

# Lote's journey:

*the engineer-turned-farmer who weathered the storm*



© Quinta do Bom Ovo

*When Lote Muchanga graduated as a mechanical engineer, he decided to use his skills to bring protein-rich eggs and chicken to the market, making them affordable for low-income families. However, his business, Quinta do Bom Ovo, a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Network (SBN) Mozambique, has had to weather the challenges of the climate as well as the recent COVID-19 pandemic.*

According to the [United Nations Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF), chronic malnutrition impacts approximately one in every two children under the age of five in Mozambique – and this concern has been exacerbated by several unforeseen disasters that have afflicted the country in recent years.

The first of these disasters arrived on 14 March 2019, when Cyclone Idai hit Mozambique, affecting 64 districts and 19 counties. Just five weeks later, on 25 April 2019, Cyclone Kenneth struck the north of the country, damaging more than 55,400 hectares of crops according to the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA). These natural disasters impacted infrastructure among local producers and enterprises of all sizes, in turn affecting the supply of nutritious food, especially for low-income families who cannot afford imported goods. Then, just a year later, the COVID-19 pandemic took hold.

SBN, co-facilitated by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), is working to support businesses in receiving technical assistance and access to funding in the wake of such crises. One programme through which this support is implemented is the Recovering Food Systems project, which supports and strengthens food systems in the aftermath of the cyclones. This initiative works

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Lote Muchanga,  
Founder, Quinta do Bom Ovo

with 15 enterprises producing nutritious foods – including eggs, fortified maize flour, iodised salt, broilers, and vegetables – and builds on the success of GAIN's Scaling Up Markets for Nutritious Foods initiative. One SBN member to receive assistance through the project was Quinta do Bom Ovo, an enterprise working to scale-up egg consumption in Mozambique.

## **Building strength in local food systems**

The Sofala province is home to Lote Muchanga – a mechanical engineering graduate who, before the cyclones, was already concerned by the country's high rates of malnutrition. Lote was aware of the nutritional value of chicken and eggs, as they contain high levels of protein and fatty acids, important for pregnant women, and good amounts of vitamin B12 and choline, which aid metabolic activities in young children. Despite these nutritional benefits though, he noticed that Mozambicans eat only 10 to 12 eggs a year, while in neighbouring countries, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, this number is above 40. Furthermore, only 40% of eggs on sale in Mozambique are locally produced.

Lote founded Quinta do Bom Ovo ('The Good Egg Farm') in 2015 and, in 2018, the business



received its first grant from GAIN to support the scaling-up of its egg production from 5,000 per day to an expected 20,000 eggs per day by 2020. Lote's aim was to position eggs as the cheapest source of high-quality animal protein in the market, and supply this nutritious product to low-income populations.

When Quinta do Bom Ovo was established, Lote kept 400 lay hens in a simple structure. By 2018, the business had become a major poultry producer in Sofala province and, "by January 2019, we had purchased more point-of-lay chickens and were expecting to produce close to 9,000 eggs per day," he says.

"We believed our eggs would be on most tables in Sofala. We sought help and invested all our savings. When we thought we had attained our goals, the unexpected happened," Lote explains. The province of Sofala registered some of the highest losses resulting from the tropical cyclones, with more than 20% of the total value in agribusiness destroyed. The disasters destroyed 80% of Quinta do Bom Ovo's infrastructure, including killing some of their flock. After closing for more than a year, the company secured another GAIN grant to support the rapid restoration of local food systems, and was provided with capital investment of USD 100,000 to rebuild stronger, more disaster-resilient infrastructure.

## Resilience in the face of adversity

The company was able to rebuild its stock of lay birds, replace battery cages, and hire technical staff. It also used its own funds to build stronger, more resilient layer houses, while waiting for the battery cages and point-of-lay chicks to arrive. Furthermore, they received technical assistance in business development and marketing resilience strategy from SBN.



It was a good restart. However, just as Quinta do Bom Ovo started to get back on its feet, the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Movement restrictions resulted in an increase in raw material costs, such as feed, and they also experienced delays in supplies and a lack of laying hens on the market. However, despite the challenges posed, Lote was determined to see his business bounce back.

Today, Quinta do Bom Ovo is building new infrastructure using weather-resilient materials and solar power, and exploring sourcing materials from local suppliers. The company has also signed partnerships with local raw material suppliers of soya, maize, and day-old-chicks – building resilience within the economy by supporting local supply chains – and is boosting its own resources.

## The importance of support networks

Quinta do Bom Ovo's competitive advantage lies in its proximity to the market compared to competitors, and consistent supply chains. Since the cyclones, the enterprise has utilised advice provided by GAIN to become more efficient, maximise egg production, and minimise losses, to ensure it sustains a reliable and secure supply to markets.

The company's strategy of acquiring large investments, support, and grants from the local Ministry of Trade and GAIN, has also been crucial. These have allowed Quinta do Bom Ovo to expand its egg production, build cages, and buy feed. "The training from SBN helped provide a management-oriented approach towards growing the business, with our consumers as a guide for the development and improvement of our produce," adds Lote.

## Laying plans for the future

Today, the company has regained its prominence and is almost at its pre-cyclone capacity, with 7,500 chickens supplying eggs for the local market. "I thought it was the end of my business, but we managed to get back on track," says Lote. Looking ahead, Quinta do Bom Ovo intends to become a nationally-recognised company in the production of table eggs and laying hens, with a 40% or above market share throughout the Sofala province.

"The last two years have shown us that the business must be resilient. Quinta do Bom Ovo was hit twice, but we are still standing and taking our place in the food system. It was not easy, but the help we had from GAIN and SBN in Mozambique encouraged us to continue the good work to improve the national food system," says Lote with a smile.



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