



**ESWATINI CANE GROWERS
ASSOCIATION
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER**

“CANE FOR GROWTH”



EXECUTIVE EDITOR’S NOTE

It is my singular honour and pleasure to present the March 2020 edition of the ECGA Newsletter. I am writing this note from my dining desk as the COVID-19 emergency has forced us to close office and work from home. The virus has brought with unprecedented paradigm shifts in the way we should do business and conduct our personal lives. The country has recorded 10 confirmed cases. Out of these four (4) had recovered at the time of compiling this newsletter. Needless to say, the risk does not appear to have reached its pinnacle. We wish to plead with ECGA members and their families to play their role in slowing down the spread of the disease by among other things complying with the state of emergency and the precautions summarized in the article herein.

The article also covers a breakthrough in the disposal of chemical containers. Growers are encouraged to take advantage of the availed opportunity. Finally, there is an article covering presentations by Eswatini Electricity Company regarding economical use of electricity. Growers are encouraged to learn from the insight provided in the presentations.

We take this opportunity to wish our members safety and good health during the lockdowns.

Dr. S.V. Nkambule, CEO

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GROWER SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH MITIGATING ELECTRICITY TARIFFS

By Dr S.V. Nkambule

Electricity is the biggest production cost for sugarcane farmers in Eswatini, accounting for about 25% of total cost. The main reason is cost escalations that have exceeded 70% over the last 6 years. Another reason is inefficiencies in the use of the resource. The latter may be attributed to ignorance and poor designs.

During the February 2020 round of PG Feedback meetings, we invited Eswatini Electricity Company to create awareness among farmers both on tariff trends and opportunities for efficiencies and economies. The main messages in the presentations were that;

1. Cost escalations result from escalations by Eskom on whom Eswatini relies to meet about 80% of its electricity.
2. That growers can save costs by, among other things, observing the following
 - a. Understanding their tariff classifications. Large growers fall between T1 and T2. Most small to medium scale growers fall within T3 (>100 kVA) and T4 (70-100 kVA) tariff categories. Some small growers have been placed on S1 and S2 categories wherein time of use does not matter but they are charged higher unit costs. The tariff category is reflected in the monthly bills.
 - b. Maximising use during off-peak hours/season (summer and night time) and minimising during peak demand (winter and daytime). The two “tariff wheels” (schematic illustrations) on the right showing peak and off-peak hours/seasons, with corresponding tariff price are obtainable from EEC.
 - c. Understanding and managing maximum demand and access charges i.e. avoiding spikes in power usage. The ECGA made strong verbal and written submissions advocating shortening of the access charge carrying period from the current 12 months. Although not promising anything EEC undertook to engage stakeholders further regarding this thorny subject.
3. The Eswatini Energy Regulatory authority (ESERA) had approved average 1.03% and 1.05% tariff increase effective 1 April 2020 and 1 April 2021 respectively.

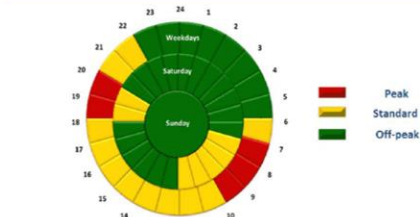


Captured during the presentations by EEC

It should be noted that EEC had asked for 5.7% increase for each of the next 2 years. The downward adjustment was partially influenced by representations by customers including ECGA during the public hearings.

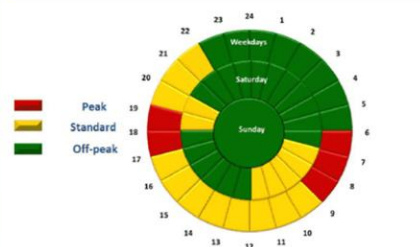
Growers are encouraged to be vigilant to their power use patterns to mitigate the high costs of power.

LOW SEASON TARIFFS SEPTEMBER -MAY



- Manage load during the Peak Hours –Peak E1.74 , Off-Peak E0.99.
- Monitor Maximum Demand and Access Charge.

HIGH SEASON TARIFFS JUNE TO AUGUST



- Manage load during the Peak Hours –Peak E4.95 , Off-Peak E0.99.
- Monitor Maximum Demand and Access Charge.

THE PLANNERS GROUP MEETINGS WHICH WERE SCHEDULED FOR 21-23 APRIL HAVE BEEN CANCELLED DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

ECGA JOINS THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

By Zinhle Ndlovu

On 26 March 2020, the ECGA in partnership with SWABCHA sensitised ECGA Branch Executive Committee members and Vuvulane Zone leaders on the COVID-19 pandemic commonly known as Corona Virus. Extension officers also participated in the training.



Social distancing demonstrated: Participants from Mhlume and Simunye posed for a picture after the Training on COVID -19

The Objective of the training was to give members information on the COVID-19 pandemic, and allow them to ask questions for clarifications on certain issues. The trainees are expected to further sensitise others in their different constituencies. One of the questions raised by members was the issue of the “Partial lockdown” and what it means to them as growers. At the time of training, it was still not so clear on what was expected specifically from growers. The trainer emphasised that the necessary basic precautions must be taken to prevent further spread of the virus. Businesses are expected to assess their work situations and eliminate any risks of exposing more people. Proper management of transporting and accommodating cane cutters remain critical for the smallholder grower. There is a need for all concerned to work together and prevent exposure and new infections.

You can catch COVID-19, no matter how sunny or hot the weather is. Countries with hot weather have reported cases of COVID-19. To protect yourself, make sure you clean your hands frequently and thoroughly and avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.

FACT:

Exposing yourself to the sun or to temperatures higher than 25C degrees DOES NOT prevent the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)



World Health Organization #Coronavirus #COVID19

Prevent the spread;

- Wash your hands with water and soap for 20 seconds
- No handshakes, embraces or hugs
- Avoid touching your face, eyes or nose
- Clean and disinfect surfaces
- Observe social distancing
- Avoid meetings of more than 20 people

FINALLY; A BREAKTHROUGH IN EMPTY CONTAINER DISPOSAL

By: Zinhle Ndlovu

What we consume and the packaging it comes with creates tonnes of waste. The sugarcane industry, especially smallholder growers are often challenged with the disposal of empty chemical containers. Some farms generate an average of 220 empty containers a year.



A pile of more than 250 empty containers at Ekuvinjelweni Farm awaiting collection for proper disposal

The great news is that after months of trying to get a reliable recycler to “clean” the farms off waste, there has been a breakthrough. A total of 3467 empty containers were disposed in March 2020 alone. This was achieved through collaboration between ECGA and Extension Officers, with ECGA’s Grower Support Manager leading the operation.

Growers are encouraged to work closely with Extension Officers for a smooth and safe disposal of the containers. About 250 containers make a collection site but the recycler needs to collect 500 per day for it to make economic sense.

More than 3000 empty pesticides containers disposed

REUSE 
REDUCE
RECYCLE



MAKE SURE WORKING SPACES ARE THOROUGHLY CLEANED AS THEY MAY HAVE PESTICIDE RESIDUES!!!

To avoid re-use of empty containers for domestic purposes, **always triple rinse, puncture and store in a safe place** until it is collected.

MM&N Farmers Association: “We are Fairtrade Certified”

By: Nonsikelelo Sikhondze (MM&N’s Administrator)

ABOUT MM&N

MM&N is a second grade Fairtrade certified organisation made up of three individual associations which are Mankontshane, Makhabeni and Ntisheni. These farms were established 26 years ago. They have a combined area of 209.8 hectares with 78 members.

BEING FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED

MM&N became Fairtrade Certified in 2012. Being Fairtrade certified has helped us understand that workers and community members are partners in the business and also to follow good management practices. Fairtrade principles also emphasise the protection of the environment, worker health and safety and proper use of chemicals.

Uses of premium

The Premium which we received over the years has helped us to improve our governance and management systems which includes proper management of records which is critical in a business. We have also made improvements in our irrigation systems and as you may know, irrigation is critical in the sugarcane business.

We are really happy to be Fairtrade Certified and we understand that this is not just about certification, its best management practises and it should be a way of life for all.



Capacity building for continuous improvement. This is done by both internal and external resource

FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED



We care for our community members; A house donated to Gogo Thobela

A place where employees are partners in the business. Workers benefiting from Fairtrade Premium



Training by Fairtrade Officer on Child and Forced Labour which is funded by Mondelez

Neat Offices, proper records management and a lot of trophies in the bag

