



EBENEZER MATOBO

A long-held Ebenezer dream came true this month with the generous donation of 50 bunk beds for our apprentices! We had some fun assembling them in the ARC for all to see, before realising that they would not fit through our dormitory doors. So we had some more fun disassembling them and reassembling them in our apprentice rooms! The beds make much better use of the space in our rooms and give every apprentice a clean, comfortable place to sleep. Just as importantly, each apprentice now has a bed of their own, which has done a lot for morale.

Our Advanced Course apprentices got another morale boost on their annual Marketing Trip, always a highlight of the second year. Visiting markets, retailers, processors and suppliers in Bulawayo lets them see their business training play out in real life. It's an eye-opener every time, and it gets them asking good questions about what they could do after Ebenezer.

This month we also enjoyed our annual Holy Spirit night away as part of the Alpha Course which we have been running in our Family Nights. The whole Ebenezer community spent a night at Shalom campsite and loved hearing from Ebenezer graduate Msizi who shared on "Who is the Holy Spirit?" and "How can I be filled with the Spirit?" Msizi was an excellently engaging speaker who deepened our understanding while also making us laugh and generously giving gifts away! As always, these sessions left our apprentices with as many questions as answers, and we have had good times chewing on these in our smaller family groups.



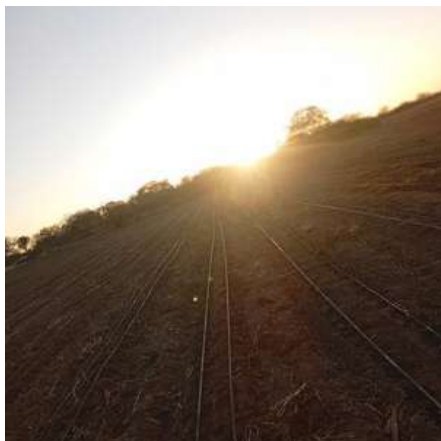
CROPPING

September was a productive month in which we planted a significant amount of crop. Overall, germination was satisfactory and within our expected standards.

This month we planted 3 ha of butternut, 2 ha of tomato and 1 ha of watermelon. Harvests were small as we finished off our winter crops, with 1,000 cabbages harvested alongside 896 bunches of onions.

One challenge we faced this month was animals damaging our crops at the germination stage. Our farm team is working hard to install better fencing in vulnerable areas.

We have planted a larger area of tomatoes and butternut this season, in comparison to previous years. This is the result of our team growing in their capacity to take on more planting and represents good progress in our production.





LIVESTOCK

Unseasonal cold and wet weather hampered the operation of our solar pump towards the end of this month. As you can see from the picture above, innovative means of getting water to our bird houses were quickly put into action.

We hit a new record in our layer flocks this month, with our birds in Layer House 1 reaching a lay rate of 99% on some days! With mortality also low, they are truly a record-breaking batch. Other houses have also recorded good results in September: an average lay-rate of 84% against a target of 77% in Layer House 4 and a lay-rate of 74% for our 100-week-old birds in Layer House 2. Normally we would have culled these birds by this age, but we will keep them going as long as they continue producing this well.

We also placed 6,000 8-week-old birds in Layer House 3 this month. These birds will only start producing eggs in a couple of months or so.

On 1 September we placed a new batch of 12,000 day-old chicks. Despite a strong start, the batch experienced a serious infection around days 4-5 which saw us lose a significant number of birds in just a few days. With assistance from vets, the situation was brought under control around days 10-12 by which time we had lost many birds. It has been a challenging month, but the remaining birds are doing well and heading in the right direction.





INTRODUCING...

This month we quizzed one of our Transformers (trainers) Nkanyiso Sithole about his own experience as an apprentice and what led him to come back to Ebenezer as a coach. He says...

I grew up in Lupane, staying with some uncles. Before coming to Ebenezer as an apprentice, I finished my O Levels and was working as a cowboy, looking after someone else's cattle. I saw an Ebenezer application form that stated "Do Farming, Know God, and Learn Business." That nailed it for me. I saw potential in myself and I wanted a wide variety of farming, business and interaction with others.

I enjoyed being an apprentice a lot, especially the field work. I gained experience growing onions, tomatoes and butternut. What I enjoyed most was seeing plants from germination, growing up to harvest. For me it showed faith – that we can grow something from scratch and then be amazed by the harvest. It brings me hope that if you place something down, you will see results.

Following graduation I got a job as a technical supervisor on a farm. Unfortunately the position was bigger than me, so I decided to leave. I then went into a partnership which grew and grew but unfortunately ultimately failed. Knowing that I have a love for other people, seeing them grow and enjoy life, I decided to apply to come back to Ebenezer in order to invest in others.

On the Ebenezer team, I enjoy helping young apprentices grow. I enjoy investing in young people; for me it's like I'm planting seeds, and I'm ready to celebrate the harvest. My hope for the apprentices is that they see that something small can become big. That if they are faithful with planting, they will see a harvest in farming, business, and in their faith.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" – Galatians 6:9

