

Planting the seeds of hope

Heavy rainfall, long withering droughts and other natural shocks and disasters – all signs of increased climate change – have made it almost impossible for vulnerable people to cope.

In most cases they simply do not have the capacity – physically and financially – to survive.

Accessing quality agricultural inputs - such as seeds and fertilizers - is a major problem for rural communities in Lesotho because they have limited resources. And, even when money is available, isolated farmers face the further challenge of getting to and from distant markets.

For this reason, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs and the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Office, has been supporting in the last years seed production at local level. Higher quality of inputs and local availability are the main expected outcomes of this initiative.

According to the World Bank, up to 50% of crop yield increases have come from improved seeds. However, in Africa, less than 30% of smallholder farmers use seed of improved varieties, and they are of variable quality. Realizing this problem, FAO has selected 38 farmers in three pilot districts to help them improve seed production and find local markets to sell their seeds. This activity has been supported by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) and coordinated by FAO Lesotho.

FAO's activities include, but are not limited to, supporting early generation seed multiplication by national research institutions to the promotion of small-scale seed enterprises, supporting community seed production in order to ensure production and access to good quality seed of adapted varieties at the community level, and providing training and technical support to the pilot participants.



Women selecting seeds, in Rothe – Maseru District

Mphakela Kutho is a teacher who decided to participate in the seed production project last year. Now he is standing in front of his beans and smiling. “I received bean seeds from FAO and they grew very well. A lot of schools and neighbours nearby want to buy my beans and I see a big market here,” said Mphakela.

He is hiring eight people to help him produce beans this season and most of them are women, who have difficulties to find jobs in other places.



Public gathering in Ramokatsi, in Mafeteng District

very satisfied with the training and their services.”

For Matamaue Hlalele, the most valuable thing that she received from the project was not the seeds, but the training. “I have 7ha of land but this was the first time to produce beans. FAO and experts from the Ministry of Agriculture came to my field to inspect the land before planting and to ensure that they came back to revisit us all the time to give us suggestions. I am

The Food and Agriculture Organization is renowned for its work in helping farmers to become more sustainable in Lesotho. FAO started its work in the country in 1983. Since then, FAO Lesotho has assisted in devising agricultural policies, supporting planning, drafting legislation and creating national strategies to achieve rural development and hunger alleviation goals.