



EBENEZER MATOBO

Seasons Greetings' from Ebenezer Matobo! We have had a joyful Christmas with over 60 apprentices on site celebrating Christmas Day while others visited their families. On Christmas Day itself, there was loud music played from dawn until dusk as apprentices partied and played games. We experienced our first Christmas crackers and particularly enjoyed special meals including fried eggs for breakfast and a chicken dinner!

Another cause for celebration in the last month has been some fantastic rains. It has been a while since we have enjoyed rains like this – sunny mornings that brew into afternoon storms, providing our crops and the vegetation around Ebenezer with ideal growing conditions! It is also much welcomed in our rivers and dams, following a severe drought last year.

A fun event held in December was our Interfamily Olympics, held as we finished our second training block of the year. Families competed against each other in some hectic challenges, including an egg and spoon race, a sack race and a race to see which family could eat a watermelon the fastest!

We have been missing Mr and Mrs Nyams this month, but we were delighted that they had the opportunity to fly to the UK in early December for a 3-month sabbatical visiting family (including a new grandson!). We hope they are having a wonderful time and we can't wait to hear their stories when they return later in the year.

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CROPPING

After a dry and windy November, December has been a great month of steady and consistent rain! With a good balance between solid rain showers and sunny spells, our crops are flourishing. The same can be said of our weeds and apprentices are having to work hard to keep on top of the weeds alongside busy days of harvesting and land preparation.

One downside of the rainfall is the increased risk of pests and diseases in our crops. We are seeing this a little in our tomato and butternut crops, and are taking swift action to treat diseases we see emerging.

This month we have been harvesting and sending lots of produce to the market: 70,000 kg of tomato, 17,000 cabbages and 63,900 kg of butternut!

We have not planted so much this month, with just 2 ha of maize going into the ground, however, in December we started land preparation for January crops and we anticipate a good year for our crops!

Crops currently in the ground are 3 ha butternut, 1 ha watermelon, 1 ha tomato and 9 ha maize.





LIVESTOCK

The arrival of some good rains has been especially welcomed by our dairy team as we are now seeing good green grass and pasture becoming available for our cows to graze on. With green grass being very nutritious, we should see an increase in production as a result.

In total our dairy produced 16,600 litres of milk in December. Some electrical challenges resulted in us producing sour milk when we could not keep our milk chilled. While our customers like this product, it is not economically beneficial to us due to the amount of milk we must discard as whey.

Heat waves in December affected our layer production with a decrease in our birds' feed consumption leading to a production drop of 6%. In total we produced 298,438 eggs across our two houses.

Our current batch of broilers is doing better than our previous batch, with a low mortality of 2.7% at 4 weeks of age. Our target is to keep mortality below 5% so we are on course to hit that. Our bird weights have been lower than we would like with the week 4 average weight being 1.4 kg against a target of 1.6 kg. We think this is the result of the heat and some coccidiosis brought on when the rains started.





INTRODUCING...

My name is Yolanda Ndlovu and I am a second year apprentice. I am 19 years old and come from Kensington in Bulawayo. Before joining Ebenezer, I was at a crossroads, having completed my O Level studies in 2022. During that time, I felt somewhat unanchored, as I had not yet found a clear direction for my future. However, my granddad shared some fascinating insights about Ebenezer, which sparked my interest. He spoke of the rich learning environment and the values instilled in students. Recognising that becoming part of Ebenezer would not only benefit my family's farming project but also contribute significantly to my personal development, I decided to apply.

Upon arrival at Ebenezer, I quickly discovered that it is a place dedicated to more than just practical and theoretical knowledge in agriculture. It also emphasises the importance of Christian values and teachings. The curriculum is designed to integrate agricultural skills with spiritual growth, creating a holistic educational experience. Previously, I attended church to fulfil my parents' wishes, but I did not fully grasp the significance of embracing Christianity in my life.

At Ebenezer I have engaged in various experiences, such as hands-on farming. I am truly grateful for the guidance provided by our mentors and the support from my colleagues, both of which have deepened my understanding of faith and its relevance to our daily lives. The discussions we have during our spiritual sessions have opened my eyes to the transformative power of faith, and I now feel more connected to my new family at Ebenezer and to God.

Looking beyond my time at Ebenezer, my plans include supplementing my studies in Maths. Maths is a critical skills in agriculture. Following that, I aim to further my agricultural training. I believe that gaining more skills in agriculture will empower me to make meaningful contributions to our family farm and the broader community.

In the long term, I envision myself not only managing our family farm but also advocating for sustainable farming practices in our region. I want to use what I have learnt to lead initiatives that promote environmental stewardship and community engagement. I am excited about the future and the opportunities that lie ahead, and I am determined to make a positive impact in my family and community. My journey at Ebenezer has equipped me with the tools I need to succeed, and I am eager to see where this path will lead me.

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