



EBENEZER MATOBO

May is always an exciting month at Ebenezer, as we hold our Selection Camps for hopeful applicants eager to join us in July. This year we had over 200 applicants for just 60-70 places, so as you can imagine, it was a challenging process to select our new intake.

Each year we run preselection days for applicants, where they meet Ebenezer staff members and find out a bit more about Ebenezer. Giving them a clear picture of what being an Ebenezer apprentice entails enables our applicants to decide if it's really a program for which they want to apply. We also take the opportunity to find out a bit more about them, checking they meet our application criteria and that they are serious about applying.

From our preselection days, we invite 120 applicants to attend one of two Selection Camps we run at Ebenezer. Over 3 days, we put our candidates through a serious but fun selection process where they get to experience some Ebenezer activities such as weeding and manure bagging! They also partake in team building activities, a 5 km run and an interview with some of the Ebenezer team. Along the way we make sure to include plenty of fun and games, biblical input and the opportunity for them to ask lots of questions about Ebenezer.

All of these activities contribute towards the final selection we make as a staff team. This is no easy process and involves a lot of prayerful discussion and debate. This year, we had a fantastic bunch of applicants at our Selection Camps and we are delighted to have offered places to 67 new apprentices who will be joining us in July. Please pray for our new intake as they prepare to join us, and for those who were unsuccessful this year, that they would be encouraged by the time they spent with us and that the Lord would lead them into what he has for them.

NEWS MAY 2024



CROPPING

As we head into winter, May has been a good month for harvesting the last of our summer crops. Over the month, we harvested 57,407 kg of butternut, 61,320 kg of tomato and 575 kg of green pepper.

We also silaged 5 ha of maize for our dairy. This has been a really successful endeavour which was completed efficiently and should have a beneficial impact in increasing our milk production in the months to come.

With no planting happening in May, the crops we currently have in the ground are 2 ha of sugar beans, $\frac{1}{4}$ ha cabbage and 1.5 ha of onion. Land preparation has begun for our next seasons so that we will be ready for timely planting as we head into the summer months. So far, fields have been prepared to plant cabbage, watermelon and tomato.

Aside from the crops in our fields, we also have a very promising tomato crop ripening in our greenhouse. With the greenhouse enabling us to grow tomatoes in these chilly winter months, we should be able to supply the market with our produce when supply is low, meaning we will get a good price for our produce!





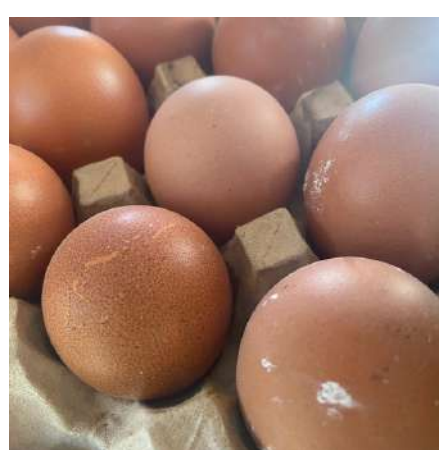
LIVESTOCK

Our dairy produced a total of 21,147 litres of milk in May. We had between 40-44 cows in production and they produced an average of 16.7 litres per cow per day throughout the month.

With our bull still injured, this month we ventured into artificial insemination for the first time! While some of our team has had some training in AI, this was our first time to implement it at Ebenezer. Of 10 cows that were inseminated, 6 have become pregnant. We are still exploring options to purchase a new bull.

Our layer flock in house 4 continues to baffle us with its underperformance. The lay-rate in that flock has been 20% lower than it should be. Our smaller flock in layer house 1 continues to produce well, hitting its target lay-rate of 83% this month. In total our layer birds produced 234,608 eggs in May.

Some feed challenges have affected the growth of our broilers. At the end of the month, our birds were hitting an average weight of 1.6 kg against a target of 2.2 kg. Second year apprentices have been continuing to work hard to manage the batch well and will continue to do so past their graduation day in mid-June, in order to see the batch through to completion.





INTRODUCING

Arnold Thabete came to Ebenezer as a first year apprentice in July, 2023. He had been farming with his family in Chiredzi where his father has 25 hectares of irrigated land, but little expertise to farm it. Arnold has always had a passion for farming, especially cropping, and he was excited to come to Ebenezer and gain more practical skills and experience. His hope is to return to Chiredzi and manage his father's farm. *"Doing farming is in my bloodline and I love it. I like how farming can allow you to run your own business and earn your own income, without having to seek employment elsewhere."*

Since Arnold came to Ebenezer, he has gained practical hands on experience in farming maize and tomato. He had grown both before at home, but this is his first time to follow specific guidelines, receive input from a coach and to farm on a larger scale. *"Being at Ebenezer has 100% helped me gain experience. I've learnt about proper spacing, how and when to apply fertilisers and chemicals, the importance of water, and many more things."*

In the past year, Ebenezer has been working with a company called Koppert who develop and promote biological methods of pest control. Incorporating biological controls into our integrated pest management system has been a new experience for Ebenezer and for apprentices like Arnold. Arnold has been impressed with the success of biological chemicals to combat red spider, and the benefits of biological controls over synthetic chemicals which are harmful to people and the environment. But he has noticed that for a farmer to use biological control measures, they must follow guidelines correctly and be thorough in their scouting. *"You need many, many traps. I found that if I placed one tuta trap today, by the next day it was full and needed replacing already. I noticed that it is essential to apply pest controls before you observe pests affecting plants. If you delay or skip days in your pest management schedule, you are in trouble."*

When asked if he would advise farmers at home to use biological methods of pest control, Arnold is keen to do so for tomato, if chemicals and traps are easily available. For butternut and watermelon, he would like to gain more experience and research biological methods of treating fruitfly before recommending one particular approach.

MAY 2024

