



EBENEZER MATOBO

A lovely January highlight came at the end of the month when we invited all 2024–2025 graduates for a reunion in Bulawayo. Around 20 or so locally-based graduates joined us for a special afternoon of catching up together, playing games, encouraging one another and sharing our experiences and challenges of life beyond Ebenezer. We were grateful to friends from Family Impact, New Life for All, and the Hamara Platform who came to share with our graduates – spiritual encouragements, practical advice and farming opportunities.

At the other end of the Ebenezer spectrum, January has seen us become busier with our preselection process – letting people know about our upcoming course and screening initial candidates. Members of our team have begun travelling far and wide, sharing about Ebenezer and undertaking preselection interviews.

We were delighted this month to welcome onsite Nelson and Tinotenda from the African Church Planting Initiative. This couple from Mutare will be with us for 2–3 months, learning about Ebenezer and how we do things. They have a particular interest in learning as much as they can about our broiler farming, with the hope of replicating what we do in their own area.

We have received some HEAVY rains in January! Flooded rivers have led to lots of travel disruptions and farming inconveniences; nonetheless we are grateful to see our rivers flowing and the dam filling.



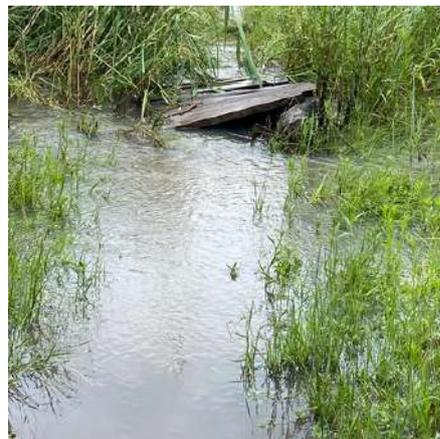
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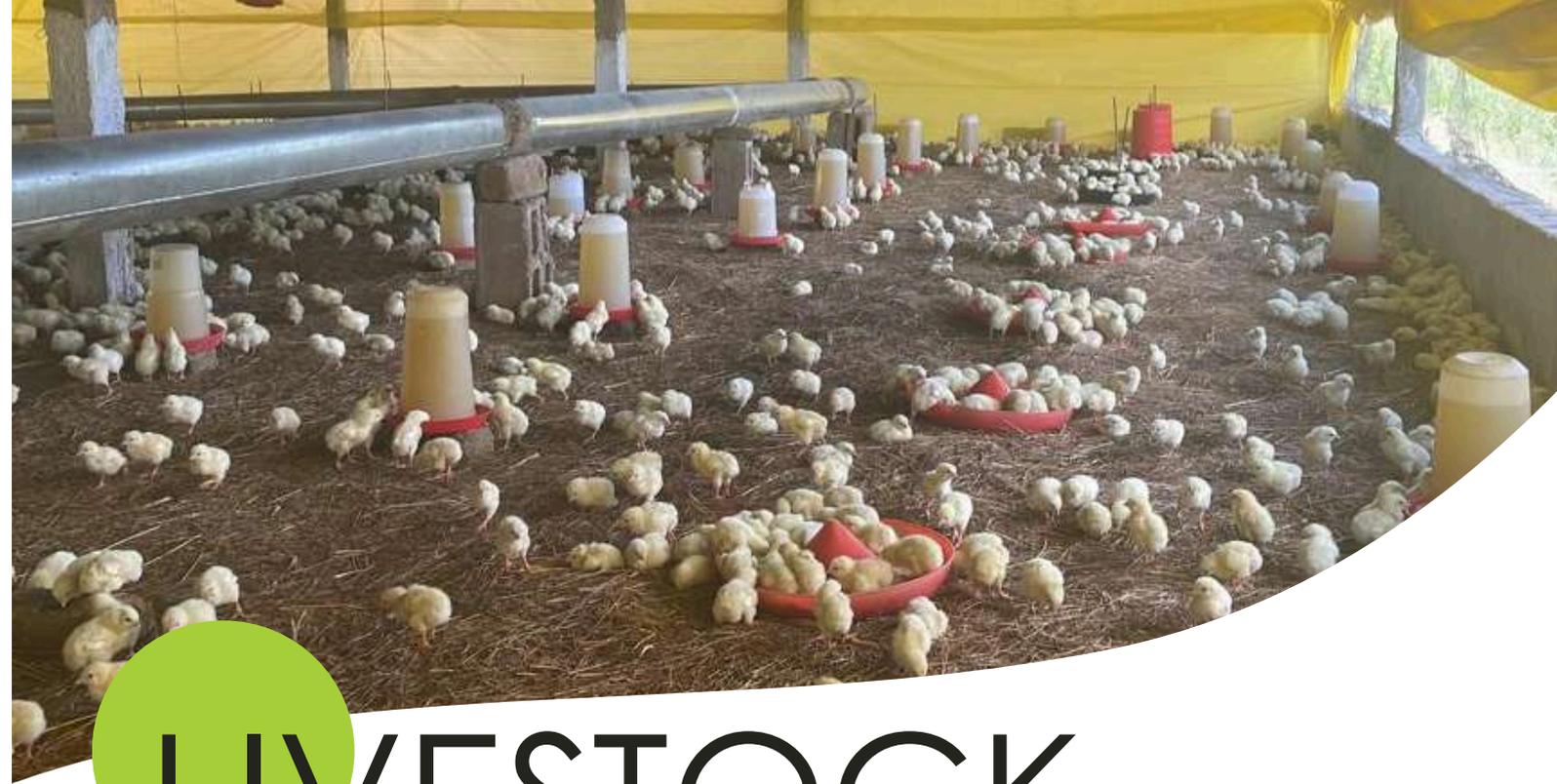
January saw us closing a few of our crops, meaning a less hectic harvesting schedule than we experienced in December. Over the month we harvested a total of 16,860 watermelons and 16,790 kg of butternut.

We finished harvesting and extracting the seed from our first watermelon and butternut seed crops this month. We are a bit disappointed with the the total weight seed extracted which is less than we had hoped. However, seed crops are not only about weight of seed, but number of seeds extracted. Therefore in future crops, we will endeavour to count seed as well as weighing it with a well-calibrated scale.

We experienced very heavy rains in January. We are grateful for this but with the ground so wet, it has delayed some of planting plans. In total we planted 2 ha of butternut and 1 ha each of watermelon, tomato and beans.

Our current crops under irrigation are 11 ha of maize, 3 ha of butternut and 1 ha each of butternut, watermelon, tomato and beans. February looks to be a busy planting month as we seek to catch up on the missed January planting as well as meet our February planting targets.





LIVESTOCK

Our layer team has been absolutely smashing it this month, with target lay-rates exceeded in three of our four layer houses! Most impressive is Layer House 1 which has been managing an average lay rate of 87% against a target of 76%. This is amazing for birds aged 85 weeks. Layer House 2 has been averaging a lay-rate 2% above target and Layer House 4 has been achieving a 95% lay-rate against a target of 92%.

Layer House 3 has dipped in lay-rate to 3% under target. This house has faced challenges in January with the heavy rainfall making manure hard to manage. Layer House 2 has also faced some challenges with manure belts breaking; it has been great to see the layer team working well together to face these challenges head on.

Milk yields in our dairy have continued to increase steadily towards our target of 15 litres per cow per day. We are currently achieving 11 litres per cow. Herd management and health management have been top priorities this month, with vaccines being administered and a pleasing discovery that 18 of our cows are currently pregnant.

With our maize crop nearing harvest, we have been busy preparing silage pits so that we can provide nutritious fodder to our cows later in the year.





INTRODUCING...

My name is Caroline Nsimango, and I graduated from Ebenezer in June 2025. I am originally from Filabusi in Matabeleland South, where I lived with my mum until I completed my A Levels. My friend and neighbour, Lucky, was an apprentice at Ebenezer. What she told me made me interested in applying, not only because I like agriculture but because she told me it was an “amazing” place!

On arrival at Ebenezer, I thought the place was boring because of the diet! However, over time my opinion changed and I loved being with others and feeling part of the family community. I started learning and I enjoyed sharing ideas, especially with the staff at Ebenezer. It was interesting. It did not take me long to adjust to the farming work because of my experience back at home.

The best thing about Ebenezer was the evening programmes. I would often think of ideas and they would be accepted; this meant I grew in organising and leading programmes. Particular favourites were culture days and music concerts. The most challenging thing about Ebenezer was waking early every day. However, even this became a habit.

I learnt a lot about myself at Ebenezer – that I am a good organiser and event planner. I became more confident. I also learnt a lot about God, that he loves us all, that he sacrificed everything for us, that we are chosen, favoured and redeemed.

Since graduation, I have been working at Maleme farm, managing a flock of 4,500 broiler breeders. My work involves managing bird health and ensuring the best environment for our birds. I enjoy handling eggs, which must be done with much care. Life is different from my time at Ebenezer, I must look after myself and manage myself. I am encouraged by my room mate, a fellow graduate from Ebenezer – we both encourage one another in our faith. I can see the benefits of my time at Ebenezer: I know how to read the Bible on my own, and I know how to work hard, even working overtime without complaining!

