



# ECGA Newsletter

3<sup>rd</sup>  
Quarter



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# CEO's note

## Dr Siphon Nkambule

**T**HE third quarter has been characterised by strong engagement locally and internationally, as ECGA continues to position Eswatini's growers within a rapidly evolving global sugar landscape.

Our participation in London at the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG) consultations and the 34th seminar of the International Sugar Organization (ISO) ensured that the voice of Eswatini's growers was represented amid discussions on declining global sugar prices. The global shift toward value addition and sustainability reinforces the need for resilience and strategic adaptation within our industry.

Locally, Planters Group meetings provided important updates on production estimates, trends in sucrose prices, and the five-year outlook. Policy and regulatory developments also featured prominently this quarter.

We welcomed the launch of the solar PV installer accreditation programme by the Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority (ESERA), which will protect growers investing in renewable energy solutions.

There is continued engagement and discussions around agricultural water pricing with relevant stakeholders, to ensure affordability and fairness for growers.

Emerging EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) signal a clear direction toward greater traceability, environmental stewardship, and supply chain accountability. While sugar is not currently listed under EUDR, sustainability and transparency are fast becoming market expectations rather than nice to have standards. ECGA remains committed to keeping growers informed and prepared for

these shifts.

On corporate governance perspective we welcome the launch of the King V Report, as ECGA continues to strengthen governance and enhance oversight in alignment with evolving best practices. King V provides a modernized set of principles for ethical, stakeholder-inclusive, and outcomes-based corporate governance. The Code becomes effective, for adoption, from 1 January 2026. Our agric finance corner segment, focuses on budgeting as a practical tool for managing cash-

flow volatility. By strengthening budgeting practices through operating, capital, and cash budgets growers can navigate the seasonal nature of sugarcane farming business and better manage cash flow risk.

In the quarter, we bid farewell to 2 of our outgoing Exco members, who retired from their respective organizations. We thank Ms SM Magagula and Mr NP Mkhonta for their dedicated, skillful and diligent service to the industry and wish them the best in their golden years.



# London meetings

By Mxolisi Hlophe



**T**HE Eswatini sugar industry, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Eswatini Sugar Association, growers, millers as well as Tibiyo Takangwane converged in London in early December to participate in key international sugar industry engagements. Representing growers was ECGA's Chairman, alongside the Mhlume PG Chairman and the Grower Support Manager.

ECGA's participation in these meetings is crucial, as it ensures that the voice of Eswatini's growers is represented at the global level and that the Association remains informed and engaged on international trends shaping the sugar industry. The meetings also provided a valuable platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration with other growers and industry stakeholders.

## World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG) Consultations

ECGA first participated in the WABCG consultations held on 1 December 2025. During the "Around the World" session, ECGA's Chairman delivered a brief presentation highlighting sugar production data and

industry developments in Eswatini. The presentation aimed to provide fellow growers from around the world with insights into the Eswatini sugarcane sector and the challenges and opportunities facing growers locally.

**Key topics discussed during the WABCG consultations included:** The value of farming data for growers' decision-making; an overview of the global sugar market; and emerging applications of sugar beet- and sugarcane-based materials within the global bioeconomy.

The WABCG meeting concluded with a joint statement emphasising the growing importance of research, innovation, and data-driven decision-making in addressing challenges facing the global sugar sector.

A strong statement was made in relation to the crisis facing the sugar sector regarding the nearly 25 % decline in world sugar prices over the past year.

Furthermore innovation is needed in creating value-added by-products derived from sugar beet and sugarcane and ensure fair value sharing across the production chain.

## 34th ISO International Seminar: "Sugar – So Much More Than a Sweetener"

The ECGA team also attended the 34th International Sugar Organization (ISO) International Seminar, held from 2–3 December 2025 in London under the theme "Sugar – So Much More Than a Sweetener." The seminar highlighted how the global sugar sector is evolving beyond traditional sugar production towards a diversified, value-added, and low-carbon bio-economy.

Discussions centred on successful international case studies demonstrating how sugarcane and sugar beet industries are developing and producing a wide range of products, including ethanol, biochemicals, bio-based materials, renewable energy, bagasse-based products, molasses, animal feed, and other co-products. These examples illustrated how diversification can improve industry resilience, reduce exposure to volatile sugar markets, and enhance environmental sustainability.

Ms Nontobeko Mabuza from Eswatini Sugar Association delivering a key presentation under the session "Working Together -SADC Sugar Producers Consultative Forum," where she unpacked the importance of regional collaboration among sugar producers in navigating shared challenges and opportunities, making relevance to the SADC Sugar Producers Consultative Forum.



PG Feedback meetings.

**P** G Feedback meetings ECGA held Planters Group (PG) feedback meetings in early November to keep growers informed on sugar prices, production estimates, and industry developments, while also creating space for growers to raise their issues. The meetings kicked off with the Mhlume PG on 4 November, and moved on to the Big Bend PG on November 5, and finally concluding with the Simunye PG on the 6th of November.

Growers were briefed on Estimate 3 for the 2025/26 season, which indicates total industry sucrose production of 791,212 tons, up from 779,537 tons in the previous season. Updated sucrose prices under Estimate 3 were shared as follows: E6,016 per ton at Mhlume Mill, E5,893 at Big Bend Mill, and E6,123 at Simunye Mill.

A five-year forecast was also presented, showing a sharp increase in sucrose production from 2026, rising steadily to 909,738 tons by 2030. Sucrose prices are projected to decline from 2026, before re-

covering from 2027 and reaching an estimated E7,125 per ton by 2030.

The ECGA office also updated growers on key operational and regulatory matters. These included developments in the electricity sector, such as the Eswatini Electricity Company's embedded generation feed-in tariff application and ongoing consultations on standardized connection charges. Growers raised concerns around affordability and limited clarity on solar installation requirements. Updates were further shared on the proposed differential agricultural water pricing framework, focusing on cost-reflective tariffs and incentives for efficient irrigation. In addition, growers were briefed on the recently held grower competition, the Annual General Meeting, and progress on the establishment of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for growers.

### EXCO meetings

In December, ECGA's Executive Committee (ExCo) convened its quarterly meeting, bringing to-

gether grower representatives to deliberate on matters affecting the Association and its members. The ExCo meets quarterly as part of its mandate to provide strategic direction, governance, and oversight of ECGA's affairs.

As the governing body of the Association, the Board plays a critical role in guiding ECGA's strategic priorities, overseeing management, and ensuring sound fiduciary oversight in the use of resources. These meetings also provide a platform for grower representatives to raise issues from the Planters Groups and contribute to decision-making that reflects growers' interests.

The ECGA Board is composed of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Chief Executive Officer, together with four representatives each from Mhlume, Simunye, and Big Bend Planters Groups, and three representatives from Tibiyo Takangwane, with one alternate from each Planters Group and Tibiyo. This structure ensures broad and balanced representation of growers across the industry.

# Policy, advocacy & industry developments

By Mxolisi Hlophe



The Eswatini solar installer program launch.

**E**SWATINI solar installer accreditation program launch After years of uncertainty and costly mistakes, growers can now confidently engage certified solar installers for their farm energy needs. In October, ECGA attended the launch of the Eswatini Solar PV Installer Accreditation Programme, implemented by the Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority (ESERA). The programme aims to strengthen Eswatini's solar energy sector by improving the quality of installations, and protect consumers from poor workmanship.

This development is welcome news for sugarcane growers seeking to invest in solar power for farm operations. For the first time, growers can engage accredited and qualified solar installers, reducing the risks associated with poor workmanship and unreliable service providers. Historically, many growers have in-

currred significant financial losses after engaging unqualified installers who charged exorbitant fees, only for systems to fail shortly after installation. The accreditation programme addresses this challenge by setting clear technical standards and improving accountability within the sector.

ESERA has published a list of accredited solar PV installers, available on its website [https://www.esera.org.sz/accredited\\_solar\\_installers](https://www.esera.org.sz/accredited_solar_installers) Growers are encouraged to consult before contracting any installer.

## **King V and the future of strong organisations**

On 6 November, 12 ECGA members attended the launch of the new King V Report on corporate governance, a significant event highlighting evolving best practices in leadership and organisational management.

The event featured a keynote ad-

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dress by renowned advocate Annamarie van der Merwe, who delivered a presentation titled “King V Is Here — Highlights and Implications.” She explained how King V shifts corporate governance from a compliance-driven approach to ethical, outcomes-based leadership that supports long-term value creation. The Code places stronger emphasis on stakeholder-inclusive and systems-based governance, introducing



## Round table discussions on EURD AND CSDD

concepts such as double materiality, simplified principles, and enhanced disclosure requirements. For ECGA, building the capacity of its leadership and management remains a top priority. Strong governance at the Association level ensures effective grower representation, transparent decision-making, and efficient service delivery. ECGA remains committed to strengthening the governance and leadership capabilities of its Board and members, recognising that well-governed institutions are key to a resilient and sustainable sugarcane industry.

## Round table discussion on EUDR AND CSDD regula-

### tions in Eswatini

ECGA recently participated in a Fairtrade Africa round-table discussion held on the 25th –26th of November 2025 in Sihhoye, focusing on emerging European Union sustainability regulations that affect access to EU markets.

The discussions unpacked the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). A technical session led by the International Trade Centre (ITC) highlighted key requirements such as traceability, farm mapping using GPS coordinates, and due-diligence systems. While sugar is currently not listed under the EUDR, the

direction of travel is clear: sustainability and transparency are becoming standard market expectations. The session also explored the CSDDD, which requires companies trading with the EU to address human rights, environmental, and ethical risks across their supply chains. ECGA used the platform to reaffirm its role as the collective voice of Eswatini's sugarcane growers, ensuring growers remain informed and represented as global standards evolve.

The engagement concluded with a practical working session for Fairtrade-certified grower organisations, resulting in draft action plans on gender and youth inclusion, child labour, and anti-harassment.



# Sustainability matters

By Mordesia Sikhondze – Fairtrade Eswatini



**E**SWATINI'S Fairtrade-certified sugarcane growers gathered on the 9th of October at the KDDPPF offices, Sihhoye, to celebrate Fairtrade day, under the theme "A Call for Collaboration within the Agricultural Sector." The event brought together over 1,500 farmers from six Fairtrade clusters, alongside government representatives and key sugar industry partners, including ECGA and Eswatini Sugar Association. Farmer speakers highlighted the direct benefits of Fairtrade certification to sugarcane growers, particularly access to international markets and the Fairtrade premium payments received on certified sugar. These premiums have enabled growers to invest in community and farm-level development projects, including boreholes, solar energy systems, vegetable nurseries, livestock projects, and alternative crops—strengthening livelihoods and improving household food security.

Farmers also reflected on how Fairtrade support has helped growers remain resilient during difficult periods, including the 2014/15 drought and the COVID-19 pandemic, when premium funds provided a critical safety net.

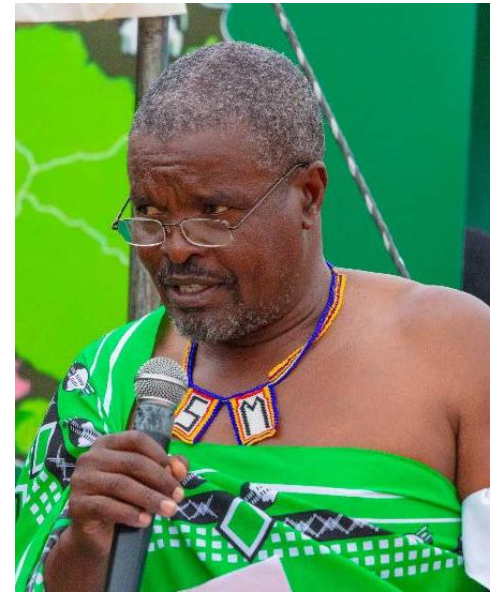
The head of region, Southern Africa Network - Fair Trade Africa, Mrs Ndlovu expressed appreciation to the Eswatini Farmers Network for successfully coordinating the event, and thanked the Government of Eswatini, ECGA, ESA, and industry stake-

**Benefits of Fairtrade certification to sugarcane growers, particularly access to international markets and the Fairtrade premium payments received on certified sugar. These premiums have enabled growers to invest in community and farm-level development projects, including boreholes, solar energy systems, vegetable nurseries, livestock projects, and alternative crops – strengthening livelihoods and improving household food security.**



holders for their continued support to farmers. She encouraged growers to remain committed to excellence in production, with a strong focus on quality and quantity. She further announced that the Eswatini Farmers Country Network will now coordinate Fairtrade Africa's activities and farmer engagement in Eswatini. She called on government and stakeholders to support the Network in fulfilling this role.

ECGA's CEO gave an address on the importance of strong grower organisa-



tions, good governance, and collective action in ensuring that Fairtrade benefits are managed transparently and deliver lasting value to growers. He reaffirmed ECGA's commitment to working with Fairtrade and industry partners to protect grower interests and promote sustainable sugarcane production.

Overall, the event reinforced the value of partnerships, sustainability, and strong farmer organisations in building resilient farming communities in Eswatini.

# Agric finance corner

By Mxolisi Hlophe

**B**UDGETING for a healthy cash-flow -part 1  
The sugarcane farming business is characterized by seasonality, uncertainty, including non-ending exposure to risk. A grower must face all the many moving parts, from unpredictable weather, to rising input and energy cost, to decline in market prices and unplanned operational breakdowns. One can imagine how such uncertainty affects the stability of financial cashflow for the farm business. Cash may be available during harvesting and selling periods, but become unavailable during off-season, yet both planned and unexpected expenses continue to accumulate and require to be settled.

Be that as it may, growers need not be reactionary all the time to the unpredictability of the farming business. Stronger budgeting and better financial planning can help farm enterprises to stay ahead of cash flow problems, reduce financial shocks, and improve financial stability throughout the season. A budget can be explained as the farm enterprise's estimate of anticipated revenues and expenses over a given period, ranging from monthly, quarterly, yearly or more. A budget helps growers answer an important fundamental question, "will the business have available cash, to conduct all necessary operations, until payments are received?". With a properly prepared farm budget, growers can be able to guide spending, prioritize activities, and allocate financial resources following the budget.

For sugarcane growers to strengthen their financial position and manage cash flow properly, there are three key types of budgets that should be prepared and reviewed regularly.

## Operating Budget

**Uncertainty affects the stability of financial cashflow for the farm business. Cash may be available during harvesting and selling periods, but become unavailable during off-season, yet both planned and unexpected expenses continue to accumulate and require to be settled.**



This budget covers all routine expenses required to keep the farm running. It includes both field operations and administrative costs. Expenditures that go into your field operations, can include planting cost, labour (both permanent and seasonal), fertilizer, herbicides and chemicals, irrigation costs, fuel and lubricants, harvesting and haulage cost. Field operations should be informed by a properly prepared and detailed production plan. This enables the grower company to budget more accurately and manage the timing of expenditures across the season. The administration includes office costs, communications, stationery, meetings for board members and shareholders and insurance.

## Capital budget

This budget focuses on the items that require large once-off spending, and often involve long-term financing. Many farm businesses experience cash flow crises because capital purchases are made without a clear plan of how they will be financed, and without considering how the repayments will affect the business in the months that follow. Making up the capital budget are items such as tractors and implements, cane loaders, irrigation equipment, major pump repairs, roads, bridges, and drains,

workshops and storage

## Cash Budget

A cash budget is normally done monthly, and it reflects the expected movement of cash into and out of the grower company. This budget helps the company identify the months where it will face shortages, and gives management time to prepare early instead of being forced to borrow urgently, delay operations, or fall behind on obligations. The budget consists of cash-in and cash-out. Cash-in includes expected cane delivery payments (by month) and other income (if any). Cash-out includes: wages, fuel, fertilizer and chemicals, equipment repairs, irrigation costs, loan repayments and interest, levies and service deductions

For sugarcane growers, budgeting is not just an administrative exercise. It is a financial survival tool. When budgets are prepared correctly and reviewed regularly, grower companies can reduce shocks, avoid cash shortages, and maintain stable operations throughout the season. In the second part of the budgeting for a healthy cash-flow series, we will deep dive and outline the step by step of preparing cash budgets.

# Farewell

By Mxolisi Hlophe



**I**N December, ECGA's Executive Committee (ExCo) held a strategic workshop where the Association's Board, with guidance from consultants, reflected on ECGA's future direction and key priorities. Held during the festive season, the workshop also provided an opportunity for the ECGA Office to present Christmas appreciation tokens to Board members, in recognition of their dedication and commitment in carrying out their executive responsibilities.

The occasion further marked a moment to bid farewell to two long-serving ExCo members who retired from their roles with their respective organizations. ECGA extends its sincere appreciation to Ms S.M. Magagula, representative from Tibiyo Takangwane, and Mr N.P. Mkhonta, representative from Royal Eswatini Sugar, for their many years of dedicated service. Their leadership, experience, and commitment have played a significant role in strengthening the Association and shaping its strategic growth. ECGA thanks them for their invaluable contributions and wishes them continued success, good health, and fulfilment in all their future endeavours.

On another note, ECGA also welcomed a new member to its EXCO, Ms Lombuso Dlamini who will be repre-



senting Tibiyo Takangwane as well as 2 new observers joining from RES and Ubombo sugar. We welcome the new

additions, and look forward to their valuable contribution to ECGA and a good working relationship.

# Mark your Calendars

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Venue</b>
18 March 2026	ECGA EXCO meeting	Mbabane
14 April 2026	Mhlume Planters Group Feedback meeting	Hambanathi Hall, Mhlume
15 April 2026	Simunye Planters Group Feedback meeting	Caritas Manzini
16 April 2026	Big Bend Planters Group Feedback meeting	Phumlamcashi Training Centre, Maphobeni

# Contact details

Tell : (+268 2404 3561 |

E-mail: [info@ecga.co.sz](mailto:info@ecga.co.sz) |

Website: [www.ecga.co.sz](http://www.ecga.co.sz)

ESWATINI CANE GROWERS ASSOCIATION



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