



EBENEZER MATOBO

The 8th July was an exciting day at Ebenezer Matobo, as we welcomed 64 new first year apprentices to join us for the Foundation Course. They are an amazing bunch who have come with a lot of energy, enthusiasm and expectation for their time at Ebenezer! For the coming 12 weeks, they will be rotating around each of our Production Learning Areas and we are already seeing a great attitude from them as they get stuck into their practical work and learning.

Another highlight in July was a staff day away at the beginning of the month. As a team, we enjoyed a day together in the beautiful Matopos, spotting giraffe, going for a walk and feasting on a braai. We also took time to reflect personally and corporately on the year that has past and what is to come as we start a new Ebenezer year. We were grateful for friends of Ebenezer, Ali and Uncle Don, who joined us for the day and lead us in some excellent reflective prayer activities, focused around the Holy Spirit, who he is to us and what he might be saying.

With the arrival of our new apprentices, we have once more started the Youth Alpha programme as part of our week Family Nights. With talks around "Who is Jesus?" and "Why did he die?", this course offers a great introduction to the core of the Christian faith, emphasising what it is and what it isn't, and encouraging lots of discussion opportunity for apprentices to share their opinions and explore their questions. Our apprentices come from very varying backgrounds and differing church experiences; it has been wonderful to see their openness in sharing their experiences, thoughts and questions.



CROPPING

Most of our cropping efforts in the month of July have been in land preparation for the start of our summer planting in August. Our cropping teams have been working hard to prepare 8 hectares of land to plant watermelon, butternut, cabbage and tomatoes.

Harvesting has continued to be minimal, as we move towards the end of the winter season. This month we harvested 6,000 bunches of onions and 200 kg of tomato. We have been very pleased with our greenhouse tomatoes which we have begun to harvest. As we are supplying the market out of season, we are receiving a good price for this produce.

We have successfully concluded our seed growing trials with JW seeds. As well as the income received for undertaking this trial, we are also able to use the seed harvested for replanting.

In further seed news, we have entered into an exciting contract with Avanos Seeds to grow butternut seed in the coming months. We will also be assisting local small-scale farmers in growing the same seed for contract.

Work is underway to replant our Lucerne grass after three years of it providing good nutritious feed for our dairy herd.





LIVESTOCK

Our layer birds produced a total of 174,538 eggs in July. The flock in Layer House 4 continues to produce poorly, hitting a lay-rate of 77% against a target of 92%. We have also seen an increased mortality in this flock which we are seeking expert help to address. This has obviously created a lot of challenges, with production and sales much lower than we had anticipated from this flock.

The birds in Layer House 1 are continuing to perform well, hitting a lay rate of 80% which is 3% above the international standard for their age and breed.

We received the results of our broiler batch closed in June. Despite a high Food Conversion Ratio (FCR) of 2.1, we are very pleased to see that we still made a profit on the batch of USD 0.42 per bird. We had some apprentices remain beyond their graduation to finish this batch; they are obviously very pleased with the fruits of their efforts.

We placed a further 11,000 broilers at the end of July. The second years managing this batch are excited for the opportunity and are receiving a lot of enthusiastic help from our new first years!

Our dairy had 41 cows in milk this month, producing a total of 18,650 litres of milk. We saw our daily average production increase from 15.9 litres per cow per day to 16.5 litres.





INTRODUCING

This month we caught up with Michael-Gerald Nkomazana, one of our new first year apprentices. Michael-Gerald is 22 years old and comes from Silobela, in the midlands region of Zimbabwe, although he grew up between Harare and Bulawayo. He describes coming to Ebenezer as a dream come true!

Michael-Gerald discovered a love for agriculture when he was 9 or 10 years old and was given responsibility to farm covo (a type of kale) at home. His parents recognised Michael-Gerald's passion for farming and always kept an eye out for farming experiences for him. Following the completion of his O Levels, in which he achieved Cs in two subjects, Michael was staying in Harare, when his father contacted him to tell him about Ebenezer, which he had discovered on the internet! Michael looked us up on Facebook and was drawn to the opportunity offered at Ebenezer to grow in his agricultural skills and in his faith. He says, *"I am here for everything. I'm here to learn more about agriculture. But Ebenezer is also helping me in my faith. I've always known about God, but now I have a feeling I am near to God and my faith is much increased."*

Michael-Gerald was particularly impacted by a recent Family Night talk and discussion around "Why Did Jesus Die?" He says, *"I knew it, but hearing more from others has moved me from knowledge about God to a strong relationship with him. We sin every day, but God always forgives us!"*

Michael-Gerald has another passion – art! *"Art is a talent given to me by God and I want to use it. I like experimenting and putting on paper the things I see in my mind. All my soul is in art and agriculture and I want to combine them both."* We have already enjoyed Michael's art at Ebenezer – pictured above you can see the new logo he has designed for his Orange Gum Family.

JULY 2024

