

OCTOBER 2023



EBENEZER MATOBO

NEWS



October is always a significant month at Ebenezer for our first year apprentices who graduate from their 3-month Foundation Course. This year was no different and on the 7th we were glad to welcome many parents and friends to celebrate the occasion. A few apprentices shared excellent speeches and even a poem; a common theme seemed to be the muscles they have grown over the past 3 months and the challenge of a new early morning routine! Well done first year graduates, you have faced these challenges head-on and come out stronger and ready for more!



Following a brief boost week which gave a few apprentices the opportunity to visit their families, we dove into block 2, with 57 first years embarking on the Intermediate Course. Lessons have begun with a lot of enthusiasm and energy and we have started a new Family Night series for this block, focusing on the book of Colossians.



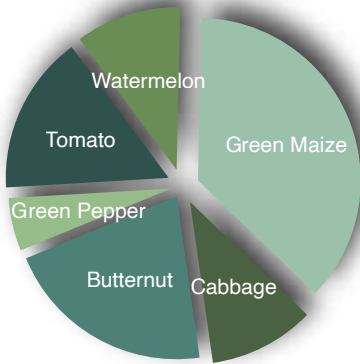
Second year apprentices have been continuing with very practical business lessons, currently focused on production and records, with a challenge to raise SASSO chickens as efficiently as possible as part of their learning. Three groups have been raising 27 birds each and we are particularly impressed with one group which has seen no mortalities in seven weeks! When these birds reach 10 weeks, the groups will be looking to sell their birds - can they make a profit??



You may remember our graduates, Bongimpilo and Brian, who are currently in the States for a year-long internship at Herbruck's Poultry Ranch. We have been receiving great updates from them both, hearing news of how they are gaining experience single-handedly managing chicken houses of 108,000 birds (thanks to some automated systems)! They are also loving the experience of American culture, including attending a Harvest Carnival and entering a hot dog eating contest - well done to Bongimpilo who managed to eat 8 hot dogs in 10 minutes!

CROPPING

19 hectares under irrigation



October has been a busy planting month, with our cropping team planting 2 hectares each of maize and butternut and 1 hectare each of tomato, cabbage and green pepper. We received our first rains which has created a good environment to promote crop growth in our recently planted fields.

Our greenhouse tomatoes have been doing so well that the weight of their ripened fruit caused our trellising poles to fall down! We have lost some of the harvest due to this incident, however this month we did harvest 1,540 kgs of tomatoes. A further harvest of 3,343 bunches of onions this month brought us to the end of our onion crop.

Cropping teams have been busy this week continuing land prep for further planting. We are excited in the next few weeks to plant our first cucumber crop!

Like many farmers in Zimbabwe, we are continuing to face challenges with tuta absoluta, a pest which attacks tomato crops. The biological systems of pheromone traps and preteu bugs which we implemented back in September are helping us to minimise the population.



LIVESTOCK



Apprentices were excited to place another batch of broilers this month. By the end of October the birds were 3 weeks old and doing well. The broiler team has been dedicated in their management of the birds and we are seeing a pleasingly low mortality of 1.3% (of birds not apprentices!).



Other pleasing improvements have been evident in our layer flock where the lay-rate average has increased from 78% to 85% in the last month.



The layer birds which we are growing to point of lay have been facing a more challenging time. In just one week we lost 200 birds to snake bites! Fortunately the snake was discovered and killed, but it is very discouraging to lose so many birds and see others affected by stress. We are glad to have started moving birds to cages where the threat of snakes is significantly reduced.



Several of our staff and apprentices benefitted from an online training provided by the International Egg Foundation, focusing on the light requirements for poultry production, especially layers. A highlight was understanding the impact on production of different light tones such as bright white and yellow.

In our dairy, we produced 17,200 litres of milk in October, an average of 15 litres per cow per day. It was a surprise to see one of our cows deliver twin calves this month! The two male calves are looking healthy and strong.