



EBENEZER MATOBO

February saw us building stronger bridges between our production and classroom training with a 2-day workshop led by Dutch professor Tom Adams, who's speciality area is connecting formal and informal learning experiences in classroom and vocational settings. Tom worked with our production and classroom coaches to assist them in designing learner-led workshops that connect the theory they receive with the practical experience they gain in the fields. What came out was not only some great workshop ideas but also a deeper team connection around our shared vision for learning across all areas of Ebenezer. Combined with the excellent input we received on Dialogue Education late last year, our team is brimming with enthusiasm, ideas and initiatives to maximise learning for all our apprentices!

More visitors whom we were grateful to receive this month were eye surgeon Dr Steve Beatty and his team who came to run an eye clinic for us and the local community. The team worked incredibly hard, managing to assist over 30 patients in just a few hours, with many receiving new glasses – a life changing experience for some, as you can imagine.

Well done to the Ebenezer FC who this month hosted an excellent tournament at Ebenezer, playing against two other teams, United FC and Ebenezer Graduates. We particularly enjoyed hosting and catching up with past graduates, then setting our soccer skills against them on the pitch!



CROPPING

With many of our recent crops now closed, there was not much to harvest in February. This gave our teams more time and energy to focus on planting and managing the crops currently in the ground. Apprentices have been working particularly hard to keep on top of weeding and disease and pest management, the risk of which has been raised by the abundant rains we have received.

While we have still been receiving a considerable amount of rain, we were grateful for an increase in dry sunny days that have enabled us to meet our planting targets. Throughout February, we planted 2 ha of butternut, 1.5 ha each of maize, tomatoes and beans, and 1 ha of watermelon.

We hope that these drier days continue as we are looking forward to planting a further 11.5 ha of crop in March. This will take our total crops in the ground to 33 hectares.





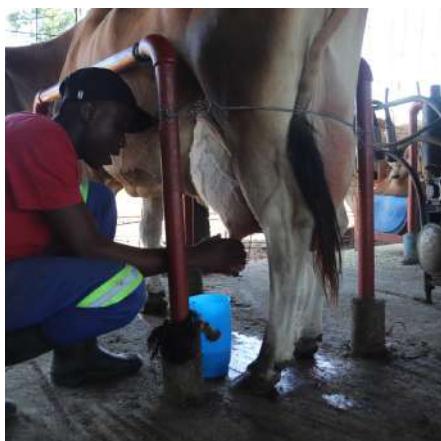
LIVESTOCK

Lay-rates continue to astound us in Layer House 1. These birds are 90 weeks old and still hitting a profitable lay-rate of 74% which is incredible for this age. Our other 3 flocks are also hitting good lay-rates for their age - this is very encouraging for our apprentices who have worked hard to keep management standards high and production efficient.

We have been further impressed by the new apprentices we have welcomed in the layer section in this month. Seven apprentices have been rotated to other Productive Learning Areas, and 7 new apprentices have joined us. They have brought with them plenty of energy and enthusiasm and we are enjoying showing them the ropes, and seeing standards maintained as they learn.

This month saw us housing our largest number of broilers on site ever, with 2 batches of 10,000 birds being grown at the same time. We are seeing a strong market for teen birds, those grown to around 3 weeks rather than the usual 6 weeks, and keeping birds for a shorter period is proving profitable for us. However, the first 3 weeks of a broiler's life are the most crucial and intense in terms of management, so apprentices have been showing us their strength and their skills as they nurture these chicks through to their teenage weeks!

Dairy production has remained consistent with each cow producing around 11 litres of milk per day





INTRODUCING...

Second year Thandolwenkosi Skhosana was born in Bulawayo but lived between Zimbabwe and South Africa throughout his childhood. Before hearing about Ebenezer, Thando was living with his parents in Nyathi and working as an assistant in a local clinic. While he was glad for work, he was not proud to be living at home at the age of 22, and he didn't feel like his life had really begun.

With farming in his family's genes, Thando's mum oversaw an initiative to help small-scale producers dig boreholes for farming. Through her agricultural NGO connections, she heard about Ebenezer. Thando didn't need much encouragement to apply, with his own passion for nature and plants, and with a belief that the best ways to build a life in Zimbabwe are through agriculture or mining. Arriving at the 2-day selection camp during which he got his first glimpse of Ebenezer, Thando's first thought was, "what a great opportunity!" He was, however, unsuccessful on his first attempt. Following this disappointment, he says, "I took a picture of myself and asked myself what I needed to change to meet the requirements of this place. I had rasta hair, cuts on my face and I was hyperactive. I was willing to let everything go in order to come, so I cut my hair and practised being someone who would want to be at Ebenezer."

A year later, Thando reapplied and impressed the Ebenezer team with his transformation. For him this was a turning a point in life: "I thought to myself, I won't be the same in 2 years time. And it's true. I am actually learning and seeing I can bring change where I come from. I have seen a change in myself in terms of spiritual growth, how I face different situations, my attitudes and my personality. I am an introvert who didn't like crowds but I have also learnt how to socialise and enjoy others."

Learning cropping skills and theory has been a highlight for Thando and he likes the combined approach of practical and theoretical learning. For any new apprentices arriving at Ebenezer, his advice would be, "Enjoy enduring! It's not easy but you won't see the beauty around you if you don't enjoy your time here."

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