



# EBENEZER MATOBO

Big news this month was of course our two selection camps, held from 13–16 May and during which we put just under 100 candidates through interviews, team-building exercises and a good amount of farm-work challenges, in order to select our new intake for this year. We were impressed by the attitude and enthusiasm our applicants showed and we are excited that 53 of them will be joining us as apprentices in July.

A particular highlight for Ebenezer apprentices in May was Africa Day, celebrated on 25 May. As first year aspiring journalist Sibongumusa writes:

*"We traveled back in time at Ebenezer as we celebrated Africa Day. We took time to look back and appreciate our roots. We were dressed in cultural clothes, some traditional and some with a modern twist. We had a fun time singing, dancing, and acting, bringing out the values shared by different cultures. We also enjoyed some late-night cultural food and tea at the end of the program. It was a wonderful celebration of our heritage, and we're grateful for the opportunity to connect with our roots."*

As our Ebenezer year draws to a close, the build-up to graduation in June has created a palpable sense of excitement on site. As well as families enjoying their final Family Nights together, there have also been some special gatherings of apprentices, where second years have been sharing encouraging testimonies with first years. Both year-groups are facing significant transitions in the coming weeks, whether it be graduating and establishing themselves outside of Ebenezer, or moving from first year into the greater responsibility and challenge of second year!



# CROPPING

Good harvests have continued into May, with 232 kg of green pepper, 74,760 kg of tomatoes and 1,117 watermelons going to market.

There was no planting this month as we head into winter. Instead, apprentices have been busy closing crops, dismantling tomato trellises and clearing plots in preparation for our August planting.

In May, we began harvesting the green pepper seeds that we are growing in partnership with Avanos Seeds. Avanos representative, Mr Mapundo visited us to train on seed harvesting and he was very pleased with the seed size and plant quality we are achieving. This is an encouraging start to this harvest which will continue over the next 6 months.

Crops currently in the ground and under irrigation are 1 ha each of onion and watermelon, 3 ha each of seed butternut and tomato, 4 ha of sugar beans now ready to be harvested, and 5 ha of maize which we are leaving to dry in the field.

We are also cultivating small plots of beetroot and other garden vegetables which are providing a good nutritious supplement to our daily meals.





# LIVESTOCK

The closure of our latest batch of broilers has left us with a good supply of manure for our cropping teams to use on upcoming crops. As we wait to place new birds in June, our apprentices have been busy cleaning, disinfecting and preparing our 2 broiler houses.

We have seen a pleasing rise in lay-rate across all of our layer houses, alongside a reduced mortality. We have seen particular improvements in house 2, with an increase from 50% to 85% over the month, and house 3, where birds are now consistently laying at a rate over 90%.

At the same time we have faced some respiratory challenges with our birds in house 1 and some pecking issues between birds in house 3, although this does not seem to have adversely affected production. In total our layers produced 448,905 eggs in May.

We are excited about an upcoming placement of 7,000 Lohmann layer birds in June, and we are busy preparing house 4 to receive these birds. This is a new breed for us and we working in partnership with Lohmann to trial these birds in our environment.

In our dairy, we have seen a consistent reduction in Total Bacteria Count (TBC) this month, with our TBC score at its lowest this year. A low TBC count means fresher, higher-quality milk.





# INTRODUCING...

My name is Privilege Mpofu and I am a 24-year-old second year apprentice from Filabusi, about 100km from Bulawayo. Before enrolling at Ebenezer, I lived with my sister and nieces.

I first heard about Ebenezer from my Pastor, who spoke highly of Ebenezer's commitment to both agricultural education and spiritual growth. Inspired by his words and my longstanding passion for agriculture, I decided to apply, eager to immerse myself in an environment that encourages learning and personal development.

What I love most about Ebenezer is its peaceful environment. Ebenezer accommodates everyone, encouraging us to go about our days with a joyful spirit. On the other hand, one of the most challenging aspects of my experience here has been waking up early for fieldwork! Initially, using a hoe felt like a nightmare, but over time I have adapted and grown accustomed to the demands of farm life.

After graduating from Ebenezer, I plan to find a job in order to save money to start my own agricultural projects in Filabusi. Additionally, I aspire to further my studies and enhance my expertise in the field.

To apprentices starting out at Ebenezer I would say: "This is a safe space where you will learn a lot and grow in every aspect of your life. Embrace the journey!"

MAY 2025

