

October 2020

10th Edition

Eswatini Cane Growers Association Quarterly Newsletter



“Cane For Growth”

Executive Editor’s Note

Someone once said “never waste a crisis”. The point was to emphasize that something good can come out of a bad situation. I am conscious that this is the 3rd newsletter we have published since the Covid-19 imposed partial lockdown in Eswatini. It is heartening to observe that growers and their business, despite cost intensive compliance measures, have not only survived but have also grown from the experience. We have missed personal interactions with our members. However, technology has kept us in contact. The importance of tools like this newsletter has been clearly highlighted.

In this issue we reflect on the life of our longest serving staff member who passed on. It is a pain we are sure is shared equally by staff and growers who have interacted with Make Dumsile Zulu in the past 18 years of service. We wish to extend our condolences to her family, friends and ECGA members on the loss.

The newsletter also indulges on the fitting and topical subject of employee and farmer wellness. We have also devoted space to strides being made on the safe and proper disposal of empty chemical containers.

The new 5-year strategy was completed during the quarter reported on. This document maps the way forward for the Association in the next 5 years. It contains aggressive approaches that will require diverse resources and energies from all members of ECGA. We also update growers on the sugarcane farming business environment in general.

We had opportunity to form a new alliance with Catalyze by hosting a very capable and strong intern in Nomathemba. She has added enormous and much needed value to the Association.

We trust members will enjoy reading

– Dr S V Nkambule

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Make Dumie is Resting

By Zinhle Ndlovu – GSM

The 2nd of October 2020 is an important day for the Eswatini Cane Growers association. This is the day the late Dumsile E. Zulu's life was celebrated at Ka-Schielle High School. Many braved the rain and cold weather to celebrate a life that impacted so many in different ways. Some of us still shed some tears when we think of her because we know we won't see this gentle person ever again.

“At Cane Growers, she was affectionately known as Make Dumie because besides being the eldest member of the team, she also played the mother role very well. She was the Finance and Admin Officer in our organisation. When she met her death, she had served ECGA for 18 years having started her career here on 1 June 2002. She performed her role with integrity which is critical for anyone working with finances. Though gone; with the office currently being audited, there are no fears of mismanagement of funds” - Dr Sipho Nkambule, ECGA CEO

During her time of service, she worked under 3 different CEO's; Mr Z Nkhosi, Mr PM Ginindza and the current ECGA CEO, Dr SV Nkambule. With her character and reputation even her former Leaders had something good to say about the late Make Dumie.



Sitsi “*Akalale kahle waNdabezitha Mageba. Alale kahle uMbhele loluhlata lonjengencoshane*”

Mr Nkhosi had this to say about Make Dumie, “..... As an Executive Director of the ECGA then, I recall that she was an industrious and dedicated officer. She was a dependable officer who became indispensable in the training programme of the Cane Growers. Her length of service at the Cane Growers was testimony of her good service”.

Mr Ginindza had this to say, “.....She was always cheerful, got on well with all her co-workers; a consummate team player who carried out her duties without ever complaining. She made the running of SCGA (now ECGA) a lot easier on me than it would otherwise have been and I hope that her co-operative spirit lived on even after my departure”.

All speakers testified about her belief system which was unquestionable and her exceptional serving spirit.

The ECGA family will remember her for her meek and cheerful spirit.

Employee Wellness

By Nomathemba Msibi

Good health is crucial for the wellness of any individual and this cannot be emphasized more in the year 2020 with an epidemic that has affected the whole world. For people going to work in this season it is paramount that the health of employees be made a priority.

a) What is employee wellness?

This is any form of health promotion or health policy and educational resources within the workplace that is designed to support a healthy lifestyle or to improve the employee's health. Employee wellness goes beyond the physiological and mental health of the employee; it also looks into the happiness and satisfaction for the employee at the workplace.

b) Factors of health and wellbeing in the workplace

Before we look at the benefits of employee wellness, it is important to point out that the general health of an employee affects them and their work environment. Employee health does not only affect medical costs, but it also affects the productivity of the workplace. With an unhealthy workforce a company is most likely to lose money in productivity alone.

There are many personal factors outside of the workplace that can affect an employee, such as family. However, people spend a large proportion of their time at work and employers carry the potential to affect the employee's wellbeing either negatively or positively based on a number of factors they control as employers. Some of these factors include the work environment (daily work

processes), employee relationships, HR policies that may include the fairness over pay and promotions as well as transparency. Employers focusing on employee wellness can improve the health and contentment of the employee even outside of the workplace (Sentinel Benefits & Financial Group, 2014).

c) The benefits of implementing a wellness program

Lower healthcare costs: As mentioned earlier that a good wellness program can encourage an individual to make healthy changes outside of their workplace and this can improve disease and sickness management and prevention.

Reduction in employee turnover:

Employees are bound to stay longer in their place of work where their wellbeing is prioritized.

Compensation and disability expense cuts:

Not only do wellness programs benefit the employee, but the employer also benefits through saving money on insurance and compensations.

Reduced absenteeism: Employees that cultivate a disease and sickness prevention lifestyle are healthier, meaning that there are fewer chances of sick days. This also improves their work productivity, where work is delivered more efficiently.

Improves employee morale: A company that takes care of its employees' wellbeing is seen as a better workplace. Employees that feel well taken care of will be more committed to their jobs. In addition, a healthy work environment inspires its employees.

Attracts employment: People will gravitate towards a company that implements excellent wellness programs because this shows them that the company puts their workers' needs first.

ECGA & SWABCHA Wellness Interventions

By Nomathemba Msibi

Employee and cane grower wellness is a priority under ECGA. The company's subscription under SWABCHA has enabled biometric and medical screenings for the employees as well as the growers.

"The likely hood of people not recovering from COVID-19 is also influenced by underlying diseases such as Diabetes, Hypertension and HIV. That is why it is critical for individuals to get tested and know their status when it comes to these diseases" Mbuso Hleta, SWABCHA Programmes and Marketing Officer

SWABCHA worked well to inform and educate the growers on the importance of their health and on disease prevention. They visited 19 Sugar Cane Grower sites as well as the ECGA team to conduct HIV tests and counseling, basic TB screening, Hepatitis B screening, Syphilis screening, Blood Pressure monitoring, Blood Glucose Testing. A total of 334 workers and members were reached.

Not only were tests and screenings done, but SWABCHA led comprehensive discussions on the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

An employee or a grower knowing his or her status on the tests mentioned above is a good way to get them started on having a healthy lifestyle. This enables the grower or employee to make the necessary lifestyle changes and to be cautious of they eat.



**SWABCHA
at Cane
Grower
sites**

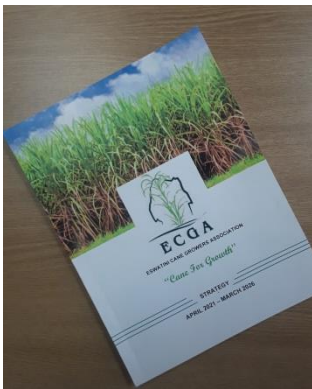


ECGA- Catalyze Internship

By Zinhle Ndlovu – GSM

The Eswatini Cane Growers Association and Catalyze have joined forces to promote job creation and skills capacity building of the youth of Eswatini through an internship programme. This is achieved through the Catalyze “*Sustainable Partnership for Agriculture, Renewable Energy and Climate Change Programme*” which is funded by the European Project.

Through this programme one young person is attached at the ECGA office between the 17th of August to 18th of December 2020.



**ECGA
Strategy
graphic
design**

Her main role is to provide support in populating of grower database; capturing of member basic data and mapping of growers and Information management which includes archiving of documents.

Meet Nomathemba

Nomathemba Msibi, born Dladla has a Master’s Degree in Urban Studies from University of the Witwatersrand with majors in Understanding Cities of the South and Community Participation in Urban Governance.



She completed her postgraduate studies in 2018 and has worked with different organisations at different capacities. She has some experience in Town Planning, community development, and housing establishments.

Nomathemba is a team player and dependable, which makes her a great person to work with; her computer and graphic designing skills are exceptional. She has done the graphic design for the Strategy document and given our Newsletter a new face. ECGA being a small office is benefitting greatly from the Catalyze Programme and from having an Intern of Nomathemba’s calibre.

We hope she enjoys her experience at the ECGA.

Disposal of empty pesticide containers

A total of **2 659** containers were collected from the Mhlume and Simunye PG members between July and August. A total of **6 126** containers (*9.2 tonnes*) have been collected since the operation started in March 2020.



Grower Report

By Dr. S V Nkambule – CEO

We are all about growing cane. The current milling season has been dominated by what I can call performance amidst precautions against Covid-19 pandemic. The sugarcane business was from the beginning classified as essential hence work continued throughout the lockdown. Several adjustments have been imposed by the new.

COVID -19

At the time of reporting (8 October 2020) the Statistics were as follows;

	Eswatini	World
Confirmed Cases	5 632	36 791 099
Deaths	113 (%)	1 067 439 (2.9%)
Recovered	5 231 (93%)	27 688 721 (75.3%)
Active	288 (5%)	8 521 206 (23.2%)

The emerging picture is that there has been a trend towards stability in the country. The number of new cases has been declining for the last about one month. The national recovery rate is above global average.

The encouraging trend is good news BUT the global picture shows that the trend may turn if we relax too prematurely. Growers are therefore encouraged to proceed with the same caution that they have demonstrated in the past 6 months.

Current advice by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with World Health Organization is as follows;

- i. Wear a mask consistently and correctly
- ii. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds OR use an alcohol based sanitizer to clean your hands, regularly.
- iii. Always keep at least 1-meter from other people.
- iv. Avoid 3Cs; closed spaces with poor ventilation, crowded places and close-range conversations.
- v. Opt for outdoors than indoors.

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN APPROVED

In July 2020 the ECGA 5-year Strategic Plan was approved to take effect on 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026. The document is anchored on 5 pillars;

1. **Finance – Diversified Revenue**
2. **Customer Service – Grower Empowerment**
3. **Customer Service – Stakeholder Relations**
4. **Learning & Growth – Employee Capacity Building**
5. **Internal Business Processes – Internal Efficiencies & Innovation**

Our new vision is:

To ensure a profitable, diversified and sustainable cane grower

We aspire to abide by the culture of SUGAR;

- ▶ **S – Service Driven**
- ▶ **U – United**
- ▶ **G – Goal oriented**
- ▶ **A – Adaptable**
- ▶ **R – Reliable**

We are gearing ourselves to collectively drive our strategy in the next 5 years.

ECGA Newsletter

PROSPECTS FOR YIELD DECLINE IN THE MIDST OF RISING PRICE

The current projections show that grower sucrose yields will go down by about 2% compared to budget and 5% up compared to previous year. The possible factors for slight yield decline include aphid infestations and physiological immaturity.

Forecasts for the same period show that the price paid to growers for sucrose is likely to increase by about 6% year on year thus potentially improving grower revenue year on year.



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