



EBENEZER MATOBO

Amhlophe, Makorokoto and Congratulations to our 54 first year apprentices who on the 6th October graduated from the 3-month Foundation Course. Three months may seem like a short time, but surviving and thriving through these months is a considerable achievement. These youngsters have grown some muscle, adjusted to some very early mornings and learnt a lot about the joys and challenges of living in close community together! We are super proud of them all and it was wonderful to celebrate their success with many of their parents and other friends of Ebenezer.

Following hotly on the heels of the Foundation Course graduation was the start of the Intermediate Course. 52 of our 1st years are continuing onto this 9-month course which will see them continue to stretch themselves in their faith, knowledge and skills. The new course has started with enthusiasm and a growing sense of responsibility as these apprentices begin to partner with us in managing their own agricultural businesses!

Talking of new skills, we have all been learning some French this month! That is because of the arrival onsite of Theodore Ndayishimiye from Burundi. Theodore works with an organisation called Impact Burundi which seeks to transform the lives of Burundians living in poverty with improved physical, spiritual and emotional health. Theodore is with us for 6 weeks to learn more about Ebenezer as a whole, and in particular to gain skills in poultry production which he plans to implement with Impact Burundi on his return.



CROPPING

October has been a good month for our cropping teams, with all of our planned crops planted and looking good. Rains have provided a welcome boost for our crops amidst some challenges with our pump and irrigation.

This month we planted 2 hectares of maize, 1 hectare of commercial tomato and ½hectare of tomato seed, in partnership with Avanos Seeds.

As expected for October, harvests have been few with just 1,660 kg of tomato coming out of the ground. That is all about to change as we head deeper into summer months and we anticipate some hectic harvesting days ahead!

Our current crops under irrigation include 8 ha of maize, 6 ha of butternut, 4.5 ha of tomato and 3 ha of watermelon. We also have half a hectare of cucumber which we are growing for seed. That's a total of 22 hectares of crop in the ground.





LIVESTOCK

We closed one bath of broilers this month. Following some early performance concerns with birds showing lower-than-expected growth rates, we administered antibiotics to stimulate feed intake and address bacterial pressures. The flock responded positively and by the time of uplift they were hitting an acceptable live weight of 2.39 kg.

We saw a mixed performance across our layer houses in October. Despite a feed shortage in September, our flock in Layer House 1 surprised us with a lay-rate of 89% against a target of 82%. This positive performance was countered by an increased mortality in the house which saw us lose 333 birds from fowl typhoid. In Layer House 4 we are seeing our most consistent performance, with birds achieving and maintaining a 95% lay-rate target.

A big challenge we are facing in our layer production is a decreased egg price on the market which has dropped from \$0.12/egg to \$0.09/egg.

We have seen an increase in our milk quality with month, with our somatic cell count improving as well as our fat to protein ratio. Our milk is now achieving Band A quality milk, the highest quality possible!





INTRODUCING...

Sandile Donga is a 20-year-old second-year apprentice who grew up on Hamara Farm, a poultry farm on the outskirts of Bulawayo. She finished High School in 2022 and for the next 2 years worked as a casual worker at the farm.

Having met one of our graduates at Hamara Farm, Sandile was inspired to apply to Ebenezer because of the opportunity to gain more farming knowledge and skills. And so it was that in July 2024 she arrived at Ebenezer as a new apprentice. At first she found the long working days a challenge - waking early and knocking off from the fields late! Over time she adjusted to this way of life and now it has become her normal. She has enjoyed growing in her farming skills and is particularly proud of her current tomato crop which she is beginning to harvest.

A particular highlight of Sandile's time at Ebenezer has been learning to ride a bike! This newfound skill is emblematic of an overall increase in her confidence over the past year and a half. When she arrived, Sandile was shy and quiet, someone who could not imagine herself standing and talking in front of others. However, under the encouragement and challenge of her coaches and fellow apprentices, she is able to lead with boldness and communicates easily with those around her. As she says, "I've learnt that I can overcome any challenge with confidence."

As she begins to think about her future and life beyond Ebenezer, Sandile is ruling nothing out and is currently researching the requirements to become an aircraft marshall! In the shorter term, she is hoping to find employment within the poultry industry.

When asked what advice she would give to a new apprentice arriving at Ebenezer, Sandile is clear: "Don't give up. Always have confidence. And finish what you started."

