



EBENEZER MATOBO

With the weather seriously hotting up this month (and then seriously cooling down again!), our apprentices loved the opportunity to refresh and scare themselves on the Shalom waterslide, a terrifying water ride at Shalom Campsite, just next door to Ebenezer. We weren't at Shalom only for water sports, but chiefly to spend a night away together as part of our Youth Alpha series, considering who the Holy Spirit is, how we are filled with the Spirit, and the impact of that on our lives and faith. We were joined by an excellent speaker, Wakumudzi Ndlovu, a teacher from a nearby High School, who spoke straightforwardly and enthusiastically about our need for the Holy Spirit, the ease with which we can approach God, and what it means to live by the Spirit.

As a result of the discipleship and Bible teaching that has been happening over the past three months at Ebenezer, we were delighted that 19 apprentices have made the decision to be baptised. At the end of September we hosted a combined church service between local church congregations at Ebenezer before heading down to the Ebenezer dam where our 19 apprentices were joined by another 4 local community members in being baptised. The service was followed by a celebratory lunch – all in all it was a wonderful cross-community time of fellowship.

Another highlight this month was the annual marketing trip for our second years. Leaving Ebenezer at 5 am, they enjoyed a full day in Bulawayo visiting different agricultural suppliers and markets.

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CROPPING

September has been a good month for our cropping teams, as we have started to see the crops we planted in August establishing well and getting off to a strong start.

This month we planted 1 ha of watermelon and 1.5 ha of butternut. $\frac{1}{2}$ hectare of our butternut planting is for seed, and we are trialling three different germination methods with these plants – direct seed, seed trays and floating seed trays. We are undertaking these trials in partnership with Avanos seeds and we are interested to learn from the results of the different approaches.

In total, we currently have under irrigation: 1 ha cabbage, 3.5 ha butternut, 3 ha watermelon, 2 ha tomato, 4 ha maize and $\frac{1}{3}$ ha chomolia (kale).

Our planting season is not yet finished and in the next month we plan to plant a further 3 hectares of maize and 2 hectares of butternut.

In September we harvested 72 bunches of onion, 55 heads of cabbage and 1,419 kg of greenhouse tomatoes. We are delighted that our greenhouse tomatoes are hitting the market at a time when there is low supply and high demand.





LIVESTOCK

In September, our Layer House 1 flock of laying birds hit 90 weeks of age. Amazingly they were still hitting a lay-rate of 82% which is quite something for their age, but the time had come to cull them, so that we can prepare the house for placing a new flock in the coming weeks.

Our troublesome birds in Layer House 4 improved their performance in September, with lay rates reaching towards 90%. Despite some pecking triggered by hot weather, we also saw a pleasing decrease in mortality in this flock.

Another batch of 6-week-old broiler birds went for slaughter this month, with an average weight of 2.37 kg per bird. FCR was a bit off target at 1.78, but with a low mortality of 3.5% the batch made a profit.

We were asked to place an unexpected batch of 10,900 birds at the end of August. This provided an excellent challenge for our second years in preparing the house and brooder at short notice. They took on the challenge with enthusiasm and the batch has got off to a strong start.

In the dairy, we have been dehorning our cows and bulls, a process undertaken periodically to prevent injury and to improve animal welfare and comfort.





SOWING SEEDS

In the past year, we have been growing strong connections with Avanos Seeds and in particular with their representative Marietta who has been working with us to trial the growing of a variety of seeds. This connection has strengthened further with the opportunity given to two Ebenezer graduates to join Avanos on a technical internship in which they are gaining specialised training and experience in seed production. Last month, 2024 graduates Tendai and Lucky headed to Harare to start their 5-month internship. We asked Lucky how they are getting on....

“Currently we have two crops for seed production. Mainly we are focusing on butternut, taking tomato seed production as a bonus to learn. We work on the ground like everyone else at the farm, but make it our aim to learn more than just working. What we enjoy is that we are treated as trainees, giving us a chance to learn. Coming from Ebenezer has helped me, as I am familiar with many of the farming methods here, at the same time I’m enjoying learning some new methods. I also appreciate how Ebenezer taught us to communicate and give feedback positively, this makes it easier for us to report to our supervisors.”

Tendai and Lucky are staying together and have become part of the local Methodist church. Lucky is excited to be taking on the Sunday School there and they are both enjoying sharing words of encouragement in the church community. It’s fantastic to see graduates continuing their journey of faith and productivity beyond Ebenezer. Lucky says, *“Being at Ebenezer brought so much growth in my life and I can say I now have a sense of direction about my life. I’m now a full-time Christian, meaning to say my relationship with God is no longer in church or in people’s eyes. I make sure that every decision I take in my life, it involves God, and I have learned to pray about everything, absolutely everything.”*

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