, 9,500t of maize could have been purchased – about four times as much as the programme 2 blocks were likely to produce.

Programme 3 was added to the block farming package in 2007/08. It has the lowest levels of inputs and the simplest technologies, and was meant to provide an opportunity for mechanised farming contractors – mainly simple tractor owners – to form and operate blocks. Its popularity boomed that season, probably inspired by some public government statements – later contradicted – that block farming loans would not have to be repaid. A total of 330 programme 3 blocks were planned to cover 28,752 ha and attract loans of almost M76m. In fact, substantially smaller areas were covered. Like programme 2, the 2007/08 programme 3 achieved disappointing results and only limited loan repayments so far. A highly unlikely 1.66 t/ha yield would have been needed in order for programme 3 farmers to break even. Using the same mode of analysis, the PSP expert estimated that the funds used for this programme could again have purchased more than four times more food than it would produce. In fact, many programme 3 participants do not have adequate equipment to do a competent job, and have been trying to work blocks that were far too large for their resources.

In the most recent summer season of 2008/09, the block farming programme was continued along the same lines. The serious logistical and financial problems implicit in the design outlined above were even more manifest than in earlier years. MAFS was already under severe criticism for late delivery of inputs to participating blocks. Decaying piles of lime that were delivered too late and never applied to the intended fields can be seen at many roadside locations. Its planning for the 2008/09 season ran later still and was heavily criticised by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Food Security, whose members include programme 2 'mentors'. As PSP came to an end in March 2009, MAFS was making equally rushed arrangements to try and put a winter block farming programme in place following good late rains.

A seemingly perpetual atmosphere of crisis and recrimination now surrounds the block farming programme. At the heart of the problem is policy makers' apparent political preference for massive subsidy to inefficient, loss-making domestic grain production arrangements, rather than for more balanced food security strategies. As this report has shown, this preference stretches back over 30 years across several different governments. Despite the involvement of a commercial bank, this is still in many ways a kind of state farming. The direct involvement of leading politicians in such a programme makes it vulnerable to accusations of impropriety, especially when the state guarantees loans that

are not repaid. The impossibly ambitious logistics, with their requirement that a state ministry operate a detailed procurement, loan facilitation and distribution exercise across the country, make the programme perpetually vulnerable to operational failure.

In these circumstances, it is not entirely surprising that PSP's recommendations for restructuring the block farming programme were not adopted by government. Detailed analysis had been done and new guidelines were available from PSP in time for the 2008/09 season. These were candid about the difficult economics of Lesotho grain production in general and the block farming programme in particular. Returning to the approved strategies of the NAPFS, they recommended that programmes 2 and 3 be ended, with the resources diverted to a large-scale conservation farming programme for poorer, smaller-scale farmers. PSP analysis concluded that the only viable block farming approach was programme 1, and urged that the limited available technical and logistical resources be focused on it. The detailed guidelines drawn up by a PSP consultant and submitted to MAFS were intended to guide a streamlined, rationalised programme 1. As noted above, they have yet to see the light of day. PSP's offer to help design a comprehensive conservation farming programme was not taken up.

The role of lirapa *in the promotion of food security*

While it was funding the APCBP (sections 2.2, 6.1), DFID was also funding the Training for Environmental and Agricultural Management project, implemented by CARE in the southern districts of Lesotho from 1995 to 2002. (The first two years were funded by NORAD.) In the spirit of its times, TEAM focused at least as much on process – experiential learning, participation through CBOs and promotion of the Farmer Extension Facilitator approach – as it did on content. On the technical side, however, it was significant in shifting the emphasis from field cropping to home garden production. This was in keeping with its focus on the poor and vulnerable in rural society. As the final evaluation of the project pointed out,

> *The shift towards vegetable gardens is positive as:*
>
> - *the technologies are more appropriate for small-scale intensive crops, therefore having a more marked impact on yield*
> - *it enables more of the 'poor' and 'very poor' categories of villagers who do not have extensive land to participate; and*
> - *it encourages women's participation as they are involved in home gardening.*
>
> Carnegie and Marumo, 2002: 14.

The Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme (LRAP) continued the technical

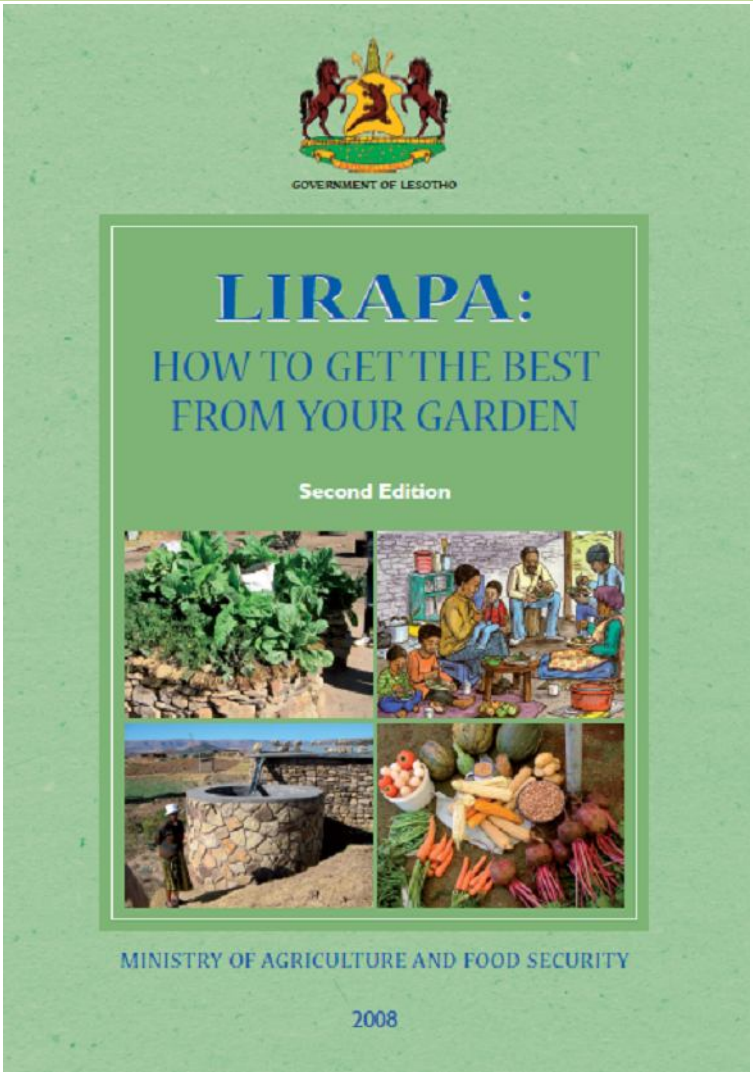


Figure 7. Cover of the English version of the second edition of the *Lirapa* manual

and extension approaches of TEAM from 2002 to 2006, again with DFID funding and again mainly in southern Lesotho. It made much broader progress with the promotion of a range of mostly small-scale enhancements to food production techniques – primarily in home gardens but with some support for field cropping too. The main fields of work were plot construction (including keyhole gardens and trench plots), improving soil fertility (mainly with kraal manure and ash), enhanced cropping practices (including the Machobane system), water harvesting and conservation, small livestock production and marketing and food preservation (Ndabe and Turner, 2006: 4-5). Many rural people were quick to see the benefits of the approaches that LRAP promoted, with the better use of kraal manure and ash the most widely endorsed techniques.

Figure 8. Extract from the English version of the second edition of the *Lirapa* manual

By the time LRAP ended, the emphasis of support to food production in Lesotho had shifted fully from field crops to home gardens. Indeed, the programme had come to be more widely known as *Lirapa*, which is Sesotho for 'gardens'. The paradigm of developing training materials on a limited number of key home gardening and related techniques and using community-based extension workers to promote them was firmly established, as was the idea of working not only with MAFS but also through NGOs' rural livelihoods programmes. LRAP was viewed as a success, and the PSP

'M'e Manthoto Phatsisi is a support group member at Ha Lebona Liotloaneng. She indicated that she has been a homestead gardener for a longer period of time and that was mainly for home consumption. She stated that she became ill and was less active in her garden. She said her feet and knees were very painful and this situation was worsened by her pregnancy and she could hardly walk and this is where she saw the importance of keyhole gardens. She explained that she went for a blood test and she did not have any blood [meaning that she was anaemic].

"People who had keyhole gardens gave me beetroot, spinach and carrots which helped me greatly" she said. After some time she went for another blood test and this time she had blood. She indicated that she believes that she has been healed by organic vegetables and this made her construct a keyhole garden. She said she feels healthy and her baby is healthy as well and can travel long distances. Her message now to the rest of the people is that at least every household should have a keyhole garden and experience the good works it does.

A case study submitted by 'Masimone Phokojoe, PSP DRO Berea.

food security component was requested by MAFS to replicate it. In fact, LRAP was in some ways also a process project. There was nothing very new about its relatively small-scale technical content, some of which had been practised here and there in Lesotho for decades, and some of which had been introduced by other projects or agencies. The idea of the keyhole garden was brought to the country by a staff member of Stock Aid who had seen the structures in Uganda and keyholes have been promoted by a number of other projects, although they are sometimes mistakenly believed to be an invention of CARE or LRAP.

In any event, the PSP food security component was given a clear technical agenda. Its promotion of gardening and related 'homestead food security' techniques, again in partnership with MAFS and NGOs, was enthusiastically received. Targets for delivery of training content were greatly exceeded (Annex 2). Despite the widespread popularity of the keyhole garden (see box), the programme repeatedly emphasised that there was a much wider range of techniques on offer. One of its major outputs was a revised and expanded second edition of the *Lirapa* homestead gardening manual, first produced by LRAP (GOL, 2008b). Almost 9,000 of these books were distributed around the country. Most are in Sesotho; an English version was also produced. The keyhole garden occupies four of its 192 pages, with other chapters devoted to topics like nutrition, farmer experimentation, wind and frost protection, fruit production and seed saving.

Keyhole gardens in Berea District, Lesotho

Keyhole gardens are rapidly gaining popularity in lowland Lesotho. Berea District is one area where they are spreading fast. These small structures are built close to people's houses. The cultivated area is at waist to chest height, so can easily be worked by elderly or ill people whose physical condition makes bending down to a conventional garden plot difficult. Once built, they need very little labour and are easier to water because they are small and because they are close to sources of domestic water. Built with layers of soil, manure and ash, with a central core that includes composting materials and sometimes tin cans, keyhole gardens achieve high productivity. Families can produce substantial amounts of highly nutritious vegetables, year round. Their ease of use and nutritional value mean that keyhole gardens are strongly recommended for households weakened by AIDS.

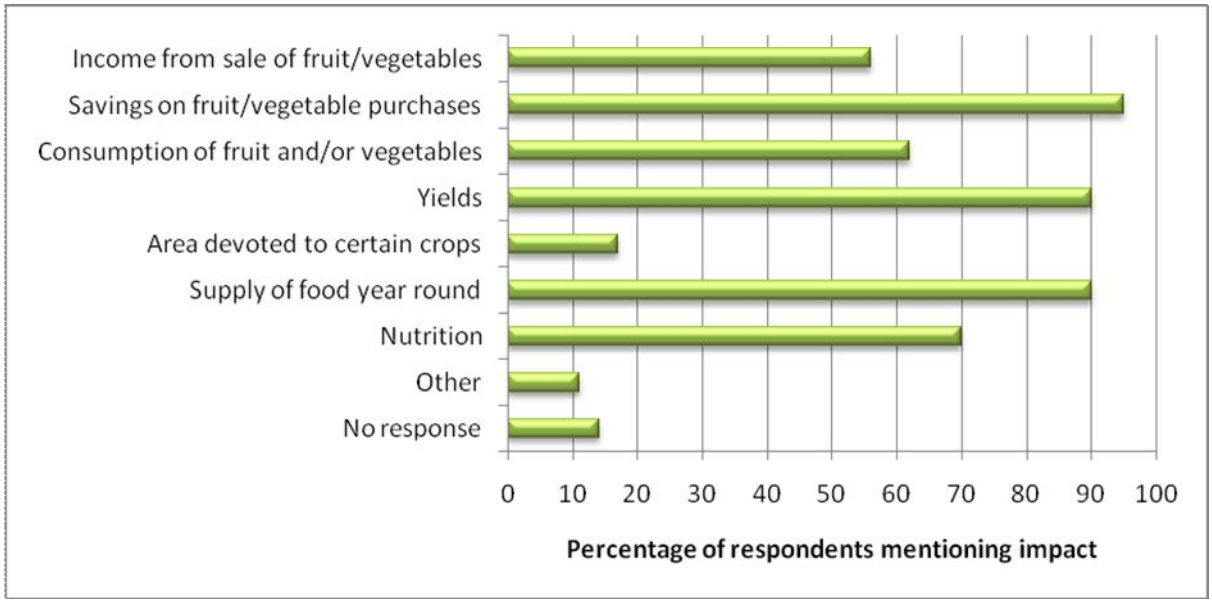
Litšeling is one of many villages in Berea with a Community Support Group of volunteers who try to help households suffering from AIDS, as well as children orphaned by the pandemic. The Falimehang Support Group at Litšeling was set up in 2003 and has ten members – eight of them women. The group have very little assistance from outside and have no drugs to dispense, but try to help AIDS-afflicted households by bringing water to them, helping to wash patients and sometimes giving them food. Mrs 'Mamahloli Rantsebe is one of the Falimehang Community Support Group members who has constructed a keyhole garden in her yard. Since she built it in February, she has been impressed by the amount of food it has produced. Like other members of the Support Group, she plans to give some of her keyhole garden vegetables to AIDS patients and orphans. Like many Basotho men, her husband works in South Africa, while she cares for the home and their four children. She waters the keyhole garden with fresh water from a nearby communal tap as well as with grey water from the household. She and her fellow Support Group members have been taking it in turns to help each other build their keyholes, and now members of a neighbouring Support Group are keen to get instruction themselves. The Falimehang group supports some 20 households who have AIDS patients, but are still battling against the widely felt stigma associated with AIDS. In many cases, the true cause of a person's death is not stated at the funeral, says Mrs Rantsebe. But at least, she says, there are so far no child headed households in the village.

Originally introduced to the country by StockAid Lesotho, keyhole gardens were promoted in several areas by the DFID-funded Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme (LRAP). More recently, DFID has been funding the Priority Support Programme, which aims to help the Government of Lesotho to work towards the two highest priorities of its Poverty Reduction Strategy – job creation and food security. Through its food security component, this programme is helping government to disseminate homestead food security approaches introduced by LRAP – such as the keyhole garden. Mrs 'Masimone Phokojoe is the programme's District Resource Officer for Berea, and was responsible for training Mrs Rantsebe and her Support Group colleagues on the keyhole garden technique.

Another village where she has done this is Ha Makoanyane. Like several others in the area, this community is extremely enthusiastic about keyhole gardens. Nearly every household has built one since the concept was introduced in February 2007 after people from Ha Makoanyane attended a demonstration by Mrs Phokojoe in a nearby village and asked her to come and do one at their place too. Some households have built two, and at least one is now starting on a third. As at Litšeling, the high productivity and easy use of the keyhole garden are key reasons for its popularity. Once again, most of the builders and users of keyholes are women, although Mrs 'Malehlohonolo Motselekatse's keyhole has just been joined in the yard by a second one that her husband built after he saw what she had done. "Women are more concerned about food and nutrition", say female keyhole owners at Ha Makoanyane. "When a hungry child cries, he cries to his mother." Some families in the village are said to be too weak to build their own keyholes, but stronger women are helping them to construct them. Ha Makoanyane has a Community Support Group too, and several of its members are among those who have built keyhole gardens. The women of Ha Makoanayane are enthusiastic about the high productivity of these new structures, but Lesotho's bitter winters can cause severe frost damage. Several keyhole owners cover the tops with old grain bags or with grass at night to protect them against this hazard.

From a PSP report, 2007.

As is shown in section 9.6 below, the homestead gardening techniques promoted by PSP were widely appreciated. The programme's beneficiary assessment suggested that this was because they meet household needs; they are efficient (i.e. low cost and using local materials); they are not labour intensive once they are in place and can therefore be used by young and old, sick and healthy; and because, with their use of household waste water, they make it possible to produce food all year round (Kenward, 2009: 30).



The sample of 127 respondents were asked to state the impact(s) of what they considered the two most useful technologies on which they had received extension advice.

Figure 9. Reported impacts of techniques promoted by PSP through NGOs

Adapted from Kenward, 2009: 31.

It is interesting to compare the current positive morale and perceptions regarding the promotion of *lirapa* techniques and the gloom and confusion surrounding block farming and the enhancement of grain production. It is important to remember that many rural Basotho, especially those in the mountains, are as strongly committed as ever to grain farming. But when they consider agricultural and livelihood development strategies, people can see a way forward when they assess the small-scale techniques that PSP and other programmes have been promoting. When they think about ways to grow more grain, they can see fewer opportunities for progress.

The discussion above shows that, like LRAP before it, PSP enjoyed considerable success with its promotion of homestead garden production. The programme has clearly shown that this is an effective way of achieving substantial and sustainable food security benefits, especially for the poor and those affected by HIV/AIDS. The programme is now sometimes wrongly perceived as having focused on promotion of the keyhole garden, while in fact the *Lirapa* manual covers much more than this single technique. Nevertheless, the keyhole is one of those most elusive development innovations – the kind that spreads spontaneously because of the target group's enthusiasm for it.

Figure 10. A keyhole garden

Photograph: M. Phokojoe.

The question remains whether the scope for development interventions in support of food production is now limited to commercial grain farming and sub-subsistence homestead gardening. (Nobody has claimed that a household can feed itself from a keyhole garden, although in exceptional cases a household can achieve a good livelihood by growing and marketing fruit and vegetables from its homestead plot.) Is there nothing more to be done for 'mainstream' field crop production, and are there no ways for external agencies to support initiatives in this sub-sector? Given the historical rationality and continuing social efficiency of the current arable land tenure system, and the social, political and logistical impracticality of a quick conversion to large-scale farm holdings, stronger production by ordinary field owners should still be a viable option in some contexts, and for some decades to come. Possible ways of supporting such strategies are briefly outlined below.

Figure 11. A keyhole garden

Photograph: D. Hall.

5.3. Irrigation

Irrigation has often seemed an attractive way to increase Lesotho's food production, both for government and for donors. Lesotho has many perennial rivers, after all (although catchment degradation means that stream flows are more

variable and intermittent than in the past). Recognising how much difference a little extra water can make, rural people have often called on government to help them with irrigation schemes. These calls have become louder since Lesotho started selling water to South Africa through the Highlands Water Project. How can Lesotho's crops be allowed to perish due to lack of moisture when the country apparently has a surplus of water for export?

In reality, Lesotho's topography severely limits the area that can feasibly and profitably be irrigated. The amount of suitable land within a viable pumping distance of reliable water sources is very small, and gravity-fed irrigation schemes are unviable on any but the smallest scale. Water harvesting has a limited role to play, and integrating water conservation into farming techniques can make a major contribution to productivity (section 5.4).

On the limited areas that are suitable for irrigation, there have been a host of donor-funded schemes. Few have succeeded for any length of time. The management of the equipment and the enterprises has typically been weak and/or corrupt. The end result is rusting or stolen pumps and coils of decaying irrigation piping that can be seen at various riverside sites around the lowlands, together with the less visible skeletons of irrigated farming associations that have collapsed in acrimony or apathy. Some irrigation schemes have been poorly designed, and have consisted mainly of the delivery of quantities of equipment that has scored political points for the donor and/or recipient government but contributed little to sustainable agricultural development.

Meanwhile, a small number of Basotho entrepreneurs – in some of the few places with the right topography, river access and soils - have proved themselves capable of irrigated crop production, using their own resources (and sometimes supported by loans from banks or elsewhere). These relatively small-scale private sector ventures are flourishing. Government and its external partners seem unable to make irrigation work in Lesotho. Individual investors can, although not many people with the required capital and skills will choose this over alternative business opportunities.

5.4. Resource conservation

Resource conservation contributes to food security in three ways. First, off-farm conservation of catchments, and especially of the slopes above cultivated areas, protects productive land from degradation. Secondly, on-farm conservation of soil and water is vital if adequate and sustained yields are to be achieved in Lesotho's environmental conditions. Thirdly, as the food security policy notes in the few paragraphs it devotes to land conservation and rehabilitation, these functions can create short-term employment, thus enhancing the food security of the poor, if they are included in safety net strategies for labour intensive public works (GOL, 2005a: 34).

From the 1930s to the 1990s, soil conservation programmes (and, later, soil and water conservation and range management initiatives) were among the most prominent modes of development assistance to Lesotho, probably receiving more funds than efforts to increase food production. Most of that effort, and especially the earlier colonial work, has since been criticised as socially, technically or economically misguided, or all of these. There is no doubt, though, that Lesotho's natural resources would be even more degraded had those programmes not taken place. There is no scope now for major new external soil and water conservation initiatives, although donor support can still make a useful difference to emerging new modes of natural resource governance (including range management). Meanwhile, although its conventional soil conservation programmes are moribund, the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation has been making a major impact, using largely domestic resources, with the third type of activity mentioned above: labour intensive public works.

The greatest scope for external support to resource conservation, as a means to enhancing food security, is in measures to enhance soil and water conservation on cultivated land. These measures are increasingly integrated in cultivation practice. Many are integral to the kinds of small-scale production that PSP and other programmes have been promoting, as set out in the *Lirapa* manual (see above). Many are combined

in the conservation farming approaches that have steadily been gaining acceptance in agricultural systems around the world, and to which MAFS has given increasing attention in recent years. Indeed, the sub-programme of the NAPFS that PSP focused on supporting is entitled 'conservation agriculture-based household food security'. Despite its obvious affinity with indigenous approaches like the Machobane farming system, and despite its apparent endorsement by MAFS, the promotion of conservation agriculture as a technical and development approach has been tortuous so far (Silici, forthcoming). There has been confusion and dissent within the ministry as to what conservation farming actually is, and it has yet to be mainstreamed into extension content. PSP's analysis of the block farming programme led to the recommendation that the third component of that programme, which has the largest number of (mostly ill-equipped) participants and poses the heaviest logistical challenges, be replaced with a large scale conservation agriculture programme. PSP offered consultancy support to help develop this programme, but the offer was not taken up. A broad and technically competent national conservation agriculture programme would probably achieve more for Lesotho's food security than the block farming programme, but MAFS continues to give operational priority to the latter.

5.5. Producer subsidies

The government of Lesotho has regularly resorted to input subsidies as a way of increasing food production, notably through the block farming programme and its predecessors. These subsidies and the programmes they have supported have lost government large amounts of money without achieving significant increases in national food output. Government does have a sound 2003 policy on agricultural subsidies that was endorsed by the national food security policy (see box), but it has not adhered to it.

If GOL were adhering to its producer subsidy policy, this could be a suitable field for external support. In present circumstances, however, such support would be inappropriate.

In the light of past experience, the following principles will be applied in providing targeted input subsidies:

- *Input subsidy programmes shall be subject to livelihood analysis followed by community based targeting, to ensure correct targeting.*
- *The private sector will be fully involved in all future programmes, with the GoL playing a facilitating role.*
- *All future programmes will take full advantage of the positive examples of appropriate crop and input mixes pioneered by various NGOs. GoL will also engage fully with NGOs in terms of implementation.*
- *All future programmes will contain a clear and effective exit strategy, which includes sensitising farmers as to the temporary nature of the intervention.*
- *Monitoring of input supplies will be undertaken to ensure efficiency. This will include taking corrective actions if required to ensure effective supplies.*

GOL, 2005a: 27.

5.6. Livestock production

Despite the difficult mountain communications of that era, the colonial authorities successfully built up Lesotho's wool and mohair sector through a relatively efficient marketing system that operated with a network of woolsheds across the country (exporting through South Africa). It was supported by elementary livestock health services. That system, which largely replaced the original wool and mohair trading by private storekeepers, was one of the more durable elements of the meagre economic framework that the country inherited at independence, but after some further decades of reliable performance it fell into disrepair in the 1990s. Recent efforts to revive it have had little success, despite some limited reintroduction of private sector marketing facilities. Weaker veterinary services and substantial range degradation have also combined to reduce the quality of the wool and mohair produced. Linked to the less reliable marketing arrangements and erratic international commodity prices, these factors pose significant challenges to the sector. In theory, the mountains of Lesotho should still be a fine place to produce wool and mohair, thus enhancing the food security of relatively large numbers of small flock owners. This could

be a useful sector for the country's development partners to support. In practice these challenges have rightly deterred most donors.

Meanwhile, shifting livelihood options and contexts combine with the major threat of stock theft to mean that sheep and goat flocks, like cattle, are now concentrated in fewer hands. Potential food security benefits from wool and mohair production would therefore be less widely distributed. Cattle raising for beef and dairy marketing does not have significant development or food security potential, although the slowly dwindling numbers of cattle in rural communities (due to rising production costs and falling productivity) do continue to provide important nutritional benefits that indigenous sharing mechanisms may spread beyond the households that own them. Modest interventions to make small-scale dairy production for urban markets more efficient and profitable still offer valuable scope for external support. But, as the abandoned modern abattoir outside Maseru shows, the meat sector does not. This is not because of economically irrational behaviour by cattle owners, as foreign analysts spent most of the 20th century arguing across Africa. It is because of the structure of rural Basotho livelihoods and the diverse and rational roles that cattle have played within them. (The scarcity of competent management for large marketing enterprises also plays a part.) In the rural but not agrarian economy that is shaped by Lesotho's structural poverty, commercial meat production is not a feasible way to enhance food security.

The 'conservation agriculture-based household food security' sub-programme of the National Action Plan for Food Security speaks of promoting small livestock production as well as garden crops and staple grains. With some support from FAO, MAFS has invested much effort over recent years in its *'Neheletse* programme to promote the passing on to other households of progeny from improved livestock that it introduces. As the NAPFS acknowledges, however, the programme achieved only limited results in its early years. It does not seem to have fared much better since the Action Plan was formulated. Nor do other initiatives to promote milk goats, rabbits and other small homestead stock, although they have all experienced some uptake by interested and able households.

What limited potential there is for promoting enhanced food security through livestock production depends on effective extension, efficiently managed. Feasible approaches for food security extension were one of the main themes for PSP, as they were for several earlier programmes (including LRAP). The issues and options are summarised in chapter 6 below.

6. Food security extension

6.1. The Unified Extension System

Lesotho's first three Agricultural Demonstrators were appointed in 1924. Through most of the last century, agricultural development and the promotion of food security were assumed to involve the transmission of innovations through extension processes that would lead to the sustained adoption of the new techniques and practices. As elsewhere in Africa and beyond, the initial assumption in Lesotho was that extension was a teaching process, through which informed outsiders would train uninformed locals on enhanced practices about which they had previously been ignorant. Over the first three decades after independence, the country experienced the usual range of external interventions aimed at making agricultural extension more efficient and effective, culminating in the realisation that innovation and knowledge transfer were not one-way processes and that more participatory approaches to research and extension should yield better results. During the 1990s, a variety of new extension approaches and systems were promoted by different donors and projects, including farming systems research and extension, the training and visit system and the client demand approach.

Eventually, the Agricultural Policy and Capacity Building Project (APCBP, 1999-2003) facilitated the introduction of a Unified Extension System (UES) that was meant to end the confusion by integrating the strengths of the several and sometimes competing systems that various agencies and programmes had been promoting. The UES placed a strong emphasis on priority problem identification and planning of solutions by rural communities, through an 'Action Learning Cycle' (ALC) that would lead to Community Action Plans (CAPs). Repeated iterations of the ALC, facilitated by agricultural extension staff, would involve regular monitoring of progress and adjustment of the innovations and programmes meant to tackle the problems that had been identified.

The World Bank's Implementation Completion Report on the APCBP was largely unfavourable, describing both the outcome and the borrower performance as 'unsatisfactory' (World Bank, 2004: 1). But it assessed the extension component as satisfactory, stating that the project had achieved the introduction of the UES. Almost all agricultural extension staff had been trained in the ALC and in the preparation and implementation of CAPs, of which 160 had been prepared, with implementation of 80 under way. It did note that "the project is still in the process of consolidating UES implementation, staffing the Resource Centres (RCs), and institutionalizing district work-planning and reporting systems. The outsourcing of selected extension service and research programs to the private sector through a District Services and Innovation Fund was not introduced" (*ibid.*: 8).

Two challenges to the UES

The first challenge is to ensure that the practical priority of working with people to help them farm more productively and sustainably is not drowned in the flood of flipcharts that usually accompanies participatory community planning processes. Process must not be allowed to triumph over content. Community action plan priorities must not obscure the need to support individuals and households with their practical farming and food security problems.

The second challenge, in Lesotho as elsewhere, is to ensure that agricultural extension continues to happen at scale. As better policies, strategies and frameworks are developed, we may lose sight of the operational weaknesses in the field: dwindling staff, budget, transport and morale. How many government staff are actually left doing practical extension on the ground? Two responses to the well known answer are to strengthen NGOs' extension role and to promote community extension workers. LRAP has piloted both of these strategies and shown that they can work... much more needs to be done to ensure that they are a sustainable long-term reality across the country.

LRAP, 2006a: 8.

Two years after the APCBP closed, the national food security policy endorsed the UES as central to its strategy (GOL, 2005a: 34-36). Curiously, the National Action Plan for Food Security that was approved the following year (2006) made no reference to the UES in its proposed strategy for "provision of extension services that are responsive to the identified technology requirements of farmers by the farmers" (GOL, 2006a: 51). Despite this aberration, the UES is still the officially endorsed agricultural extension approach in Lesotho, and MAFS remains committed, at least in principle, to the preparation and implementation of CAPs. MAFS Medium Term Expenditure Framework plans for 2006-07 – 08-09 referred to "fast track operationalisation of an effective UES in all 10 districts by March 2009". In practice, however, the ALC has proved to be a one-off process of supposedly participatory planning: the all too familiar experience in which extension workers spend a few days in a village with flipcharts and a 'toolbox' of PRA techniques, leaving with a plan that is not subsequently implemented and never returning to report back on the (lack of) progress. With six years of hindsight since the closure of the APCBP, the UES looks like a project-driven process. 160 CAPs may indeed have been prepared with donor funding for extension workers' and planners' field allowances. Only a handful of the projects in those CAPs have been implemented. The ALC has proved not to be a cycle at all. In most cases, it is now seen as a single and increasingly distant event.

6.2. Management and motivation

The fate of the UES shows that the APCBP failed to achieve much sustained impact on the mindset, management or motivation of Lesotho's agricultural extension service. Although not very realistic, the principles of the UES are a significant improvement on the one-way technology transfer approaches that preceded it, and from that perspective MAFS is to be applauded for its continued commitment to it. But managing the 648 field staff so that they implement the ALC or any other structured extension programme efficiently and effectively remains a difficult challenge for the ministry. Indeed, the ability of MAFS to manage this or any other of its programmes and systems seems to be dwindling. As was argued in section 4.3, steady policy and programme direction seems impossible to achieve as management by crisis becomes more widespread across the Lesotho government. The senior management of the MAFS Department of Field Services, which is responsible for extension, are committed and hard working. But the working styles and culture with which they are surrounded at management and operational levels make it impossible for them to drive a strategy like the UES. Agricultural extension is a three part challenge of management, technical content and operational philosophy. MAFS is in a position to tackle the second and third parts of this challenge successfully, but the first part seems increasingly daunting.

Management weaknesses are linked to the seemingly poor motivation of most agricultural extension staff in the field. During the closing district and national debates on food security that PSP sponsored, there was much discussion about the reluctance of modern field staff to live and work in remote areas. If they cannot find a mobile phone signal, it was argued, they are unlikely to stay. Some even find inability to see their favourite evening television shows an intolerable hardship. These weaknesses should not be exaggerated. There are still some committed MAFS field staff working in remote and difficult conditions. But there is no doubt that the industry and productivity of the extension service are low, even in more accessible areas. Salaries are not high, of course. But in Lesotho's context of major unemployment, this is not the major issue. Basic training and the introduction of the UES have failed to produce or sustain an adequately motivated cadre of field workers. Management weaknesses mean that the system is unable to rectify these failings.

6.3. Community-based extension workers

The idea of using skilled and committed individuals as unpaid extension workers within their communities has been promoted in Lesotho ever since the Boy Scout-like efforts of the colonial Department of Agriculture to identify 'Progressive Farmers' who might in due course be promoted to the rank of 'Master Farmers' (Turner, 1976: 7). From 1996 to 2006, two DFID-funded CARE projects (TEAM and LRAP) promoted the concept of 'farmer extension facilitators' (FEFs) as modern equivalents of these community-based extension workers, and the approach was prominent in the design (if not the delivery) of the UES, endorsed by the food security policy.

The basic logic of promoting such community-based extension workers (CBEWs) is twofold. First, rural people may be better inclined to adopt innovations from their community peers than from outside extension workers. Secondly, those formal field staff of MAFS or other agencies can never be numerous enough to tackle the extension challenge adequately. Scaling up extension to the required coverage is only possible if much larger numbers of people are involved. These people have to be drawn from the target or beneficiary group itself.

PSP therefore continued the efforts of TEAM and LRAP to promote CBEWs. Despite the formal endorsement of the approach by the UES and the food security policy, this has meant a continuing campaign to convince and persuade MAFS to take it seriously and to ensure that District Extension Officers and Area Extension Officers take the necessary steps to identify, train and then support such community workers. The motivational and management challenges outlined above are very real in this context.

In the current circumstances of Lesotho's HIV/AIDS pandemic, PSP pushed the CBEW net wider as it urged MAFS (and NGOs) to work with motivated individuals within the rural community. Community Support

Groups, intended to help HIV positive people, AIDS sufferers and their families, have spread far and wide in recent years and are a valuable source of committed people prepared to work to enhance their and other people's food security (Ndabe, 2006). So are the Community Health Worker cadre that the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has been working to establish.

As it closes, PSP can claim some success in further institutionalising the CBEW concept. Major issues remain, however. How motivated can such individuals really be in the absence of a salary? Opinions differ. There are certainly some who feel adequately rewarded by the benefits they achieve in their own livelihoods and those of their neighbours, and by the prestige that may accrue from the CBEW role. But there is no doubt that the sustainability of the concept would be better assured if CBEWs could receive some sort of material compensation. There is no prospect of government taking them on its payroll. But PSP has urged that consideration should at least be given to a standardised and regular package of compensation in kind for these valuable extension workers: for example, the annual transfer of a package of training materials that might include garden equipment and seed. MAFS has listened to these ideas and has confirmed its commitment to continuing support to CBEWs. It remains to be seen whether the CBEW approach will prove more sustainable than the UES.

6.4. The role of NGOs

Many development agencies now view non-governmental organisations as a valuable complement to, or even substitute for, government agencies. DFID has been among several of Lesotho's development partners that have built this approach over the last decade. LRAP worked with five NGO service providers, including the Lesotho Council of NGOs itself. The PSP food security component has worked with six NGOs for replication and scaling up of LRAP homestead food security extension (see Figure 17 on page 49). The usual arguments for working with NGOs alongside or instead of government are that they are more flexible, more committed and more innovative. It is often hoped that they will prove to be better managed, better skilled and more focused on delivery of results within specified timeframes.

Not all these hopes are fulfilled, but the current consensus in Lesotho – built up in part by PSP experience – is that NGOs are indeed more strongly committed to fulfilling their work plans and that they are more willing to endure harsh conditions in remote mountain areas than their government counterparts. The capacity of the Lesotho NGO sector should not be exaggerated, however. As will be explained in section 10.2, their administrative management – planning, budgeting, monitoring, report writing and accounting – often leaves much to be desired, and may not be notably better than that of government. But they have proved, through their PSP work, that they can offer flexibility and commitment and that they can deliver results through extension programmes in the kinds of remote area where MAFS staff are increasingly reluctant to work.

Figure 12. Staff of NGO SMARTD prepare to move into the Seroto area after crossing the Senqu river

Although they often display non-commercial values and ethics in their work, NGOs are in many ways operating as private sector service providers when they contract with programmes like PSP to carry out specified activities and achieve defined results. There is therefore some compulsion for them to perform – a compulsion that is absent from government operations. But the NGO sector in Lesotho remains poorly

resourced and co-ordinated, and there is no prospect of them being able to deliver extension services on the scale that MAFS (supposedly) does.

NGOs should therefore be seen as a complement to government extension capacity, and not a replacement for it. Two key challenges then arise. The first is to develop sound working relations and effective co-ordination between government and NGO extension programmes. Building on LRAP's efforts, PSP worked hard with MAFS and its six participating NGOs to achieve these targets, and made substantial progress. MAFS does now recognise the important contribution that NGOs can make. The second challenge is to persuade MAFS (or GOL more generally) to use domestic funds to contract NGOs' services. This requires a fundamental change of mindset in government – a change that has yet to occur. While government contracts the private sector every day to provide a whole range of services – from the provision of stationery and fuel to the construction of roads and bridges – the idea of contracting them to do something like extension, which it has always assumed it could do itself, is hard to accept. Given that MAFS increasingly acknowledges the shortcomings of its own extension services, there should be some prospect that it will come around to the idea of budgeting some of its domestic funds for the procurement of NGO inputs in this sector. But that did not happen in PSP's time.

The Wellness Centre, Maluti Adventist Hospital

PSP's food security work with the Wellness Centre of the Maluti Adventist Hospital is an example of how opportunities for collaboration with NGOs may arise in unexpected places – and of how suitable NGOs remain hard to find in Lesotho.

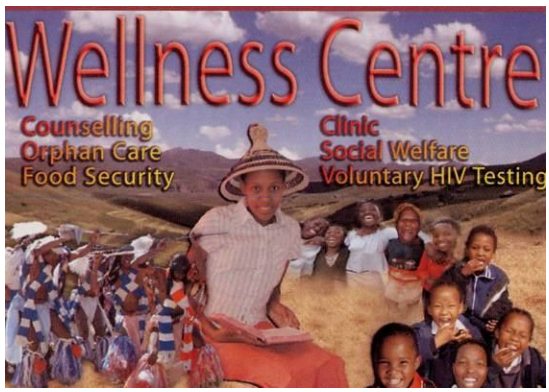


Figure 13. Wellness Centre publicity

The Seventh Day Adventist Church established the Maluti Hospital in Mapoteng, Berea district, in 1951. The hospital has developed a good reputation (especially for eye surgery) and is the second busiest in Lesotho, with 150 beds, 200 staff and a health service area population of about 100,000 spread through 264 villages in an area of about 300 km^2. It also operates a nursing school.

In 1991, five years after Lesotho's first such case was identified in Mokhotlong, the Maluti Hospital diagnosed its first HIV positive patient. By 2003, it estimated that there were 10,000 HIV positive people in its health service area. By the middle of the current decade, the hospital was reporting that two thirds of its hospitalised patients were HIV positive and that its annual death rate had risen from 140 to 683 over the previous ten years (Maluti Adventist Hospital, nd).

Back in 1991, the hospital established an HIV/AIDS department that gradually built up a wide-ranging programme of services to those infected and affected by the pandemic. It was soon known as a competent and caring source of moral and medical support for the health service area and many living further afield. People in Maseru and elsewhere sometimes prefer to come to Mapoteng, where their visit to such a centre is less likely to be noticed and where they are more confident of professional and sympathetic attention.

Confronted with the usual stigmas associated with HIV and AIDS, the hospital decided to rebrand the facility as a Wellness Centre. At the hospital itself, the Centre's medical staff offer counselling, testing and treatment services. Across the health service area, there are two related field programmes. One focuses on helping orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and their carers. The other works to enhance the food security of poor and vulnerable households. This food security programme has evolved from earlier efforts, funded by Bristol-Myers Squibb, to stimulate income generation at village level through farming and other activities such as candle making, in order to help communities to cover the health care costs of their sick members. By 2007, this outreach to the families and communities of Wellness Centre patients had trained 127 Community Health Workers (CHWs) in basic counselling and home-based care. Working especially to support OVCs, the Centre operated a Crop Sharing Programme. Field holders made land available, the Centre provided technical advice and the community provided labour. Crops were shared between the field holders and OVCs in the village, with some OVCs receiving financial support from the proceeds of

CONSERVATION FARMING

CASE STUDY: A beautiful example of intensive food production and rainwater harvesting

Mr S S Matlere has been working with conservation agriculture for many years.

He noticed a number of problems in the cropping fields in his work as an agricultural extension officer. These included soil erosion through run-off, declining soil fertility, a lack of water, and low production.

Through long and thoughtful observation he has now designed and implemented his own system of farming that solves these problems and has many other benefits as well.

Mr Matlere says: "Ask me about furrows"

His design consists of making furrows on the contour in the fields, with a mound all along the downslope side of each furrow. Organic matter is continually incorporated into the mounds. A range of crops are grown, including maize, wheat and vegetables such as beans, tomatoes, cabbages, potatoes, rape, mustard spinach and onions.

RIGHT: MR MATLERE IS STANDING IN ONE OF HIS FURROWS. ON THE MOUND IS A CROP OF MAIZE, ALREADY HARVESTED, WITH RUNNER BEANS CLIMBING UP THE STALKS.

LEFT: IN ANOTHER ROW OF THE FIELD, CABBAGES WERE PLANTED ON THE MOUND NEXT TO THE MAIZE. THESE CABBAGES ARE NOW BEING LEFT TO PRODUCE SEED FOR THE NEXT SEASON. NOTE THE ORGANIC MATTER THAT IS WEEDED OUT AND PLACED AS MULCH IN THE FURROW AND ON THE MOUNDS.

Figure 14. Extract from English version of *Lirapa* manual on Wellness Centre techniques

crop sales. This programme covered 33 villages, 720 participating households and 105 OVCs. There was a volunteer 'community assistant' in each of the 33 villages, backed up by 11 Field Supervisor Trainers, who received a modest allowance for transport and related costs, and two technical staff employed for the food security programme by the Wellness Centre. Sentebale, the charity established by Prince Seeiso of Lesotho and Prince Harry of the UK to support OVCs in Lesotho (in memory of their late mothers), helped to fund the programme.

As the first two District Resource Officers of PSP began their work in Berea and Mohale's Hoek in 2006, they were asked to identify local NGOs with capacity and commitment in this sector. The DRO for Mohale's Hoek found three such organisations. The DRO for Berea could only find one: the Wellness Centre. Impressed by the Centre's technical emphasis on small-scale, low external input, organic production techniques, she recommended that PSP consider it for a subgrant to undertake food security extension in association with MAFS.

The Wellness Centre's technical approaches resonated well with those promoted in the *Lirapa* manual (see page 25). Indeed, the second edition of the manual includes a chapter on conservation farming that focuses on the system of furrows and mounds developed by the Centre's chief technical officer (see Figure 14 above). However, the Crop Sharing Programme was effectively a form of communal production. As such, it was prone to the many disputes and logistical difficulties that have caused most such group ventures to fail in Lesotho – a country littered with abandoned communal gardens. PSP urged the Centre to adopt an extension approach that focused instead on individual households and their homestead gardens.

Following lengthy bureaucratic delays, PSP negotiated a subgrant with the Wellness Centre for the 12 months from September 2007. With a budget of M319,397, the Centre was expected to work with the existing 127 Community Health Workers, each of whom would work with ten households caring for AIDS and/or tuberculosis patients. The CHWs, backed up by the 33 Community Assistants and by 12 Field Supervisor Trainers, would provide basic organic homestead crop production training to these households and to a further 127 home-based care givers. This subgrant was one of the many ways in which PSP promoted the role of community-based extension workers (see section 6.3).

The Wellness Centre's work went well. With an additional budget of M222,582, it was extended for six months from September 2008 so that the extension programme could be continued for a second growing season. The intention during this period was to consolidate existing learning and to extend the coverage of the programme.

Although the opportunities to evaluate the PSP's food security achievements were limited (section 9.5), the impression gained from field supervision of the Wellness Centre's work was positive. At the end of the subgrant period, however, the usual question of sustainability remained, as usual, unanswered. While the hospital was committed to maintaining the food security work of the Centre, it was not clear how it would fund the salaries and field costs. Despite urgings by PSP, working links with the local MAFS Area Resource Centre had been limited, and there was no guarantee that the ministry would continue the Wellness Centre's work on the same scale.

The experience and conclusions of this subgrant were a microcosm of the whole PSP food security component. They showed that the technical ideas for enhanced food security are available; that there are salaried and community-based extension workers with the skill and commitment to disseminate these techniques; and that there are NGOs able to complement government capacity and programmes in this sector. But they were unable to conclude that government is fully ready and able to sustain these NGO programmes, or that there are other resources ready to fill the gap. At the time of writing, there is no assurance that the Centre's good recent work will be continued.

7. Social protection

7.1. Social protection and food security

At a conference organised by the DFID-funded Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP) in Maseru in 2007, Stephen Devereux defined social protection as "all initiatives that (1) provide income (cash) or consumption (food) transfers to poor people; (2) protect vulnerable people against livelihood risks; (3) enhance the social status and rights of socially excluded and marginalised people" [his emphasis]. He pointed out that social protection can be provided by indigenous social structures (as has traditionally

been the case in Lesotho, though they are weakening), as well as by government, NGOs and other elements of civil society such as the private sector. Social protection is more than safety nets, which give short-term consumption support to people facing livelihood shocks. It is less than the full social security systems developed by richer countries, which include elements like unemployment benefits and state support for maternity leave.

For many years, Lesotho has complemented its traditional social protection systems with modest government social welfare programmes. More recently, the national old age pension (introduced in 2004) has added a major new element to government social protection provision. There has also been intensive attention to the social protection implications of the HIV/AIDS pandemic: support to households affected by AIDS and, in particular, orphans, vulnerable children and their carers. Working with UNICEF and other partners, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has been engaged in the protracted launch of what is meant to be a major programme (funded by the European Commission) to build stronger social protection for OVCs, including pilot conditional cash transfers (CCTs) through Community Councils.

There are clear linkages between strategies to enhance food security for the poor and vulnerable and strategies to reinforce social protection. To be food secure, many people in Lesotho must benefit from effective social protection. The food security policy recognises the need to strengthen community level safety nets. The National Action Plan for Food Security goes further. In Programme 3 (Social Protection and Safety Nets), Sub-programme 3.2 focuses on transfer-based programmes (including cash and food transfers as well as voucher systems) and calls for research on alternative approaches to such transfers, leading to the possible modification of ongoing systems such as school feeding programmes and the launch of new social protection initiatives.

7.2. Building stronger social protection in Lesotho

Efforts to build stronger social protection in Lesotho must be founded on an understanding of the indigenous mechanisms for this purpose. They served the nation well for several generations. But, as noted above, many of them are weaker now, and some (like the *tsimo ea lira*, a field managed by the chief to produce a grain reserve for the needy) have disappeared altogether (Turner, 2005b). The policy question is whether there is realistic scope to rebuild some of these indigenous institutions, or at least to construct social protection systems with some of their cultural components. The complementary or alternative strategy is to introduce modern social protection mechanisms for operation by the state or by other agencies in civil society, such as churches, CBOs and NGOs.

Recent social protection initiatives in Lesotho present a mixed picture. Some, notably the universal state pension that was introduced in 2004, have been impressively direct and effective. Lesotho's old age pension system has been widely commended. Other initiatives, in particular the UNICEF-DSW programme mentioned above, have made little progress so far, amidst a host of administrative and operational uncertainties that include the key question of the delivery mechanism for cash transfers to orphans and vulnerable children. One initial idea was to use Community Councils for this purpose, but this appears not to have been taken forward.

PSP's experience in the social protection arena was confusing too. The programme's obvious primary concern was with food security, but for the reasons outlined above it seemed essential to assess and help reinforce the social protection systems needed to assure the food security of the poor and vulnerable. Despite the provisions of the NAPFS, MAFS appeared to equate social protection with social welfare. It argued that social protection was the responsibility of DSW and that it did not need explicit programmatic attention from the food security angle. (Nor did MAFS participate actively in the steering group for the UNICEF-DSW programme.) Contemplating possible future strategy for its Lesotho programme, DFID expressed interest in the sound argument that support to the kingdom should combine the promotion of growth and employment on the one hand and social protection on the other, for the significant proportion

of the population who have no prospect of profiting from growth in the formal sector in the short or medium term. However, DFID's conclusion was that its support to enhanced social protection should continue to be channelled through the RHVP (in addition to its funding for a technical adviser to the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee, and of course its funding of food aid through the World Food Programme). PSP therefore made no substantive input to social protection debate or initiatives, and MAFS remains on the sidelines. RHVP, which DFID has recently funded for a second phase, produced a series of high quality analytical and research studies on social protection in Lesotho and in southern Africa generally, but has had little direct impact on policy or programming in this country. Its former Lesotho programme officer, however, has recently been instrumental in the establishment of the Queen 'Masenate Trust for Social Protection. Building on some earlier RHVP work with the wives of principal chiefs, the trust aims to reinforce the indigenous cultural roots and mechanisms for social protection among the Basotho, and rebuild civil society's active commitment to caring for the weak and needy. It remains to be seen what success it will have, but the emphasis on social protection as both a traditional and a modern civic obligation is valuable.

7.3. Future strategies

Despite RHVP's best efforts (including the useful national conference on the subject mentioned above), Lesotho still lacks a clear and integrated overall strategy for social protection. It is debatable how much this matters, and external development agencies should certainly pause before concluding that the preparation of such a strategy would be a useful investment. But, at the macro level, the proposed new national development plan for Lesotho should certainly be written to provide such a strategy. The initial approach to the preparation of this plan was built around two main themes: growth and employment, and combating poverty. Social protection initiatives would be a key element of the latter. But the initial approach has reportedly been revised. It is not currently clear how social protection will be addressed, nor how useful a document any future national development plan will prove to be.

Whatever the overall strategy (if any) turns out to be, strong social initiatives are certainly needed.

- The provision of food aid will unfortunately remain a necessity for the foreseeable future. That is the nature of Lesotho's structural poverty, exacerbated by its remaining farmers' predilection for growing a crop that is not very well suited to their conditions (section 5.1). Well resourced, efficient and thoroughly co-ordinated operations by the major food aid agencies are therefore a continuing priority. The World Food Programme, the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and LVAC will still deserve external support through the relevant channels. Through its various food security information initiatives, PSP made some contributions to enhanced co-ordination of humanitarian aid in Lesotho, although DMA did not always respond to its efforts.

- PSP and its predecessors have shown that the poor and vulnerable do not have to be helpless in enhancing their food security. *Lirapa* type activities (section 5.2) are a valuable way to help such people to help themselves, falling into the second part of the definition of social protection quoted in section 7.1 above. Particularly when these techniques can be spread through rural society by community-based extension workers, they constitute a way for communities to act internally, using largely their own resources, to sustain the food security of their weaker members. As PSP experience has shown, they do not need major external resourcing, but modest inputs from Lesotho's development partners would help to assure the contribution they can make to social protection.

- As this chapter has emphasised, not all social protection measures and initiatives need outside support. There is plenty that society can do for itself, if it can find the motivation and leadership. Both those qualities must come from within. They cannot be supplied by any external organisation. Nevertheless, a number of initiatives that build on indigenous strengths and strategies would still benefit from external funding. These include a better co-ordinated programme to strengthen the

network of community support groups, and possibly measures to reinforce the roles of chiefs and Community Councils in caring for the poor and vulnerable. Any such support should of course be co-ordinated with the major existing programmes aimed at helping Lesotho tackle its HIV/AIDS pandemic. Despite their emphasis on counselling and support for those affected by HIV/AIDS, these programmes have not yet adequately developed the social protection dimension.

8. Decentralisation

8.1. Devolution and decentralisation in Lesotho

It is worth beginning this chapter by pointing out that decentralisation is sometimes a misnomer. Devolution is the reallocation of authority and responsibility from the centre to peripheral or subordinate governance structures. Decentralisation is the more administrative process of rearranging an organisation so that more management and related decisions are taken at the local level. Devolution usually has significant governance implications for society and the state. Decentralisation is more a matter of administrative efficiency. But this latter term is often applied to both types of change, as has become the case in Lesotho.

Devolution is nothing new in Lesotho, although at first the amount of power available for redistribution from the centre was strictly limited. The British colonial authorities established District Councils in 1945, and gradually built them up over the following 21 years, a period that included occasional political turbulence as the nation moved towards independence. However, Lesotho's first independent government closed down the District Councils through the Local Government Repeal Act of 1968 (van de Geer and Wallis, 1982: 17-19). It was not until the Local Government Act of 1997 that a different government took new steps to devolve some power and resources to local level. Those steps were hesitant and slow, however. The Local Government (Amendment) Act of 2004 replaced the originally proposed Rural Councils with District Councils and created the current architecture of 128 Community Councils (some of which are responsible for substantial towns like Mafeteng and Hlotse), ten District Councils and the Maseru City Council. Only in 2005 were the first local government elections held and only then did these new structures actually come into being (on an unimpressive voter turnout of 30.3%). A second round of elections is planned for April 2010.

The first and second schedules to the Local Government Act (as amended) set out the responsibilities of the new local authorities. These include land allocation and natural resource management, including range management. District Councils' responsibilities include agriculture and forestry, and there have been protracted and tortuous measures to transfer budgetary and administrative responsibility for the extension staff of MAFS to these bodies. These have been part of a broader and equally convoluted process of devolving some planning responsibility and development and recurrent funding to the District Councils.

It is worth recalling that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security was decentralised over a decade ago. The intention was a more administratively efficient arrangement giving District Agricultural Officers greater autonomy in budget management and staff supervision, although their Subject Matter Specialists remained technically answerable to their superiors in the relevant departments at headquarters. This decentralised structure remains in place, with each DAO constituting a separate cost centre in the Ministry's annual budgets.

8.2. Decentralisation and food security

To the extent that the promotion of food security depends on efficient agricultural extension, the plan to devolve administrative and budgetary responsibility for this service from MAFS to local authorities is clearly relevant, and the protracted confusion surrounding the process is a significant constraint. There are several broader considerations, however.

The first is that all efforts to promote food security should now take the existence and mandate of local authorities into account. Whether it be a food aid delivery programme, a project to enhance the performance of community support groups, efforts to strengthen the role of community-based extension workers or the implementation of an irrigation project, it is now necessary to keep the relevant Community and District Council(s) briefed. In many cases, it should be more than necessary; it should actually be useful to bring the local authority on board in any such programme and to seek its collaboration, especially in community mobilisation efforts. Whatever one's views on the rights or wrongs of the devolution process, the fact is that the local authorities are now in place, with specified legal mandates, and that any development intervention should therefore plan to involve them.

Secondly and more specifically, local authorities may now have a key role to play where the promotion of food security involves development interventions (as opposed to emergency response or recurrent social protection or extension programmes). Both Community and District Councils have development planning and management mandates, through which they are expected to consult with their constituents, identify priorities, draw up plans and identify budgets for priority development efforts. Those efforts could and should include the enhancement of food security. Those concerned with the promotion of food security – most notably MAFS – must therefore engage with the evolving systems and procedures for development planning by local authorities.

More specifically still, the emergence of these new decentralised planning approaches has created new challenges for the Unified Extension System (section 6.1). The UES produced (and in theory still produces) Community Action Plans. At Community Council level, the new decentralised planning system also produces Community Action Plans. There is obvious scope for duplication and confusion if these two systems run in parallel (although, in practice, the Action Learning Cycle that is meant to produce UES CAPs is hardly running at all). The two approaches need to be merged and integrated. Beyond reducing the confusion, such a merger ought to achieve a productive sharing of resources and effort by MOLGC and MAFS. The latter ministry's extension resources, despite their current shortcomings, could still be a significant strength for decentralised planning processes.

8.3. What has been achieved

Local government reform has made difficult progress since the Act was passed in 1997. The establishment of the new local authorities and the installation of a cadre of support staff have been significant achievements. But, as the next round of local government elections approaches, many of the councillors currently in office know that they have achieved little for their constituents, and that this is largely because MOLGC's efforts to provide them with the necessary skills, systems, resources and political mandate have been so confused and ineffective.

This is not the place to review the overall performance of the local government reform programme. But, for the reasons outlined above, the launch of decentralised planning systems is highly pertinent to the food security issues with which this report, and PSP, have been concerned. The disappointing progress in this regard has been a significant constraint for PSP, given the commitments made to decentralised planning in its design and budget (sections 9.1, 9.6). As in a number of other countries, GTZ made support to decentralisation a leading part of its development co-operation with Lesotho. In 2005-06 it worked with MOLGC in Qacha's Nek district to pilot a decentralised planning approach called 'Quick and SMART' ("easy to understand by everybody, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound" (GOL, 2006b: 4)). PSP then worked closely with GTZ and MOLGC in support for a revised 'Quick and SMART' process in Mohale's Hoek in 2006-07.

As is reported on page 43 and in section 9.6, the results of the Mohale's Hoek planning process were disappointing. The plans that were produced were in fact just abbreviated lists of project ideas, usually very vaguely specified. The intended inputs from technical experts in line ministries such as MAFS came late and reluctantly, where they came at all. The District Planning Unit that is instituted by the Local Government

Act, and that is meant to be central to support for Community Action Plans and preparation of a District Council Plan, proved largely ineffective. Like most other DPUs, it now exists only on paper. The review of the decentralised planning process recently commissioned by PSP noted that "the functions (planning mandates) of the different local administration levels were not defined in concrete terms... indicative planning figures... were not disseminated in advance... the process lacked sustained national level political commitment... ". It criticised the "non sustained functionality of the DPUs" and the "non functionality of the DDCC" (District Development Co-ordinating Committee) (Ssewankambo, 2009: 8-11).

Following the Mohale's Hoek exercise, PSP made more progress in promoting collaboration between the MAFS Department of Field Services (responsible for the UES) and the MOLGC Department of Planning. As the latter worked with GTZ to revise the 'Quick and SMART' approach further and rename it the 'Participatory Council Planning approach' (PCP), an interministerial working group built some of the UES community level planning methods into the PCP approach, so that the resultant guidebook includes material from an earlier UES manual (GOL, 2007). However, the leadership of MOLGC was putting a growing number of obstacles in the way of further elaboration of local government planning approaches. Community Councils were given clear instructions in 2008 that those development funds they did receive from the central treasury were to be used entirely for rural road construction. While road improvements are widely appreciated by the rural population, this top down instruction totally contradicted the spirit of local priority setting and devolved authority that is central to the Local Government Act. It was then announced that no further decentralised planning should be done, as government's performance in supporting the implementation of the existing plans in Qacha's Nek and Mohale's Hoek had been so weak. It is certainly true that the local authorities in those districts had been poorly served by central government, and that planning without implementation is a waste of resources and political credibility. But this edict frustrated those who were still seeking better ways forward.

In the event, quiet work continued to find ways to pilot the PCP approach, again with PSP support, in Berea district. Management and administrative problems in MOLGC, compounded by uncertainties about clearance for the process, meant that there were lengthy delays before the Berea exercise began in late 2008. At the time of writing, it is largely complete, but it is too early to say what the quality of the resultant plans will be, or whether they will lead to significant benefits for district residents in the food security or other sectors.

It is hard to contradict Ssewankambo's finding that central government is not seriously committed to the devolution that the Local Government Act instituted, or to the genuinely participatory planning that the new Community and District Council processes represent. Much well-meaning effort has been devoted to building these approaches over the last four years. So far they have yielded few material benefits for the people of Lesotho and little sign of the sustainable institutional progress that could in theory make a real contribution to the country's food security. Support to local government reform and building decentralised development planning and management should in theory be useful sectors for contribution by Lesotho's development partners. Indeed, both the European Commission and UNDP are funding large programmes alongside GTZ's inputs. (Neither MOLGC nor these three agencies have been very successful in co-ordinating these efforts.) But in current conditions it is hard to be sanguine about what such contributions can achieve.

Serumula in Mohale's Hoek district

The Swiss development agency Helvetas undertook a successful programme of support to rural water supplies in Lesotho from 1978 to 1996, when a strategic review recommended a shift of focus to natural resource management. Although it followed this recommendation, Helvetas began a gradual withdrawal from Lesotho a few years later. It completed its departure in 2005, having facilitated the establishment in 2002 of a local NGO, the Serumula Development Association, to continue some of its core programmes.

Serumula now works in Maseru, Mohale's Hoek and Botha-Bothe districts.

As reported on page 38, it was easier for PSP to find suitable NGOs with which to work in Mohale's Hoek district than it was in Berea. One subgrant was made to the Southern Mountain Association for Rural Transformation and Development (SMARTD) for work in the remote, mountainous eastern areas of the district. Another was made to the St Camillus Centre, which specialises in working with community support groups. The third subgrantee, Serumula, was well established in the Phamong and Ketane areas of Mohale's Hoek. Building on its Helvetas heritage, it was continuing a range of programmes to promote community-based natural resource management and enhanced, sustainable crop and livestock production. Much of this work was funded by the Kellogg Foundation.

PSP's subgrant to Serumula for September 2007 – August 2008 was budgeted at M406,675. It was extended to February 2009 with an additional budget of M264,970. With this subgrant, PSP took the organisation out of its comfort zone. Like the Wellness Centre (page 36), Serumula received funding to work within its existing theme of sustainable land use, focusing on the homestead food security techniques that PSP was promoting in its four districts of operation and with a more explicit emphasis on the identification, training and support of Farmer Extension Facilitators. Serumula did this work in two Community Council areas: Qobong and Phamong. It identified 20 FEFs from the membership of farmer organisations that it was already supporting, and used the first edition of the *Lirapa* manual to train them in these techniques. These FEFs in turn trained 280 people in their communities on topics like keyhole garden construction (Figure 15), seedling production, mulching, integrated pest management and the preparation and use of liquid manure.

> *SDA was born out of the end of Helvetas Swiss Cooperation for Development's operation in Lesotho in 2002. Nonetheless, the backbone of our organisational culture is our 25 years experience operating as Helvetas Lesotho. This is reflected, to name a few, in our mission, services, projects and beneficiaries of which some are a direct inheritance from Helvetas Lesotho. Through the legacy of Helvetas, Serumula's light continues to shine. 'Serumula' is a Sesotho name which means a firewood with a bright flame burning at its top. In the past Basotho used to share the firewood to light up fire in their huts; one firewood could be borrowed from hut to hut to give light to many huts in the village. We therefore derive our name from our belief that if you, as per our motto, 'Let Your Light Shine', the light can be radiated and rippled onto others. Embedded firmly in our belief system is the value of solidarity.*
>
> From the Serumula website.

> *Farmer Extension Facilitators reported great interest from farmers they trained particularly those who participated as volunteers. Success stories were reported for different farmers who were motivated to take production to a higher level. The farmers were given seed packs for demonstration purposes at the beginning of the project but some managed to continue on their own with the training they received and have produced beyond their households' needs. For instance, one farmer in Phamong managed to buy 3 goats out of the money he made from sales of vegetables, something he had not achieved before the intervention.*
>
> *The FEFs have found the assignment beneficial in deepening their knowledge base and building their confidence in extending the knowledge they acquire to other people. There was a remarkable enthusiasm and participation from remote areas that hardly get services from extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. However, one aspect that was a consensus was that people have relied on free handouts and have as a result lost a zest for self-help. This was true for participants who were selected by councillors, who unlike those who volunteered thought the software should be accompanied by some kind of support, failing to grasp the main objective of the project.*
>
> Serumula Development Association, 2009: 5-6.

In addition to this relatively straightforward homestead food security extension, PSP also commissioned Serumula to push the decentralised development planning process forward with six Community Councils in Mohale's Hoek district (Phamong, Qobong, Seroto, Mootsinyane, Nkau and Likhutloaneng). At the time the subgrant was made, the 'Quick and SMART' process in the district had proved to be less than quick. All Community Councils had developed 'Community Action Plans' and the technical staff of line ministries at district level were meant to be working on the costing of these projects so that they could be put forward for funding from domestic or donor budgets. In fact, neither MAFS nor other ministries had been proactive in providing this technical input, and the District Planning Unit was proving ineffective in co-ordination of the process. The purpose of this part of the PSP subgrant to Serumula was

to identify food security-related project proposals within the six Community Council Action Plans and to facilitate the further elaboration of those proposals with technical support from MAFS. Serumula was also required to work with the Community Councils and MAFS to identify means of getting the final proposals funded and implemented.

Part of PSP's intention in stimulating this work by Serumula was to promote a stronger role for NGOs in support services to decentralisation and, specifically, the decentralised development planning process (section 6.4). There is a major shortage of capacity for this kind of support in Lesotho, and PSP believed that there was an important opportunity for NGOs to fill some of the gap.

Figure 15. An FEF trained by Serumula demonstrates keyhole garden construction

This was a new kind of challenge for Serumula. Although it moved fairly promptly to hold initial briefings and discussions with the district authorities and the six councils, it took some time to engage with the technical challenge of identifying and elaborating the food security projects within their action plans. This was partly because of the organisation's dismay at what it found in the field. It was hard to meet the Community Councillors, who seemed often to be away at workshops and training sessions. When Serumula staff did track them down, they were vague about the 'Quick and SMART' process in which they had supposedly participated, and did not always remember what the action plans' contents were. Community Council secretaries, who are the key administrative and planning officers posted by the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship to each council, were also hard to find. It is not unusual for them to live in the district town rather than at their duty stations. Although they included bulky listings of facts and figures about each area, the action plans proved to be little more than lists of project ideas, often consisting of only a few words such as 'an irrigation project at locality x' or 'potato production project'. As was already known, food security initiatives were rarely a priority in Community Council Action Plans. Like all such participatory planning output in Lesotho, these plans tend to focus on infrastructure such as roads, bridges and clinics.

Serumula was ultimately able to identify a total of ten food security-related projects across the six action plans. Most concerned livestock facilities: woolsheds, crush pens and dip tanks. There were also proposals for irrigation projects and for fruit and vegetable production. The organisation pursued intermittent discussions with MAFS in Mohale's Hoek about the detailed planning and implementation of these projects, with uneven results. The IFAD-funded Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Programme (SANReMP), which operates in southern Lesotho, was able to fund some of the livestock facilities, but progress with others was hindered by the transfer to another district of the senior livestock officer, who then tragically died before handover to his successor was complete. Serumula did eventually succeed in focusing the minds of MAFS irrigation

Figure 16. Mootsinyane Community Council office, Lithipeng

officers on the planning of two irrigation projects at Ha Qacha and Ha Malephane in Phamong Community Council's area, leading to pre-feasibility reports for these projects and an apparent commitment by the ministry to do the further work needed to bring them to implementation.

This PSP-sponsored effort at furthering the progress of decentralised development planning is most generously described as a learning experience. In its final report to PSP, Serumula stated that

> *Almost four years since the establishment of community councils in the country, decentralisation does not seem to be drawing anywhere closer. There is still very little connection between the local governing structures and other government ministries and departments so that a question remains as to who does actually have powers to control and to account for community development. It is actually very common and not surprising to find better and harmonised relations between civil society organisations (NGOs) and the Community Councils than there are between the community councils and government departments, perhaps because the civil society organisations see the need for having good relations with all the structures and therefore force such relations to happen in order to facilitate development. The scenario raises a question of how annual budgets are drawn by the different departments and ministries if community needs are not taken on board, particularly considering that community needs were gathered and prioritised and have just remained raw documents.*
>
> *During the discussions with the community councils it became clear that the action plans were vaguely understood by members of councils. Firstly, some members could not even recall the contents of such documents, not even knowing what became of the documents. Secondly, they could not comprehend the fact that the contents of the documents would still need further refinement to eventually turn them into projects. Given the limitations highlighted, the question is would the community councils be in a position to source funds, implement and manage projects on their own?*
>
> Serumula Development Association, 2009: 9.

However, the organisation also felt that members of the six Community Councils benefited from the experience:

> *The project created awareness to the councillors of the importance of planning both in terms of time and resources management and efficient utilisation. Before the intervention, the councillors had an impression that the documents containing community needs were indeed plans. However, after discussing what plans are and the information that should be contained they came to realise that if the projects were indeed finalised it would have saved them time in terms of having to juggle around different government offices and departments to solicit services, which if the plans were costed, it would just be a question of implementation on their part. The community councils realised the importance of having the planning completed and projects formulated and resolved to take the matter to the district authorities for action.*
>
> Serumula Development Association, 2009: 8.

Serumula itself benefited from its involvement in this often frustrating exercise. Its interactions with MOLGC, MAFS and the local authorities put it in a better position to provide such services in future, and helped it to realise that this sort of work requires skill sets that agriculture and natural resource management experts do not always have. But the organisation could probably have achieved more in both parts of its task if the financial management of the subgrant had gone more smoothly. Like the other subgrantees, Serumula took time to grasp the procedures of funding advances and liquidations through which CARE disbursed and accounted for tranches of the subgrant. Like the other NGOs, it was frustrated by lengthy delays in CARE accounting and payments. It sometimes transferred money from other funding sources to keep its PSP work going. At other times, PSP work was suspended for lengthy periods because funds had not been received from CARE. Whatever the technical and institutional benefits of its involvement with PSP, Serumula would probably agree that the subgrant procedures adopted by the programme are not a good way to get the work done (section 10.2).

9. The food security component of the PSP

9.1. Introduction

In chapters 3 - 8, this report offered a brief review of the issues and options facing those who seek to promote food security in Lesotho. It now presents a summary of the experience on which much of that review is based: the food security component of the Priority Support Programme, which operated from 2006 to 2009. This chapter focuses on the substantive issues of strategy and content. Chapter 10 comments on some of the implementation issues that arise in the sector.

9.2. Approach

PSP explained in its inception report that the design of its food security component was influenced by the food security policy. It identified a number of possible entry points in the National Action Plan for Food Security, and anticipated that its progress would be measured partially in terms of priority activities from that plan being under implementation, on budget, through enhanced MTEF systems whose development in MAFS the programme would support. The inception report emphasised that PSP was about helping government to do its job better, not about redefining that job nor about doing the job on behalf of government. The programme's approach was summed up with reference to the purpose statement in the food security component logical framework:

> *The concept of partnership is at the heart of the PSP philosophy for the way in which the problem of food security in Lesotho should be tackled. This is reflected in the wording of the purpose statement in the FSC logical framework: "Government and its partners enabled and on track to reduce hunger and vulnerability".*
>
> *The key words in the statement are:*
>
> - *Government and Partners: GoL is the key "target" for PSP, and a large part of PSP is about "helping government do its job better". It is recognised, however, that PSP will not achieve its intended impact unless GoL partners (mainly NGOs and the private sector in this context) are also engaged.*
> - *Enabled: PSP is about enabling GoL and partners to operate more effectively in tackling food insecurity. This is very much reflected in the Outputs of the FSC (see next section). By increasing the capacity of various levels and functions of government, encouraging the outreach and engagement of NGOs with rural communities and empowering innovative individuals in agriculture, the PSP FSC will make a contribution to increased overall capacity to address vulnerability and food insecurity.*
> - *On track: The purpose of PSP is not simply to increase capacity to act, but also about the consequences of such action. This is reflected in the statement "on track". With a modest budget of M11 million, it would be unrealistic to expect the Programme to make a dent in the numbers of food insecure at a national level in three years. It is, however, realistic to expect there to be some results of PSP induced change by mid-2009.*
>
> PSP, 2006: 25.

Perhaps the most important of the several important statements above was that PSP could not expect to achieve a significant impact on the nation's food security status with its modest budget and implementation period. Instead, its achievements should be measured in terms of enhanced capacity and working methods, which should be in use and on track by the end of the programme.

As the above statement notes, one key element of the food security component's approach was to work with other partners as well as GOL. This was another aspect of the programme's heritage from LRAP, and linked directly to MAFS' request for expanded replication of the earlier project's field activities. Reconciling this request for field implementation with PSP's design as a more upstream intervention was a challenge. In many ways, however, it was an attractive challenge, because it was already apparent during the inception phase that working within the machinery of central government was going to be a slow and often frustrating process. Despite the obvious importance of the programme's institutional intentions, it was not attractive just to contemplate three years of work in committee rooms, supposedly leading to enhanced administrative procedures, better budget management and streamlined implementation of programmes. Given the gravity of rural poverty and food insecurity, the imperative to help more directly in tackling the challenges in the field was seen as legitimate. It was rationalised in terms of the purpose outlined above on the argument that this part of the food security component would demonstrate that enhanced extension approaches to improving homestead food security could work, and would be working sustainably by the end of the programme.

Background to the PRS Priority Support Programme

Extracts from an inception phase outline, 2006

This programme represents a transition period from disparate projects to Direct Budgetary support driven by the overall Public Sector Improvement Reform Programme. Government of Lesotho processes (MTEF and decentralisation) and structures (at national and district levels) are to be supported throughout the programme's duration as well as to develop links and to strengthen joint donor working within a government led framework.

- *The PSP will seek to build on current structures and processes among GoL environments, rather than establish special structures such as steering committees, task forces and working groups;*
- *The PSP will collaborate with other donor support to help make the MTEF and policy making processes more meaningful for the budget process as well as helping the GoL be more accountable to its own parliament and citizens in delivering the PRSP. Servicing the needs of the UN system in respect of the MDG review is not of comparable importance.*
- *The approach to developing a programme of support will establish connections with decentralization;*
- *The PSP will seek to help develop partnerships between GoL institutions and private sector associations and companies;*
- *The financial resources available to the PSP will be geared to trigger a more coherent approach across the priority areas to help coordinate and harmonise donor support (financial and strategic) as defined by GoL system requirements;*
- *Defining who needs what type of support and when will be guided by GoL needs and the PSP will work in a way that is responsive and attuned to these needs.*

Like LRAP, PSP worked with non-governmental partners by making sub-grants to selected NGOs for implementation of the homestead food security extension activities just discussed. The programme made sub-grants ranging from 11 to 19 months to a total of six NGOs (see Figure 17 below). Administrative and management aspects of this approach are discussed in section 10.2.

A second important dimension of working beyond government was PSP's emphasis on community-based extension workers, who were trained by the DROs, by the sub-grantee NGOs, and to some extent by GOL extension staff. In total, about 5,500 such people were trained. Some are what are variously known as lead or progressive farmers, or Farmer Extension Facilitators (FEFs). Many more are members of the now widespread Community Support Groups set up at village level to help households afflicted by HIV/AIDS. Community Health Workers were also trained at several sites. The programme's experience with this kind of extension approach is discussed in chapter 6 above.

Another important part of the approach was to acknowledge and support the emerging role of local government in development planning and management. Fundamental local government reform was instituted by the Local Government Act of 1997, but making the decentralisation arrangements set out in that law operational has proved to be a slow and complex process. The first local government elections were only held in April 2005. This did give added impetus to the design of decentralised development planning procedures, in which GTZ has played a key role. The 128 new Community Councils also have important land and natural resource management functions. The 2003 Land Bill that reflected these arrangements was shelved (section 2.2), although any new land law will presumably provide for local government to fulfil them too. During discussions with the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship (MOLGC) and GTZ in the inception phase, PSP concluded that support for enhanced promotion of food security in Lesotho would have to take local government reform and decentralised development management proposals into account – indeed, it should support them actively. The food security component therefore had two important characteristics with regard to local government. First, all those involved in its field programmes were urged to keep local authorities well informed on food security issues and activities, even though those authorities could play no direct implementation role. Secondly, PSP devoted substantial resources to support MOLGC implementation of new decentralised development planning procedures in two districts. This was done in order to explore how effectively such procedures could promote food security through local projects under the auspices of Community and District Councils.

For a programme that was about facilitating enhanced performance by government, PSP had in its food security component a surprisingly extensive set of direct field activities. As noted above, this was a conscious decision during inception – partly because of the MAFS request to replicate LRAP, and partly because it was felt that real needs could be met and significant results could be achieved by complementing upstream activities in Maseru with downstream implementation in the field. With its modest resources, the food security component certainly could not do this downstream work nationwide. Instead, certain districts were selected for the field activities (see Figure 17 below). They were chosen in close consultation with MAFS and MOLGC, taking into account the latter's plans for rolling out the decentralised planning procedures that had been piloted in Qacha's Nek district and were scheduled next to be undertaken in Mohale's Hoek. Other considerations were the desire not to focus on districts where other programmes were providing more direct support, and to ensure that a substantial part of the programme's field effort took place in the mountain districts where poverty is known to be worst. This meant confronting a long-standing challenge in Lesotho: reaching remote mountain areas with extension services. Understandably, the logistical difficulties of doing this have meant that the remotest areas have remained under-served by GOL and by externally funded projects. PSP ultimately decided to begin its food security field programmes in Berea and Mohale's Hoek districts. The former is predominantly lowland and foothill country with relatively easy access. The latter includes accessible lowland and foothill zones and extremely remote mountain areas. From PY 2, the programme extended

Figure 17. Districts on which PSP focused, showing where participating NGOs worked

its coverage to two mountain districts: Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka.

PSP was originally conceived as an integrated package of DFID support to several priority fields of GOL effort. During 2005-06, it fragmented. First, as outlined above, it became clearer that the HIV/AIDS and governance/justice elements would function as effectively separate projects, and that there would be no integrated M&E function. To most intents and purposes, the 'PSP' became the job creation and food security packages. Initially, efforts were made to operate functional linkages between these two elements, based on the clear reality that job creation and food security are closely interrelated in Lesotho. As has been pointed out, in the medium to long term job creation offers the best potential for enhancing food security in this country. During PY 1, one activity of the food security component was meant to be identification of small-scale initiatives in civil society to create jobs through food production and marketing. There was little progress. The project team also engaged with World Bank initiatives to stimulate larger-scale commercial farming links between Basotho land holders and South African food companies, but the emerging programme made such slow and uncertain progress that there was little scope for PSP to contribute meaningfully. Efforts were also made during inception and PY 1 to link GOL personnel from MAFS and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Co-operatives and Marketing (MTICM) through joint planning and management activities. These efforts were unfruitful. Staff from the two agencies seemed to see little point in these joint operations, and the two components of PSP lapsed into what could easily be seen as two separate projects.

9.3. Intervention logic

From the outset, the logic of the PSP food security component has comprised three sequential elements: policy, capacity and implementation. The basic argument has been that the effective promotion of food security in Lesotho requires first that appropriate public policies be in place. Secondly, guided by those policies, appropriate capacity and procedures are needed, primarily for food security extension but also for related functions that enhance it at local level – such as decentralised development planning and management. Thirdly, with the right policies and good capacity, field extension programmes and related interventions – by NGOs and rural people as well as government – can achieve optimum effect.

As will be explained in sections 9.4 and 9.5 below, the PSP food security logical framework went through several versions over the life of the programme. But this basic intervention logic remained unchanged. Given the approach explained above, the first element in the sequence was not expected to involve major policy work: rather, the refinement of existing policies and their reinforcement with additional analysis and better information. Initially, it was expected that a major part of this refinement would involve the strengthening of budget management procedures that would give policy clearer expression in expenditure.

The second element had two main functions: the development of appropriate extension capacity and the reinforcement of support for food security through the newly decentralised development planning systems. The first of these functions involved reinforcement of the MAFS Unified Extension System (UES) and integration of its community-based action planning approach with the similar approaches being developed by MOLGC. (With other donors, DFID had earlier supported development of the UES through the APCBP.) Technical training focused on homestead food security approaches, all of which fell under sub-programme 1.1 of the NAPFS ('conservation agriculture-based household food security'). Conceptually, this first function emphasised the concept of community-based extension workers. The second function involved PSP in proactive support for the decentralisation process, through regular engagement with the Department of Planning in MOLGC and funding support for its development of local authority planning approaches in Mohale's Hoek and Berea districts.

The third element of the food security intervention logic focused on application of the enhanced extension content and approaches in four of Lesotho's ten districts. The rationale for this has been outlined above. Referring to the relevant PY 1 output, the programme's inception report stated that

> *At a pilot scale, the former LRAP achieved this kind of enhanced extension delivery for a limited period. Through this output, PSP support will enhance, expand and mainstream these approaches across significant areas of the country. The programme will not pay directly for the extension network itself, except in cases where NGOs can make a significant contribution if they receive grants for the purpose. PSP's main contribution will be to facilitate and motivate the extension delivery undertaken with the resources of GOL and communities themselves. Achievement of this output will constitute practical achievement of the programme purpose that GOL and its partners should be on track to reduce hunger and vulnerability.*
>
> PSP, 2006: 27.

9.4. Key activities and milestones

As noted above, PSP was scheduled to run for three years after its six month inception period. Programme years were adjusted to match the financial years of the Lesotho and UK governments. PY 1 therefore ran for ten months to 31 March 2007. As noted in section 1.1, the food security component was slightly curtailed when DFID informed GOL of its proposal to close it 'on schedule' on 31 March 2009.

Programme design was originally set out in the inception report (PSP, 2006), which included logical frameworks for the job creation and food security components as well as specification of activities and budgets for each output. Subsequent Annual Performance Reports were combined with the annual work plans and budgets for the following years. With the approval of GOL and DFID, each of these milestones included revisions to the logical framework and to the specification of outputs and activities.

The main design changes took place at the end of PY 1. In January 2007, after seven months of implementation, the PSP team assisted in the completion of a 'Summary Review' for entry into DFID's management information system. This gave the food security component an overall score of 3 (1 is best and 5 worst), meaning that only partial achievement of the purpose was likely and that only some of the outputs were expected to be achieved (and that DFID would require a 'project improvement plan'). The principal concern was the upstream work on policy and budgeting with MAFS and MFDP. Both the programme team and DFID were disappointed with GOL's approach to completion and funding of the NAPFS, which included its presentation (without much involvement of the NFSTF) to a donor round table that showed very little interest in supporting it. The NFSTF languished, partly because MFDP did not fulfil its intended role as chair of the body. The MTEF and related Budget Framework Paper processes proved unproductive: the NAPFS and the Round Table proposals for funding it were not linked into them, and MFDP's approach to MTEFs remained quantitative rather than strategic, appearing to view them as accounting tools more than planning instruments.

In a rather exaggerated response to these concerns, DFID agreed with MAFS in early March 2007 that work on the then Output 1 (*improved policy, planning and performance management at central and local levels*) would be suspended, and there would be no detailed planning for further work of this nature, until DFID had reviewed the possibilities and agreed a way forward with GOL. In the Annual Performance Report (APR) a few weeks later, the PSP team wrote that "PSP has supported MAFS with the NAPFS, Task Force, Round Table and MTEF processes focusing on the Budget Framework Paper, but concludes that conditions are not favourable for a major commitment of PSP effort in these (wide ranging) areas…" (PSP, 2007: 11).

At national level, the first year of the PSP food security component was not an easy experience. Despite clear statements of approach in the programme memorandum and inception report, MAFS management developed the impression during the inception phase that PSP would fund the implementation of selected priority activities set out in the NAPFS. There was an unwarranted feeling of betrayal and bad faith when the PSP team again emphasised that this was not the case and that the programme focused on the provision of technical assistance. Although PSP was originally intended to achieve an innovative sharing of responsibility by GOL and programme personnel, MAFS soon reverted to its default mode of expecting the

programme to take daily management responsibility. The Ministry did not explicitly reject the concept of output managers (a senior official taking charge of each of the component's outputs – see section 10.1), but practical support for it was at best lukewarm. Whereas it had originally been thought that programme performance against the logical framework would be attributable at least as much to GOL as to the programme team, it soon became clear that this was unrealistic and that the team needed a logical framework against which its own work could be specifically and fairly measured (see box). Frustration of broader PSP expectations about an integrated development effort spanning several ministries was reflected in the case of food security by disappointments with the MTEF process and MFDP's lack of interest in driving food security initiatives across government – something MAFS itself was manifestly unable to do.

Adjustments to the workplan... arise from an attempt to word objectively verifiable indicators and assumptions more accurately and realistically in the logical framework and to link Outputs to Purpose more meaningfully through a restatement of Purpose level OVIs so that they more accurately reflect the programme's emphasis on work and results at field level.

The assessment that led to the Summary Review of the programme in January 2007, and feedback from MAFS at various stages during PY 1, have also led the programme to restate its food security activities and commitments strictly in terms of what PSP itself should be able to achieve. PSP remains a programme of the Government of Lesotho, but for monitoring and evaluation purposes the revised programme design refers more narrowly to those results that PSP should itself generate, rather than those complementary results for which GOL will be responsible beyond the direct control of the programme.

PSP, 2007: 19.

Meanwhile, relations with the then Minister of Agriculture and Food Security were deteriorating. Seeing no significant transfer of capital resources from PSP to MAFS activities and bemused by the innovative management and advisory approaches inherent in the programme, the Minister emphasised in February 2007 that he wanted to see practical delivery in the field. PSP could quickly respond that the bulk of the programme's effort was devoted to exactly that, largely through the replication of LRAP approaches that the Minister had himself requested from DFID. Nevertheless, the Minister's hostility continued, culminating in his announcement later that month that he would take steps to end the programme's collaboration with MAFS. Three days later, he left Cabinet after losing his seat in the general election, and DFID and PSP were assured by GOL that these intentions would not be carried forward. Under the Minister who then took office and the Principal Secretary who has been in post since April 2007, relations between MAFS and the programme have steadily improved, although there has been no reversion to the roles and responsibilities that were originally envisaged.

After the ten months of PY 1, PSP has a keener appreciation of the risks and benefits of working with the range of partners potentially available for the effort to promote food security, and of the necessity of spreading effort and risk across these partners - in central and local government, NGOs and rural communities...

There are real limitations to what can be achieved with central government partners unless effort and resources are sacrificed at field level – which would be contrary to the spirit and the central purpose of the food security component of the PSP...

PSP is starting to explore ways to promote food security through decentralised development planning with management systems that offer more discretion to community and district councils. It also, by way of attempting to integrate food security into these systems, offers better chances of sustainability beyond PSP's time frame as well as replication across the country. These approaches seek to integrate the capacities of agricultural extension with multiple service providers from NGOs, the private sector as well as Government.

PSP. 2007: 12-13.

These early experiences strengthened two aspects of the PSP approach. The first was to spread risk. It was evidently unsafe to put all the programme's eggs in the MAFS basket and – despite PSP's largely upstream intentions – to put too much emphasis on work at national and policy levels. Instead, the emphasis in the food security component's design on working with NGOs, communities and local government authorities as well as with GOL was shown to be appropriate (see box). The second aspect, linked to the first, was to devote much of the

programme's approaches to direct field implementation, with the rationale (as explained above) that this would strengthen the capacity and experience of government and its partners in promoting successful food security technologies through effective institutional arrangements and extension methods.

The first APR also concluded that the originally designed five outputs constituted an unnecessarily complex structure for the food security component. Work to enhance food security information systems could logically be included in the first, most upstream output, which was renamed *improved policy, planning, information and co-ordination*. The results of the original fifth output on linking job creation and food security had been disappointing: a scoping study that the programme commissioned found few promising opportunities. It was agreed to fold any such work into the third, field-focused output: *functioning and replicable field support to food security*.

The DFID summary review to which the PSP team contributed in January 2007 was only finalised in June 2007. By that time, DFID had concluded that it needed to separate the overall PSP into two discrete programmes: one addressing HIV/AIDS and the other covering job creation and food security. It requested the PSP team to produce an integrated logical framework for the latter two components. This was done in June. The revised three food security outputs became outputs 4, 5 and 6 of this combined logical framework.

The decision to suspend the then Output 1 cost the programme almost a year's work, although this did not affect the intentionally larger part of its effort at district and community levels. Measures to reappraise and define this output and its activities dragged through much of 2007. The intention was that this task would be included in DFID's 'annual review' of PSP. This first 'annual review' eventually took place on 10-12 September 2007. DFID did not produce an aide memoire on it until 31 October and GOL did not respond to the aide memoire until 29 January 2008, whereupon it was possible to consider the suspension formally lifted. The conclusion was that the upstream work should be more limited, basically comprising efforts to improve food security information systems and to service policy with a number of focused analytical studies responding to identified programmatic needs. The aide memoire also criticised the poor co-ordination of food security by GOL and the need to give the sector better leadership. DFID committed itself to discuss the needed enhancements with MFDP, but the limited consultations that have since occurred have been inconclusive.

> *With little implementation of Output 4, few lessons could be learned directly. Observation of policy, planning, information and co-ordination in the food security sector confirmed that MAFS, as a line Ministry, finds it difficult to drive co-ordinated action by the various agencies with roles in this sector, due partly to the lack of leadership from MFDP in this regard. Many of PSP's original design assumptions about policy and programme co-ordination across government have proved to be optimistic. DFID's intention to stimulate action by MFDP, as stated in the* [Annual Review]*, has not yet yielded results. Clear imperatives to action from high levels in government mainly concern reaction to food shortages and the promotion of increased production through block farming which offers a limited interpretation of and operational response to the food security policy.*
>
> PSP, 2008: 11.

One recommendation of the 'annual review' was that PSP set up a steering group for the food security component. An Advisory Group, chaired by the MAFS Director of Field Services and comprising other key MAFS officials along with representatives of MOLGC and the participating NGOs, held its first meeting on 16 November 2007 and went on to meet quarterly, rotating around the participating districts.

PSP's second APR, produced in March 2008, included various further minor revisions to the logical framework. These comprised both negative and positive realism about what the programme was achieving and could expect to achieve in its final year. As the problems of rolling out the decentralised planning process through MOLGC became clearer, the programme's ambitions in that regard were restricted to Berea and Mohale's Hoek districts only. Ambitions in terms of strengthened food security programming and information (Output 4, as revised following its long suspension) were limited to the production of

policy studies and initial steps to enhance the food security information system by an inter-agency group. As the pace and success of the programme's field delivery accelerated, however, targets in those areas were raised. The March 2008 logical framework, against which performance was finally assessed at the end of PY 3 (see section 9.5) is reproduced at Annex 1.

By the start of PY 3 in April 2008, PSP had settled into a relatively stable *modus operandi* and a clearer working relationship with MAFS and MOLGC. The consolidated arrangements were set out in a two page outline produced in November 2007 in response to a recommendation of DFID's 'annual review' (see Annex 3). As noted above, work at policy level was largely restricted to a small number of analytical studies, notably of the economics of grain crop production, a review of and recommended guidelines for the MAFS block farming programme, and later a review of decentralised development planning experience. Following a useful scoping study of food security information systems, various initiatives were carried forward, including the production of popular versions and summaries of selected key documents and data. The enhancement of approaches, systems and capacity continued with further support to the tortuous progress of decentralised development planning, moving from Mohale's Hoek to Berea district on the basis of an integration of MAFS and MOLGC extension and planning systems that PSP facilitated. Meanwhile the programme's District Resource Officers continued to train GOL and NGO extension workers in the four focus districts. DROs and extension staff undertook a series of training events for community-based extension workers, who in turn were largely responsible for the training of other rural households in homestead gardening and related techniques.

9.5. Monitoring and evaluation of the PSP

To meet DFID requirements, the PSP team prepared Annual Performance Reports (APRs) for June 2006 – March 2007 and April 2007 – March 2008. (The reporting periods were adjusted to match the UK and Lesotho financial years.) These review processes were integrated with preparation of annual work plans and budgets. In accordance with current DFID practice, the annual planning allowed for adjustment of the logical framework. One key change in this regard, at the end of programme year (PY) 1, involved the integration of the initially separated job creation and food security log frames into one, and the reduction of the number of food security outputs from five to three (see section 9.4).

As they began work in their respective districts, the four District Resource Officers (DROs – see section 9.1) produced reports on the status and capacity of GOL and NGO extension services. These fed into a status survey report produced by two consultants and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) M&E Officer in August 2007 (Ghartey *et al.*, 2007). The assignment was meant to produce a methodology that could be used in the final evaluation of the food security component's performance that was expected in the first quarter of 2009, and to produce status assessments of the four PSP districts in terms of that methodology. Those tabulated assessments (Ghartey *et al.*, 2007: Appendix 3) were basically an expanded version of the objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) defined by the log frame that was then in force. In the absence of a full final evaluation, preparation of the Project Completion Report (see below) has largely referred to the aggregate OVIs of the current log frame.

To meet GOL requirements for donor funded programmes, PSP has submitted quarterly progress reports. These are aggregated into six monthly progress reports to GOL and DFID that in turn feed into the Annual Performance Reports that were also presented to the Advisory Group for the food security component.

For formal programme and budget management purposes, DFID undertook a 'summary review' of PSP that was started in January 2007 but only completed in June. It did a slightly fuller 'annual review' of the programme, involving brief visits from the DFID Southern Africa office in Pretoria, in September of that year. A further 'summary review' took place in August 2008.

DFID did not undertake any external final evaluation of the food security component of PSP. It requested the programme's Food Security Component Adviser to draft a Project Completion Report in the standard format for finalisation by DFID and entry into DFID's management information system.

To help provide an adequate assessment of the food security component's performance in the field, PSP commissioned a beneficiary assessment. Fieldwork for this was done in December 2008, and the report was finalised in February 2009 (Kenward, 2009).

9.6. Results

Programme results can be measured and assessed as outputs, outcomes and impact. At this early stage as PSP comes to a close, it is most appropriate just to outline the outputs that were achieved, with some preliminary commentary on their implications. As DFID has not commissioned any independent evaluation of the food security component (section 9.5), this discussion is based on the author's interpretation of programme data and experience, with some reference to the independent beneficiary assessment that PSP commissioned on its own initiative (Kenward, 2009). A more detailed table of results, drawn from DFID's Project Completion Report, is shown at Annex 2.

It was originally envisaged that PSP would be a largely upstream activity, achieving its principal results in the fields of government policy and the management of PRS implementation and related budget resources. For the reasons that have been outlined, these results were not achieved. Much more modestly, the food security component generated a number of valuable analytical and scoping studies (Orr, 2008, Cole, 2008a, b; Isaacson, 2008; Ssewankambo, 2009). Thanks to motivation by PSP, the renamed Food Security Information Steering Group is the one element of the National Food Security Task Force that has continued to meet. The food security policy and the National Action Plan for Food Security are still key guiding documents for MAFS, although they have little practical influence over budgetary allocations or the programming of the ministry's activities. Nevertheless, PSP has helped give them new prominence through the series of summary versions and pamphlets that it has disseminated throughout the country, and through the series of district and national publicity events on food security that it facilitated in early 2009.

Figure 18. MAFS DRO Mokhotlong presents at national food security event, March 2009

As a result of funding and protracted facilitation by PSP (in close consultation with GTZ), some progress has been made with the integration of agricultural extension and decentralised development planning approaches. The latest version of the evolving decentralised planning methodology, known as Participatory Council Planning (PCP), has mainstreamed some community-level consultation and planning techniques from the MAFS Unified Extension System. PSP helped to fund decentralised planning with the earlier 'Quick and SMART' approach in Mohale's Hoek district. It then commissioned the NGO Serumula to work with MAFS and six of that district's Community Councils to develop food security project outlines within their Community Action Plans into fully designed and costed proposals that could be put to government or donors for funding. Most recently, PSP has helped MOLGC to fund implementation of the PCP approach in Berea district – first with a pilot in the Phuthiatsana Community Council area, and then across the rest of the district.

The results of all this effort have been disappointing. Procedures have been tested and upgraded, and MAFS and MOLGC have a better understanding of each other's extension and planning approaches. But the atmosphere of constant confusion and crisis in MOLGC has precluded significant progress with the replication of meaningful decentralised development planning and management systems across the country. Serumula found the quality of the Community Action Plans developed in Mohale's Hoek to be poor, and struggled to get the co-operation necessary from MAFS and MOLGC to bring them up to a standard on which implementation could be based.

PSP achieved and exceeded the results specified by its logical framework in terms of training MAFS and NGO extension workers in homestead food security approaches. A total of 452 MAFS staff and 220 NGO workers received this training, mostly in the form of short workshops lasting from one to five days. In an intensive effort with the MAFS Department of Crops, the programme produced a second, expanded edition of the popular *Lirapa* manual on homestead food security techniques that was first produced by LRAP. This has already been widely distributed. While the training provided to extension staff has consolidated their understanding of these techniques and their appreciation of effective extension approaches – notably the use of community-based extension workers – there is no guarantee that the approaches will be sustained. For MAFS this requires a quality of management and a degree of commitment that are rarely apparent and that neither PSP nor any other programme could achieve on its behalf. PSP's District Resource Officers did succeed in working with the ministry at district level to ensure that homestead food security work is included in annual work plans and budgets, but again this does not guarantee the quantity or quality of extension work that will be done. While NGOs are on average somewhat better managed and more committed, their sustainability remains dependent on external funding. PSP has urged MAFS to provide some of this funding – without success.

Figure 19. Display at Botha-Bothe district food security event, February 2009

PSP's results at community level have been impressive. Logical framework targets were far exceeded, with available data (based on somewhat imperfect reporting by DROs and NGOs) suggesting that 6,922 community-based extension workers and a further 11,542 community members received training on homestead food security techniques. There is no doubt that these techniques are widely appreciated; indeed, the best known of them, the keyhole garden, has proved to be that most elusive of development interventions – an idea that spreads spontaneously without further external encouragement (section 5.2). The PSP beneficiary assessment found that 49% of direct beneficiaries had been contacted by neighbours, friends or family about the techniques they had been taught, and that an average of five people then went on to copy them. Thirty-two per cent of direct beneficiaries had advised other members of their communities about these techniques, with an average of eight people then copying them (Kenward, 2009: 6). While there is uncertainty as to whether MAFS extension services will show much diligence about continuing to pursue the approaches and techniques that PSP has promoted, there is no doubt that rural people will go on using and benefiting from these basic production, conservation and nutrition practices.

PSP closes in a mood of some optimism about homestead food security approaches within MAFS. This optimism, which is in direct contrast to ongoing crises and gloom with regard to the ministry's commercial block farming programmes, has been stimulated by PSP's active stimulation of communication and linkages between the ministry's ten district offices and the NGOs and farmers with which they work. The inter-district visits sponsored by the programme were much appreciated by participants, who showed active interest and, in the case of Botha-Bothe, immediately requested training from the PSP DRO they had visited in Thaba-Tseka. District Agricultural Officers and their staff were enthusiastic about the food security events that the programme arranged around the country, attending each other's events and developing a spirit of some competition between their respective district gatherings.

Much as predicted by some observers at the outset of the programme, the results of the PSP food security component have proved to be more convincing at the community level than at the national policy level on which the programme was originally expected to concentrate. It is at least encouraging to conclude that, however tortuous or unconvincing the machinations of central government may be, the ultimate beneficiaries of PSP's food security efforts have responded directly and enthusiastically in ways that are likely to be sustainable.

10. Implementation issues

10.1. Working with government

External donors and lenders have been working with the Government of Lesotho for over 40 years now. Procedures, protocols and related mindsets are well established – probably too well established. Government planners tend to assume too readily that capital funding for innovative or additional activities should come from external sources. They have not yet engaged fully with the new opportunities and challenges of the modernised budget management systems that the World Bank, DFID and other agencies have been urging them to adopt as a possible foundation for future general budget support. The system of budget framework papers and medium term expenditure frameworks ought to provide new scope for a more integrated approach to the use of domestic and external capital resources. While the GOL budget will come under increasing pressure in the short to medium term, its capital resources are not negligible, and ministries should be more ready to apply them to activities for which they have traditionally seen donors as the only source of funding. The failure to engage creatively with these new systems and opportunities is due partly to the failure of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to drive their substantive dimensions as well as their financial ones. MFDP should be requiring ministries to use their budget framework papers for thorough analysis of the issues and strategic options in their respective sectors, and not just as unimaginative tabulations of existing programmes and their costs.

The failure to move capital budget management forward is also due to the reluctance or inability of ministries like MAFS to undertake meaningful review of their policies and strategies during the MTEF process, or even sometimes to make the required elementary linkages between their overarching programmes – like the National Action Plan for Food Security – and the content of their budget framework papers. This lack of scrutiny in the budget process is a major weakness and links to an apparent reluctance to play a substantive role in the management of donor-funded programmes. As reported in section 9.4, PSP's efforts to give MAFS managers a leading role in its management were unsuccessful. (They suffered the same fate with the job creation component in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Co-operatives and Marketing.) Old habits die hard. Government's instinctive expectation still seems to be that a donor funded project will provide it with new resources (notably buildings, vehicles and other equipment) but will operate its own project management structure that will require only occasional input from civil servants.

While PSP's Output Manager experiment was unsuccessful, therefore, its later establishment of an Advisory Group for the food security component went much more smoothly. Constructively chaired by the MAFS

Director of Field Services, this group met quarterly and generated thoughtful, useful debate about food security strategies and their implementation, by PSP and more broadly. The group was innovative in its inclusion of representatives of participating NGOs as well as senior MAFS staff. It served as one of PSP's several strategies to bring the governmental and non-governmental sectors closer together in the promotion of food security.

10.2. Working with NGOs

As reported in section 9.1, PSP built on the approach of its predecessor LRAP and worked with six NGOs, to which it made subgrants from its programme budget. In terms of programme implementation, this approach had substantial advantages. In terms of programme administration, it proved a major challenge. Whatever their technical skills or social commitment, NGOs often have administrative weaknesses, although there are obviously differences between international, national and small local NGOs in this regard. (PSP's six subgrantees comprised one international, one national and four local NGOs, with the four local ones ranging from a small church-based organisation to larger district-wide structures with substantial experience of collaborating with international partners.)

Whatever the details of a project's structure and administration, subgrants are bound to multiply the paperwork, particularly because of the additional series of payments and accounts that have to be scrutinised. This administrative load is compounded by the weaknesses that many NGO partners can be expected to have in the management of such contracts and accounts, often arising from financial experience and/or incompetence and weak administrative and accounting systems. A further complication is the need to comply with the funding agency's regulations with regard to subgrant contracts.

In PSP's case, these issues were compounded by the emerging administrative difficulties of its own consortium partner, CARE Lesotho-South Africa. DFID contracted PSP implementation to a consortium of three organisations: one commercial consulting firm (Harewelle International, the lead consultants), one British parastatal that operates along increasingly commercial lines (the British Council) and one international NGO (CARE), which took lead responsibility for the food security component following its successful administration and operation of LRAP, which had also involved subgrants to local NGOs. Subgrant administration and accounting between the participating NGOs, the PSP programme office, CARE and DFID proved to be slow, cumbersome and confused. While NGOs did not immediately understand the required procedures and often made reporting and accounting mistakes that took time to rectify, staff shortages and delays in CARE were a major reason why the subgrant approach proved so administratively frustrating for PSP, whatever its operational rewards. Some subgrantees stopped work from time to time because of the consequent cash flow problems. New CARE management towards the end of the PSP period was quickly aware of these issues and acted to tackle them, but that came too late to enhance this programme's performance.

The clear lesson is that working with NGOs as well as government is certainly rewarding in terms of the quality and quantity of results in the field; but the administrative burdens should not be underestimated. In many circumstances it would be advisable to contract subgrant administration to a commercial accounting firm rather than pretend that an NGO's administration can handle it – however large that NGO may be.

10.3. Working with donors

After Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan moved Lesotho into more active opposition to South Africa's apartheid regime, the kingdom attracted the support of a large number of international development agencies. Only some of the embassies and donor country offices that operated in Maseru in the 1980s survive today. The United Nations system, Irish Aid and the European Commission are well represented. The World Bank has a small office; GTZ a larger one. The United Kingdom has closed its High Commission and reduced its DFID office to one person, with all substantive Lesotho programme management now done from Pretoria. Having closed its large USAID office many years ago, the United States has recently reappeared with by far the largest donor programme in Lesotho: the Millennium Challenge Corporation

(MCC). The MCC's country office is complemented by a larger, Mosotho-headed Millennium Challenge Account organisation.

The degree of in-country presence that a donor agency maintains obviously affects the nature of its collaboration with the host government and with the projects that it is funding. The multilateral agencies (notably IFAD in the food security sector) have long depended on periodic supervision missions fielded from headquarters. Agencies like Irish Aid, GTZ and the MCC that retain offices in Maseru can engage in much more detailed and meaningful interaction with their projects and with their counterparts in GOL.

When donors start to manage their programmes from outside the country, as DFID has done, predictable problems arise. Lesotho may start to seem a less significant part of the portfolio. It is certainly smaller and in many ways less important than South Africa, where the offices managing Lesotho programmes are often based. Whatever donors' supposed commitment to maintaining support to Lesotho, the country and the projects there may in practice be crowded out of their diaries. The quality of programme management can easily decline, and donors' country strategy may be less well informed. A further risk, which PSP experienced with DFID, is that the donor has so few resources to devote to its representation in the country that it asks project teams to start attending meetings on its behalf. This dangerously blurs the boundary between donors' bilateral relations with the host government and project teams' status as contracted implementing agents.

Another frequent casualty of donors' remote management of their programmes is monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring visits become rarer, shorter and more perfunctory. Much the same may happen to evaluation studies. In the case of the PSP, for example, DFID did no final evaluation of the food security component, and the 2009 final review of the job creation component lasted three days (section 9.5). The beneficiary assessment of the food security component, and these closing reflections, have both been produced on the initiative of the PSP team themselves.

Much effort and countless words have been expended since 2005 on donor harmonisation. One result in Lesotho was the consensus that various agencies would serve as lead donors for certain key sectors identified in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Largely for historical reasons, DFID was agreed as the lead development partner for job creation and food security. Other agencies played similar roles for sectors such as health, education and infrastructure. Again, it is harder for donors to play such lead roles from offices located outside Lesotho. It is not clear whether DFID is expected or intends to continue this function with regard to food security, or what the views of GOL and the other development partners are in this regard.

11. Strategies for the future

11.1. Introduction

Despite its difficult early experience, the PSP food security component had achieved a good reputation within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security by the time it closed last month, and not surprisingly there were enquiries about whether DFID would be prepared to extend it. Although the details of DFID's country strategy for Lesotho are not known, it was made clear in 2008 that no such additional support would be provided. Others must carry PSP's strategies and achievements forward.

These were not actually PSP's strategies and achievements, however. PSP emphasised throughout its operation that it was a technical assistance programme intended to provide strategic advisory inputs and minor funding support at defined points in GOL's existing strategies and operations – not to introduce radically new strategies or provide large-scale capital funding that would lead to challenges of sustainability. Again during its closing presentations in the ten districts and in the capital, the food security component emphasised that Lesotho has policies and strategies in place. Despite its budgetary constraints,

it does have resources to devote to promoting food security and to other development priorities. Despite its staff shortages and management weaknesses, it does have skilled and committed people in the civil service who are quite capable of continuing the approaches that PSP helped to develop. The comments below are therefore mainly about what government can do with its own resources. Some of the activities mentioned would benefit from external support, if other development agencies are able to provide it. Chapters 3 - 8 offered a broader review of the sector in a way that should help such agencies see the opportunities and constraints with regard to donor support.

11.2. Institutional strategies

At the macro level, the clear challenge and obligation for MAFS is policy monitoring and programme management. Government adopted a national food security policy in 2005, and the ministry launched a National Action Plan for Food Security the following year. Not enough is being done to track the implementation of the policy and plan, or to develop the areas of both that were insufficiently thought through at the outset. Part of this failure is due to the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning's apparent lack of interest in achieving the interministerial co-ordination that the food security sector needs. But this is no reason for MAFS not to do all it can to assess the status of food security policy implementation and to revisit the NAPFS. This is an obvious and major agenda for the ministry's Department of Planning and Policy Analysis.

Linked to the necessity of stronger policy and programme management for the food security sector is the obligation to continue enhancing Lesotho's food security information systems. PSP and LVAC made good progress with this, although some opportunities were missed due to slow reaction by the Disaster Management Authority to some of the programme's proposals – notably revitalisation of the National Early Warning Unit through renewed links with the regional Famine Early Warning Systems Network. MAFS should continue to work with DMA and LVAC to monitor and expand the recommendations of the PSP-sponsored scoping study on food security information systems. It should continue the proactive hosting of the Food Security Information Steering Group (the one remnant of the National Food Security Task Force that continues to operate) and encourage the FSISG to continue the better integration of the various agencies and activities in this field.

The food security policy recognises the contributions that NGOs can make to the sector (GOL, 2005a: 67), and PSP and earlier programmes have amply demonstrated it in practice (section 6.4). Over the closing year of the PSP food security component, MAFS management have repeatedly endorsed the role of NGOs, and this was re-emphasised at the closing national event on food security that the programme sponsored on 26 March 2009. For their part, PSP staff repeatedly urged the ministry to budget to contract NGOs for extension or other services. There are two priorities for the future. The first is for GOL and its development partners to sustain and strengthen the contributions of NGOs in the food security sector. The second is for MAFS finally to commit some of its own resources to this purpose. The next opportunity for this will arise in a few months as preparation of the 2010-11 budget begins.

The Unified Extension System emphasises the importance of community-based extension workers, and again PSP has continued its predecessor programmes' work in building this key area of national food security strategy. Section 6.3 of this report showed what needs to be done next. It is largely a management challenge. The Director of Field Services should give priority to the monitoring, support and expansion of the CBEW network across the country, and ensure that District Agricultural Officers do the same in their respective areas. MAFS should collaborate with NGOs for this purpose, and with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in order to maintain and build on the collaboration with community support groups and Community Health Workers that PSP promoted. Once again, the next part of the challenge should be tackled during preparation of next year's budget. MAFS should allocate resources to basic support packages for CBEWs, perhaps consisting (as was suggested in section 6.3) of basic training materials.

As PSP closed, there were questions about how to maintain the momentum and value of its Advisory Group (section 10.1). The answer is to revive the National Extension Working Group that operated usefully for some years with the support of the APCBP but lapsed thereafter. That group could serve much the same purpose as the PSP Advisory Group, provided that NGO membership and representation from other ministries (notably MOLGC) are ensured. Revival of the District Extension Working Groups would play a complementary role at that level and help to support DAOs and District Extension Officers in co-ordinating CBEW and NGO activities in the manner recommended above.

11.3. Technical strategies

There are three priorities in building appropriate strategic direction for the technical aspects of food security. All three concern sustainable food production approaches.

The first concerns maintenance of the current emphasis on homestead food security techniques, as promoted by PSP and by LRAP before it (section 5.2). These techniques are so popular that the ministry is pushing on an open door as it promotes them further. PSP sought to institutionalise the homestead food security sector by urging DAOs to include such work in their annual work plans and budgets. The MAFS Departments of Crops and Field Services should continue to do this, encouraged and monitored by a revived National Extension Working Group (section 11.2). Many NGOs are skilled and committed in this field, and their participation in such a group would help to maintain the *lirapa* momentum. This sub-sector offers the ministry easy opportunities for further success. It should be sure not to miss them.

The second priority concerns the further promotion of conservation agriculture. As noted in section 5.4, this approach to sustainable food production is now well known in Lesotho, but MAFS has not yet achieved a convincing large-scale programme to promote it. There is no good reason why not. An analyst commissioned by PSP urged that Programme 3 of the block farming programme be replaced by a national conservation farming initiative. The ministry did not accept this recommendation. It should have. The national food security policy and the NAPFS both endorse it strongly. It should be a key programmatic emphasis from next financial year onwards, and the current year should be devoted to developing and costing the necessary design.

Thirdly, MAFS urgently needs to reappraise its block farming programme, which continues to lose government large sums of money without significantly contributing to national food security. As PSP closed on 31 March, urgent late efforts were being made to put a 2009 winter block farming programme together. In 2008, MAFS was similarly rushing long after the last minute to put the summer block farming activities in place. This is not how MAFS or any other GOL ministry should set its priorities or programme its activities. PSP-sponsored guidelines for the block farming programme (including the recommendations on conservation agriculture just mentioned above) have yet to be tabled in the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Food Security, despite calls from all sides for them to be put into operation. As the recent study showed, block farming does have a role to play, although it will always be a risky enterprise in Lesotho conditions. But there is an urgent need to reformulate the programme along more rational lines, and to arrange to implement it more efficiently.

11.4. Planning strategies

Last but not least, a vital strategy to continue building progress towards food security is to make the GOL budgeting and development planning processes more meaningful and effective – without, of course, sacrificing content to process or delaying action while planning frameworks are perfected. As argued in section 10.1, this means MAFS giving more thorough attention to the content of its budget framework papers, and MFDP managing the MTEF process in a manner that gives at least as much weight to strategic content as it does to budgetary accounting mechanisms. What it also means is delivering on the initially promising preparation of a new national development plan that would give equal weight to combating poverty and promoting growth. (Like many countries, Lesotho is leaving the era of poverty reduction strategies behind and returning to more conventional multi-annual development planning.) MAFS MTEF

priorities for promoting food security should be convincingly argued in its budget framework paper and in the relevant sections of the new national plan. Once again, this is primarily a challenge for DPPA.

The national food security planning challenge should be tackled across government, however, and not only by MAFS. A new national development plan should, as urged above, integrate the enhancement of food security in a convincing and comprehensive set of measures to alleviate poverty. These measures should also incorporate a comprehensive social protection strategy. As argued in section 7.3, government and civil society have not yet succeeded in formulating such a strategy. It is urgently needed and should be one of the cornerstones of any future national development plan. Both these challenges should be addressed in the first instance by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, which is responsible for co-ordinating the national plan and has the authority to persuade line ministries to collaborate in social protection strategies and programmes.

Annex 1. PSP logical framework, March 2008

This logical framework covers both the job creation and the food security components of the Priority Support Programme. The objectively verifiable indicators for food security at purpose level are numbers 5 – 10. The food security outputs are numbers 4 – 6.

Hierarchy of Objectives **Goal**	**Objectively Verifiable Indicators**	**Means of Verification**	**Assumptions**
GoL priority PRS issues being addressed effectively	Unemployment rate reduced from 31% to 21% by 2010	Labour Force Survey, BoS	
	Number of people undernourished reduced from 500,000 in 1990-92 to 375,000 in 2010.	FAO statistics	
Purpose			
An improved enabling environment for all business and a better programming environment for GOL and its partners to reduce hunger and vulnerability	1. GoL secures market access to the EU through signing an agreement and implementing its terms by EOP (May 2009)	EOP Final Status Report	Private sector in Lesotho can respond effectively to securing market access in the EU and SACU
	2. GoL, through informed negotiating positions, improves its position within SACU by EOP (May 2009)	EOP Final Status Report	
	3. A reduction in time and cost for GoL and businesses in issuing business licenses, import permits and export visas by EOP (May 2009)	OSS Survey	Savings realised by businesses trigger a higher retention and attraction of businesses and investments in Lesotho in value and volume terms
	4. Private Sector clients of MTICM fully aware of GoL regulations and service provision by EOP (May 2009)	EOP Final Status Report	Private sector clients of MTICM better react to legislation and support available to them is delivered
	5. Food security programming is guided by stronger analysis and more efficient information systems by EOP (May 2009)	EOP Final Status Report	Cabinet sub-committee and Parliamentary committee on food security use information to inform GoL responses to food security situation
	7. In at least four districts, food security is promoted through the appropriately trained extension staff of GOL, the appropriately trained extension staff of NGOs and appropriately trained community extension workers by EOP (May 2009)	EOP Final Status Report	Sufficient resources are allocated to the plans through the MoLG capital grant and after care is provided after the training

	8. In at least four districts, technical content of food security extension is appropriate for poor and vulnerable people, including those affected by HIV/AIDS by EOP (May 2009)	EOP Final Status Report	Food security planning and action by local government authorities effective in increasing food production and reducing number of people undernourished
	9. In at least two districts (Berea and Mohale's Hoek), food security is promoted at community level through planning and action by local government authorities in collaboration with MAFS and NGOs by EOP (May 2009)	EOP Final Status Report	Sufficient resources are allocated to the plans through the MoLG capital grant and after care is provided after the training
	10. At least 600 people in each of the four districts (Berea, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka) adopt at least one homestead food security technique promoted by MAFS, NGOs and/or community based extension workers	Beneficiary Assessment	People who adopt are able to retain the technologies and these continue to be supported after the programme closes.
Outputs	**Objectively Verifiable Indicators**	**Means of Verification**	**Assumptions**
1. Increased MTICM capacity for economic analysis, policy and regulatory formulation	1.1 Consolidated economic database fully operational by the PRAU and up to date information disseminated by the team on a monthly and quarterly basis to MTICM PS and directors and the MEWG.	PRAU Monthly and quarterly bulletins	MTICM directors drive the PRAU's functions and demand lead its products
	1.2 GoL is supported through the provision of timely and appropriate position papers regarding Industrialisation, EPA and SACU.	PSP Six Monthly Report	An improved empirical basis improves quality and relevance of GoL decisions
	1.3 National State of Enterprise survey completed, signed off by GoL and results disseminated by September 2008	PSP Six Monthly Report	The Results of the survey adequately inform the Growth Strategy as well as the MTICM's and BEDCO's Budget submission for 09/10
2. More efficient, effective and business friendly implementation of government regulations, procedures and support.	2.1 OSS activities in place, subject to process targets and co-financed by MTICM and LRA covering all its functions by EOP (May 2009)	OSS Annual workplan for 08/09	OSS has the capacity to implement the plan and operate systems and World Bank support is geared towards operationalising delivery of work permits and residency visas
	2.2 The management information system covering issuance of business licenses, export and import permits has shifted to the electronic system and scoped for replication among the districts (on Licensing) by EOP (May 2009).	OSS six monthly report to the OSS Committee	Increases in satisfaction levels among OSS clients with OSS performance
	2.3 A One Stop Border scoped, designed and costed for piloting at Maputsoe by EOP (May 2009)	PSP Six Monthly Report	LRA and MTICM allocate resources for Pilot implementation
	2.4 Awareness of regulatory best practice by MTICM, MoFDP, the Government Secretary and the Prime Minister's Office has improved by EOP (May 2009)	PSP Six Monthly Report	Improved awareness leads to a more coherent and joined-up approach to delivering regulatory reforms

	2.5 MTICM Strategic Plan 2007 and Operations Plan 2007-08 completed to schedule by end PY2.	MTICM budget submission of 2008/09	MTICM has the capacity to translate implications of strategic plan into their operational plan and subsequently implement the improvements
3. Improved Government of Lesotho capacity to make markets work more effectively	3.1 9 Sub-sector studies commissioned identified constraints and opportunities for preparing interventions into commodity markets by end PY2	PSP APR for 07/08	Interventions are costed and budgeted for in DOM operational plan for 08/09
	3.2 a strategic plan developed with BEDCO that establishes clear links with both the SMME White paper and its operational plan for 08/09	Minutes of BEDCO board meeting in March 2008	Consequences of the strategic plan are reflected in the operational plan in 08/9
	3.3 MTICM website populated with all information and launched by June 2008	PSP Six Monthly Report	Improved information to the private sector makes a significant contribution to an improved enabling environment.
	3.4 A Directory of SMME service providers in developed and disseminated across the districts and national level by EOP (May 2009)	PSP Six Monthly Report	SMMEs are more aware of the nature and location of support and begin accessing these sources
	3.5 A series of 2nd edition Investor Manuals are produced and disseminated among the business community in Lesotho and abroad by July 2008	PSP Six monthly report	Improved knowledge among investor community leads to increases applications for inward investment
	3.6 HIV/AIDS information for the workplace handbook and posters launched and an action plan for further dissemination agreed by May 2008.	PSP Six Monthly Report	The information disseminated is responded to among businesses
4. Strengthened food security programming and information	4.1 At least two studies explore issues and options for more efficient and/or effective promotion of food security in Lesotho and are accepted by MAFS DPPA	Study reports and DPPA records	MAFS adopts recommendations of studies
	4.2 Measures to enhance and integrate Lesotho's food security information system have been identified and initiated by the Food Security Information Steering Group	Consultancy reports and Working Group records	Stronger food security information system used effectively by Cabinet Sub-Committee on food security and by those implementing food security programmes
5. Enhanced approaches, systems and capacity to promote food security at district and community levels	5.1 The UES approach is mainstreamed into the Community Council planning system in at least two districts (Berea and Mohale's Hoek)	DPU reports and EOP survey	Mainstreaming of UES approach into Community Council planning approach effective in promoting food security
	5.2 Implementation and funding arrangements have been made for food security initiatives through at least five Community Council Action Plans	DPU reports and EOP survey	Implementation and funding arrangements for CCAPs lead to effective implementation
	5.3 At least 30 GOL extension workers trained in homestead food security approaches in each of Berea and Mohale's Hoek by September 2007 and in each of Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong districts by June 2008	DRO reports	Trained GOL and NGO extension workers undertake extension work with poor and vulnerable people

	5.4 At least 30 NGO extension workers trained in homestead food security approaches by June 2008	DRO and NGO reports	
6. Functioning and replicable field support to food security	6.1 At least 600 community extension workers trained in homestead food security by NGOs in each of Berea and Mohale's Hoek by September 2008 and at least one other district (Thaba-Tseka/Mokhotlong) by December 2008	NGO reports	Community extension workers transfer extension messages
	6.2 At least 600 households receive homestead food security training from community extension workers and/or NGO extension workers in each of Berea and Mohale's Hoek, Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong districts by December 2008	NGO reports	Adequate follow-up support by trainers is given to trained households
	6.3 MAFS DFS annual extension plans include promotion of homestead food security in Berea, Mohale's Hoek and at least one other district (Thaba-Tseka/Mokhotlong) by March 2009	MAFS plans	MAFS annual extension plans are implemented
	6.4 At least four districts not targeted by PSP briefed by EOP on opportunities for promoting food security through enhanced extension approaches and implementation of Community Council Action Plans	Programme reports	Districts not targeted by PSP are responsive to briefings about extension, planning and implementation approaches

Annex 2. PSP food security component results

This table is drawn from the DFID Project Completion Report for the PSP food security component (March, 2009), showing performance at purpose and output levels.

Purpose level		
Objectively verifiable indicator	**Progress**	**Comments**
1 Food security programming is guided by stronger analysis and more efficient information systems by EOP	Comprehensive analyses of grain crop economics and of block farming system. Overall study of improvements to FS information system. Enhanced livestock information system. Popular versions of LVAC national and district reports for DMA. Review of decentralised planning with special reference to FS.	Support for enhanced budgetary processes discontinued after poor reaction in PY 1. DFID and GOL suspended relevant Output for most of PY 2. Not all proposals for stronger analysis accepted by DFID (social protection) or GOL (conservation agriculture). GOL has not followed up on some recommendations of FS information study; some others well implemented, notably restructuring of Food Information Systems Steering Group (which continues to meet) and dissemination of user-friendly FS information products.
2 In at least 4 districts, FS is promoted through the appropriately trained extension staff of GOL, the appropriately trained extension staff of NGOs and appropriately trained community extension workers by EOP	Achieved in Berea, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka districts. See outputs 5 and 6 for numbers trained.	Training has focused, as agreed with GOL, on sub-programme 1.1. of National Action Plan for Food Security ('conservation agriculture-based household food security'), with special emphasis on expansion of former DFID-funded Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme's homestead gardening approaches (as requested by GOL). Broad national dissemination of second edition of LRAP technical manual (produced by PSP) will help ensure sustainability.
3 In at least 4 districts, technical content of FS extension is appropriate for poor and vulnerable people, including those affected by HIV/AIDS by EOP	Achieved in Berea, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka districts. Enhanced extension content disseminated to all other districts.	Content is appropriate through emphasis on homestead food security techniques as outlined above.
4 In at least 2 districts (Berea and Mohale's Hoek), food security is promoted at community level through planning and action by local government authorities in collaboration with MAFS and NGOs by EOP	Intensive work with Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs to integrate food security issues and extension approaches into national decentralised development planning system led to implementation of integrated approach in Mohale's Hoek and partial implementation of enhanced integrated approach in Berea by EOP.	Major management weaknesses in MOLGC have constrained PSP performance in this area (see review of decentralised planning, with special reference to FS, produced by PSP). Practical value of decentralised planning so far achieved from FS perspective is limited; but concept of integrating FS concerns into procedures broadly accepted, structures of co-operation between MAFS and MOLGC established and local government authorities in 4 districts familiarised with FS concepts and strategies - especially those relevant to poor and vulnerable households. NGO Serumula worked with Community Councils in Mohale's Hoek district.
5 At least 600 people in each of the 4 districts (Berea, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka) adopt at least 1 household food security technique promoted by MAFS, NGOs and/or community based extension workers (CBEWs)	Achieved in each of the 4 districts	Over 10,000 people trained, including over 600 in each of the 4 districts (see Output 6). Beneficiary Assessment (BA) found that, of sample of those advised by CBEWs and NGOs, 49% had received no other advice in previous 12 months; 20% had had advice from GOL extension worker. 78% of those advised by CBEWs and 92% of those advised by NGOs had used advice. In addition, 49% of BA respondents reported advising neighbours/friends/family, with mean of 5 people for each of these respondents copying the adopted practice(s). 32% of respondents reported advising other community members, with mean of 8 people copying the adopted practice(s).

Output level		
At least 2 studies explore issues and options for more efficient and/or effective promotion of food security in Lesotho and are accepted by MAFS DPPA	Achieved	2 studies (production costs, block farming) both accepted by DPPA. Review of decentralised planning also undertaken with MOLGC as main client.
Measures to enhance and integrate Lesotho's FS information system have been identified and initiated by the FS Information Steering Group	Achieved, partial adoption of identified measures	Operational and activity mapping study of humanitarian assistance in Lesotho during PY 1. FSIS scoping study (PY 2) identified 9 sets of measures (not all for immediate action). 4 sets of measures initiated: revised central level FSIS structures; enhanced crop forecasting; FS databases for livestock information; user-friendly FSIS products (latter 2 with PSP funding; user-friendly products widely disseminated). Disaster Management Authority has not taken up PSP-facilitated opportunities for a 5th (revitalising National Early Warning Unit).
The UES approach is mainstreamed into the Community Council planning system in at least 2 districts	Partially achieved	CC system implemented with enhanced FS emphasis in Mohale's Hoek; UES mainstreamed into national decentralised planning manual; new manual used in Berea; effectiveness compromised by constraints in MOLGC
Implementation and funding arrangements have been made for FS initiatives through at least 5 Community Council Action Plans	Partially achieved	PSP NGO sub grantee Serumula has facilitated these arrangements in Mohale's Hoek. 9 project proposals identified and developed with 5 CCs and MAFS. Implementation and funding arrangements not yet complete.
At least 30 GOL extension workers trained in homestead FS approaches in each of Berea and Mohale's Hoek by September 2007 and in each of Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong districts by June 2008	Achieved and exceeded (Thaba-Tseka by September 2008)	Totals to date: Berea 79; Mohale's Hoek 50; Mokhotlong 204; Thaba-Tseka 82; Botha-Bothe 37. Total 452. (Botha-Bothe district requested staff training from DRO Thaba-Tseka following inter-district visit to Thaba-Tseka).
At least 30 NGO extension workers trained in homestead FS approaches by June 2008	Achieved and exceeded	70 trained by June 2008. Total trained 220.
At least 600 community extension workers trained in homestead FS by NGOs in each of Berea and Mohale's Hoek by September 2008 and at least one other district (Thaba-Tseka/Mokhotlong by December 2008)	Achieved and exceeded	Available data show total 6,922 trained across 4 districts by NGOs and DROs. Second edition of *'Lirapa'* homestead FS manual produced for use by GOL, NGOs, CBEWs and households; 8,800 copies now being disseminated across all 10 districts
At least 600 households receive homestead FS training from community extension workers and/or NGO extension workers in each of Berea and Mohale's Hoek, Thaba-Tseka and Mokhotlong districts by December 2008	Achieved and exceeded	Available data show total 11,542 trained across 4 districts
MAFS DFS annual extension plans include promotion of homestead FS in Berea, Mohale's Hoek and at least one other district (Thaba-Tseka/Mokhotlong) by March 2009	Achieved	Included in 2009/10 plans for Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Berea, Mohale's Hoek.

At least 4 districts not targeted by PSP briefed by EOP on opportunities for promoting FS through enhanced extension approaches and implementation of Community Council Action Plans	Achieved and exceeded	Total 6 inter-district visits between MAFS staff facilitated Sept 08 - March 09. FS awareness and dissemination days (covering, inter alia, extension approaches and links to CCAPs) held in all 10 districts, Jan - March 09. National food security awareness and dissemination day held on 26 March 09.

Annex 3. Outline of the food security component, November 2007

The Government of Lesotho is working to implement the policies and achieve the targets of its Poverty Reduction Strategy. To complement and support these efforts, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) is contributing funding for technical assistance in several areas. These include the two top priorities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy – job creation and food security. DFID is funding a Priority Support Programme (PSP) to address these two priorities. PSP is implemented through the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Co-operatives and Marketing and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

The **goal** of the Priority Support Programme (PSP) is that the top two priority issues in the Government of Lesotho's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), job creation and food security, are being addressed effectively.

The **purpose** of the food security component of the PSP is *Government and its partners enabled and on track to reduce hunger and vulnerability.*

The emphasis of the PSP in food security is more effective, replicable promotion of food security at household level. So most of PSP's work is done at community and district levels. However, PSP supports activities at national level as well. The logic of the component's design flows from the need for appropriate policy, planning, information and co-ordination at national level, through the achievement of enhanced approaches, systems and capacity to promote food security at district and field levels, to the facilitation of functioning, replicable support to food security through extension activities at community and household levels.

Following a six month inception period, PSP runs from 1 June 2006 to 31 May 2009. It builds on the fact that GOL has most of its policies and programmes in place. PSP helps to enhance the working methods and approaches used to implement these policies and programmes. As a technical assistance programme with a relatively small budget, it cannot fund capital investments in food security project implementation such as Community Action Plans.

At national level, PSP works to strengthen and support the policy and information needed to drive effective food security programmes. For example, it has helped develop the National Action Plan for Food Security (NAPFS) and translate a summary of the Food Security Policy. It will support improvements to food security information systems in Lesotho and fund policy studies on relevant issues, thus supporting elements of Programmes 3, 4 and 5 of the NAPFS (Social Protection and Safety Nets; Food Supply Stability and National Availability; and Institutional Arrangements).

At district and community levels, PSP focuses on improving extension delivery, especially with regard to homestead food security approaches. It thus aims to replicate the former Livelihoods Recovery through Agriculture Programme (LRAP) and to improve implementation of Sub-Programme 1.1 of the NAPFS (Conservation Agriculture-Based Household Food Security). Working in Berea, Mohale's Hoek, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka districts, it focuses on the following:

- strengthening the role of community-based extension workers, such as Farmer Extension Facilitators, Community Support Groups and Community Health Workers, whose training and support should be the primary target of NGO and government extension programmes;
- training on homestead food security for GOL and NGO extension staff;
- improving access to funding for NGO homestead food security extension programmes;
- providing advisory support for government homestead food security extension programmes, which are funded by GOL recurrent budgets;
- supporting local development planning by Community and District Councils in association with the Ministry of Local Government as a means of strengthening participatory development efforts in the food security sector – this includes support to harmonising the community agricultural planning process through the Unified Extension System with the new Community Council Action Plans.

Priority Support Programme: Food Security Component: Roles and Responsibilities

The **DFID** Lesotho country programme and oversight of support for the PSP are managed from DFID's Pretoria office. The DFID Country Representative in Maseru provides local liaison. The DFID Country Programme Manager and Country Representative hold periodic consultations with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, MTICM and MAFS about the progress of PSP. They receive six monthly progress reports from the project and carry out joint annual performance reviews of PSP with GOL.

The PSP food security component falls under the authority of the **Principal Secretary, MAFS**. Various Departments of the Ministry participate in the activities of the food security component. For example, the Department of Field Services is responsible for PSP's contributions to enhanced food security extension approaches; and the Department of Planning and Policy Analysis is responsible for the Food Security Policy and the National Action Plan for Food Security – both of which PSP aims to enhance. The Ministry's District Agricultural Officers have oversight of the programme's extension training and support at district and field levels. MAFS receives quarterly performance reports from PSP management and includes the required expenditure data in its periodic reporting to MFDP.

The PSP technical assistance that DFID funds is managed and delivered by a **consortium of agencies.** This consortium, which was selected by GOL and DFID following an international tendering process, is led by **Harewelle International**, a British company. Harewelle employs the PSP Programme Manager and Technical Team Leader (both based in Maseru). **CARE Lesotho-South Africa** is the consortium member responsible for the food security component of the technical assistance. It employs the full time staff for this component – the Food Security Component Facilitator and District Resource Officers – as well as part time consultants, such as the Food Security Component Adviser. CARE is also responsible for the contracting and procurement associated with the food security component, in consultation with the Programme Manager.

PSP strategy recognises the need to promote food security in the context of Lesotho's current decentralisation policy, recognising the emerging roles of District Councils and Community Councils. The **Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs** therefore has an important role in PSP, notably through liaison between the MAFS Department of Field Services and the MOLG Department of Planning. All PSP field work is carried out in consultation with the relevant local government authorities.

PSP strategy also recognises the important contribution that **NGOs** should play in promoting food security in Lesotho. The programme has made sub grants to a number of NGOs to carry out food security extension training and related activities in the four districts on which it focuses.

To improve communication, consultation and collaboration between the various agencies involved in the PSP food security component, an **Advisory Group** meets periodically to review progress, identify challenges and agree on ways forward. Chaired by the MAFS Director of Field Services and reporting to the Principal Secretary, MAFS, the Advisory Group includes key MAFS and PSP staff, District Agricultural Officers, the MOLG Director of Planning and representatives of participating NGOs.

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