

JANUARY 2024



EBENEZER MATOBO

NEWS



Happy New Year from Ebenezer Matobo! Our year has got off to a great start with apprentices very busy in their productive learnings areas and starting their third training block of the Ebenezer year!



As we head into 2024, we are already seeing a lot of interest in our new course starting in July. Preselection days have begun this month, with Ebenezer team members visiting different communities to share about Ebenezer and do preliminary interviews with applicants.



We have enjoyed catching up with some Ebenezer graduates this month, with some visiting Ebenezer, others meeting up with staff members in Bulawayo, and our two graduates in the USA sending us photos of themselves in the snow!

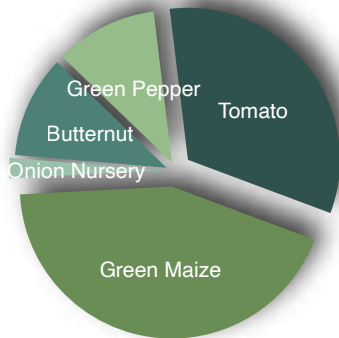
With the start of a new training block, we have started a new Family Night series focused around Walking With Jesus Everyday. Jesus hasn't promised us an easy life, but he has promised to be with us - we have been enjoying visiting speakers coming to share from their own experience of walking with Jesus through the challenges we all face in life such as anxiety, relational difficulties and temptation.



As schools have opened for the new year, 9 of our apprentices have re-engaged with the Chick Starter program which works with local primary schools to resource and train them to grow chickens. As well as getting involved in the practical farming training given to the children, our apprentices have enjoyed the discipleship element of the program, playing games with kids, singing songs and teaching them about Jesus.

CROPPING

9.2 hectares under irrigation



January has been a good and busy month for our cropping team, with lots of harvesting still underway as well as land preparation and planting! Our harvesting totals for the month were 46,781 kg tomatoes, 1,145 watermelons, 3,287 cabbages, 259 crates of green pepper and 37,820 kg butternut!

In January we planted 4 hectares of maize, 2 hectares each of onion and tomato and 1 hectare of butternut. In land preparation for tomato planting, our apprentices have been working hard to collect organic matter, such as chicken manure from a local farm.

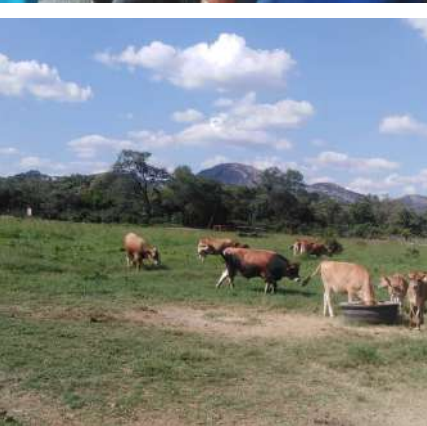
While we celebrated some good rainfall this month, it also brought us some challenges such as the washing away of some of our onion seeds! We will have to replant as a result which means our product will hit the market later than we would have liked.

Another big challenge this month was the breakdown of all of our 3 water pumps and 2 tractors on the same day! Fortunately, recent rain saved our crops from complete dehydration, but it did delay our tomato planting.

It has been good to see more action in our kitchen this month, with apprentices planting lettuce and green pepper.



LIVESTOCK



Our current broiler batch was sent for slaughter at the end of January. The apprentices working in broilers showed a lot of fortitude and a good attitude as they faced the challenge of the collection truck getting stuck in the mud, which led to birds being loaded, off-loaded and loaded again. This meant very little sleep for the broiler team over a couple of nights! We are awaiting results for this batch.

Our smaller flock of layer birds is still hitting a lay rate above 84% at an age of over 70 weeks. Our new point of lays which we placed towards the end of 2023, have just started coming into lay. At the end of January their average lay-rate was 8%, a number we expect to rise sharply throughout February!

Our dairy team continue to work with joy and there is a really positive working environment in the dairy. Always willing to try something new and with an "I can" attitude, this pair of apprentices have been working together to fix one of our broken milking machines.

One cow surprised us this month by producing a total of 36 litres in one day - 22 litres in the morning followed by 11 litres in the afternoon! With a consistent feed supply and good green pastures following recent rain, we are seeing a general increase in milk production to an average of 17 litres per cow per day.