



“Cane For Growth”

Eswatini Cane Growers Association Quarterly Newsletter

April 2021
14th Edition

Executive Editor’s Note

Welcome to another ECGA Quarterly Newsletter. We are writing this 14 Edition during a dip in the Covid 19 pandemic. In our first article we caution against complacency towards the pandemic. We also encourage growers and stakeholders to take the available vaccine at earliest available opportunity.

The ECGA Office has recently seen some staff changes. We welcome the new Finance and Administration Officer. In the same vein we bid farewell to the Grower Support Manager (GSM) whose outstanding personality, aptitude and diligence has earned her a lucrative international post. Sad to lose her but at same time we are proud to see her grow professionally.

Our Vuvulane Irrigated Farms (VIF) members remain in our minds and prayers as they face a number of challenges. We have this dream that one day they will be able to refocus on growing sugarcane, something they have able demonstrated passion and aptitude for. Challenges around to the land and structural issues remain. Meanwhile the ECGA structures have done what they can in terms of facilitating dialogue on all issues with main focus on operational support in terms of water management.

The last article reflects on the conclusion of the 2020 harvesting season and beginning of 2021 campaign. Forecasts are that the 2020 campaign will end well in terms of sucrose price although production ended lower than budget. A further, albeit marginal sucrose price increase is forecasted for 2021 campaign.

We hope our members and other stakeholders will enjoy reading their newsletter and give feedback for improvement. We wish our members and the industry a sweeter cane farming year.

– Dr. S V Nkambule (CEO)

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By Dr. S V Nkambule – CEO

As the Association we are very pleased to announce that Mrs Sibongile Langwenya has joined us as the new Finance and Administration Officer effect 11 January 2021. Ms Gina-Langwenya holds an AAT-3 certificate and brings relevant experience from organizations including World Vision and Youth Enterprise Fund. She has already started making impact in the Finance and Administration of ECGA. We welcome and wish Ms Gina Langwenya a long and fruitful stay in ECGA. We believe that she will be of much value to the Growers as she continues working and engaging with them. We are grateful to have a Finance and Administration Officer who is as passionate as the team and carries the same values as the Association.



Figure 1. Mrs Sibongile Langwenya. ECGA Finance new Administration Officer.

On a sad note the office reports that by the time most of you read this newsletter our first Grower Support Manager (GSM) Zinhle Dlamini-Ndlovu will have left the Association to pursue growth opportunities. Zinhle is a hardworking and innovative leader. After her 22-months, with EGCA, she is leaving a legacy that will be a challenge for us as a team and for her replacement to improve on. She built strong relations with growers and stakeholders in general. She played a key role in the development of the new 5-year strategy, developing and coordinating the chemical container disposal protocol and implementation of industry sustainability strategy. Her presence was felt in the various industry Committees and platforms where she participated.

I am confident that all members of the Association will agree with me that it will be difficult to find a suitable replacement. However, we wish her the best in her future endeavors. The process of identifying the replacement is at an advanced stage.



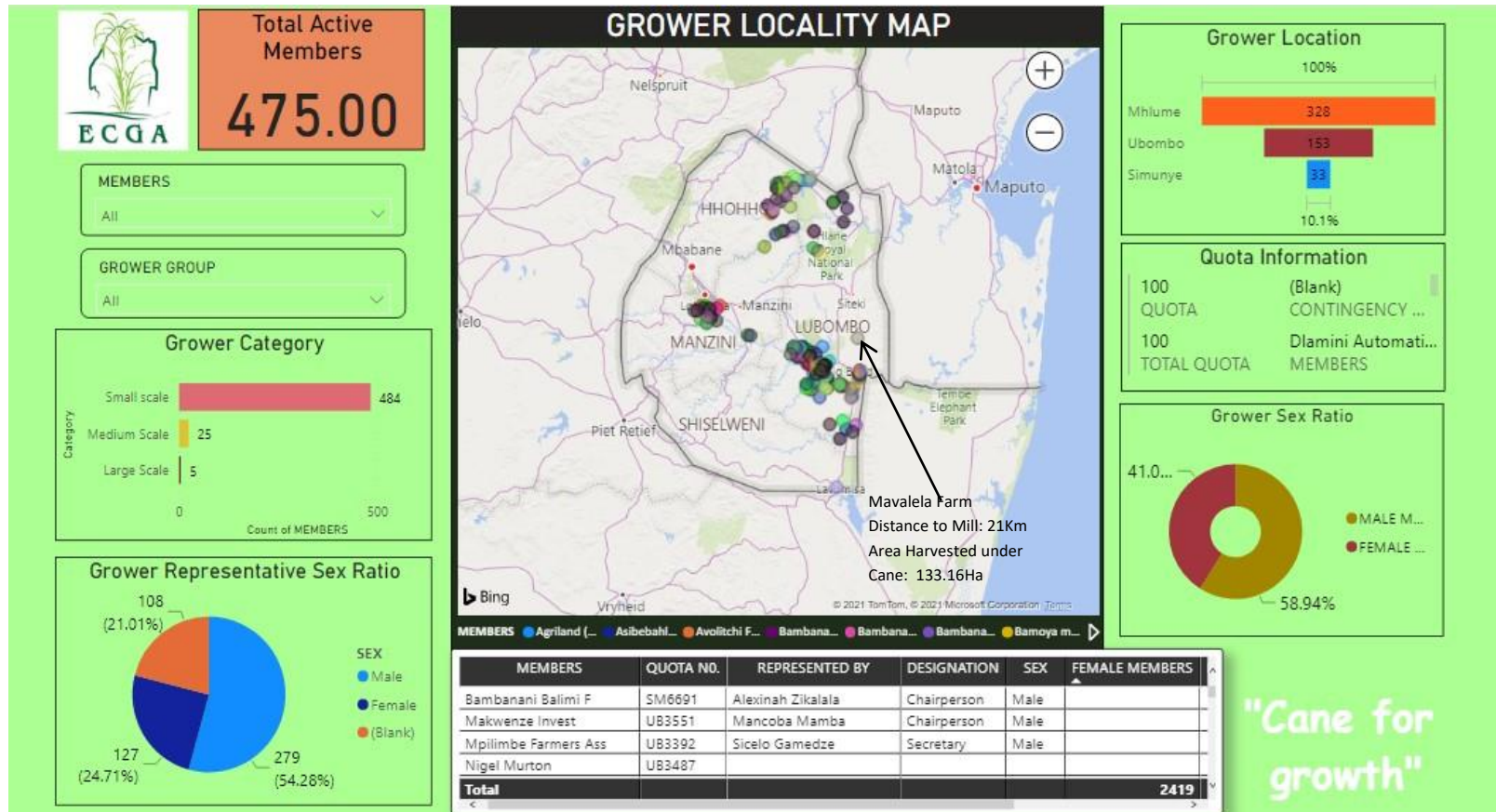
Figure 2. Mrs. Zinhle Dlamini-Ndlovu outgoing Grower Support Manager.

Grower Database

By Nomathemba Dladla-Msibi

A Grower database was created where we managed to compile information on all the active Growers that are under the Association. We collected information such as their representatives, contact details, location, area harvested under cane, Grower by gender as well as their farming category (i.e. large, medium or small scale). This has been an exciting journey accompanied with great lessons.

We encourage the Growers to continue working with us on making this database current and up-to-date as we highly value their input in this exercise. The main purpose for this database is for the Association to have all Grower information at its fingertips, which can then be used for further analyses. We plan to create a similar dashboard that will look at the crop production statistics that could provide great projections of the industry.



Grower Database Dashboard 2020 - 2021

By Zinhle Ndlovu – GSM

In an attempt to assist the VIF growers with their water challenge, a water working group has been formed. The group consists of representatives from the following entities; VIF growers, Mhlume Planters Group leadership, ECGA Office, Eswatini Sugar Association Technical services, Extension Office and Mhlume water. Some of the challenges are caused by poor irrigation scheduling and water management. The team decided on having a pilot project on irrigation scheduling with 5 growers to demonstrate that it is possible so that the other growers can learn from their peers. ESA TS irrigation team and the Extension officer responsible are leading the project. The ECGA office commends the growers who have volunteered to be part of this project and hopes that they will see the benefit both in the short and long term.



Figure 3. Sugarcane irrigation methods.

In the month of April we commemorate *World Health Day*. This is a reminder that we need to do our best to live a healthy lifestyle. If you want to be a well-rounded, healthy individual, here are a couple of staying healthy tips that may help you do just that:

- Maintain a regular exercise routine
- Be conscious of your diet
- Engage in things that you are passionate about
- Surround yourself with positive energy

By Dr. S V Nkambule – CEO

At the time of reporting there were appearances that the more severe second wave of the Covid 19 pandemic was coming to end. As of 8 April 2021 there were only 57 active cases in Eswatini. Similar trends are reported in neighboring South Africa. While this is good news, members are warned that globally there is anticipation of a possibly another wave that might be more severe. Some countries are already experiencing the feared third wave. Precautions remain the best defense against the pandemic.

At the time of writing over 20 000 Emaswati, mainly elderly and those with comorbidities, have been vaccinated. Government is anticipating to receive more vaccines that should be administered to the rest of the population. The Office is aware of the negative sentiments against the vaccine currently available in Eswatini. However, most of these sentiments are unfounded and misleading. The World Health Organization and Eswatini Ministry of Health have assured that the benefits far outweigh the risk of side effects. In other words we are in greater danger from the pandemic than we are from the rumored side effects. Members are encouraged to rely on the health authorities (WHO and Ministry of Health), for information, and make use of available opportunities to take the vaccine. The author of this article can testify that he has received the first vaccine without any adverse side effect.



Grower Report

By Dr. S V Nkambule – CEO

The 2020 milling season ended in December 2020. At the time of writing the estimated final prices were;

Mhlume : E4 346 per tonne sucrose
Big Bend : E4 253
Simunye : E4 453

Industry average = E 4 300

The forecast industry average is about 14% higher than the E3 763 achieved in the previous year.

The 2021 milling season kicked off at Big Bend on 7 April 2021. The other 2 mills will start later in April 2021. The provisional first payments are as follows;

Mhlume : E3 979 per tonne sucrose
Big Bend : E3 908
Simunye : E4 065

Current forecasts show that the 2021 price will be approximately 3% higher than the 2020 price. However, it is still too early to call as many things may change over the next 12 months.

ESWATINI CANE GROWERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Container Management

By Zinhle Ndlovu – GSM

12184 containers disposed

That is **12.1 tonnes** of hazardous waste material.

Now that all the containers that had accumulated over years have been disposed, there is a need for a coordinated approach to make sure that collection centres are identified and the frequency of collections is set and communicated with recyclers.



Figure 4. Containers collected for disposal.

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