



ESWATINI CANE GROWERS ASSOCIATION



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2nd QUARTER NEWSLETTER

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EDITOR'S NOTE

BY: DR SIPHO NKAMBULE



Welcome our July 2025 in-house Newsletter covering events and activities of the first quarter (April to June 2025). In this edition we cover a visit by officials from Mozambique intended to share ideas and insight on how they can revive their Cane Growers Association.

For a period of 3-years the position of Grower Support Manager (GSM) was vacant after the departure of previous incumbent and subsequent financial challenges. We are pleased to report that the yawning shortage of hands has finally been closed. We welcome Mr. Hlophe into the ECGA family.

ECGA is an active member of the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG) from. The mid-year Council of the Association was held in Cairns, Australia. The Eswatini Cane industry was represented by the 3 Planters' Group Chairman. A report back is covered in the article herein.

Finally we cover the Extra-Ordinary Planters' Group General Meetings. The main purpose of the meetings was to approve amendments to the ECGA Constitution. A secondary objective was to approve the formation of a Growers' Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). Read about the successful meetings herein.

Lastly our new GSM introduces a feature called Agricultural Finance Corner, wherein he gives members advice on available opportunities for business funding.

We hope members will be informed and inspired as they read their latest version of their newsletter.

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COLLABORATION: ECGA HOSTS MOZAMBIQUE GROWERS' DELEGATION

BY: SIMPHIWE DLAMINI

On the 2nd of April 2025, ECGA hosted our Mozambiquean counterparts, from the Association of Sugar Producers of Mozambique (APAMO) led by the Deputy Executive Director Mr Mauro Ferrao. The visit served as a platform to share experiences, insights, and strategies for strengthening grower associations and improving the effectiveness of grower representation in the sugar industry. The Mozambican delegation sought to gain practical guidance on key areas such as; Strategies to bring all growers under one unified association, ensuring that no grower is left unrepresented? Understanding Eswatini's approach to the use of a single-desk marketing to market Eswatini's sugar, particularly in relation to calls for a transition to multi-desk marketing – a topic currently debated in Mozambique. ECGA's Chief Executive Officer provided valuable insights based on Eswatini's experience, offering practical and strategic advice.



The CEO highlighted the importance of a legal instrument, in the form of the Swaziland Sugar Act of 1967 in ensuring industry-wide compliance—particularly in making levy payments compulsory for all growers. This legislative framework ensures the financial sustainability of sugarcane grower representation by eliminating voluntary contributions and ensuring that all growers contribute fairly. The discussion also explored democratic practices in grower decision making and representation. ECGA also highlighted that as an Association, they encourage members to diversify to food crops in order to align and contribute to national food security policies. The APAMO visit underscored the value of bilateral exchange visits and the power of peer-to-peer learning in strengthening grower organizations across the region. ECGA looks forward to hosting and participating in more exchange visits that advance collaboration and innovation within the sugar industry in the region.



WELCOMING MXOLISI HLOPHE TO THE ECGA FAMILY

The Eswatini Cane Growers Association (ECGA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Mxolisi Hlophe as the new Grower Support Manager, effective 1 July 2025. Mxolisi brings a unique blend of experience in agricultural value chains, development finance and MSME development making him a strategic addition to the ECGA team. Mxolisi will play an instrumental role in establishing the associations greatly anticipated Special Purpose Vehicle.

With over eight years of experience in implementing development projects across Eswatini, Mxolisi has worked extensively to support smallholder farmers, women-led enterprises, and SMEs, particularly by enhancing their access to finance, markets, and business development services. He previously served as the Centre Manager for Business Incubation at the Small Enterprises Development Company (SEDCO), where he led various initiatives aimed at improving SMEs access to finance and digital innovation.

Mxolisi holds a postgraduate qualification in Development Finance from Nelson Mandela University and is currently doing his final research year for the MPhil in Development Finance with a research focus on financial inclusion and income inequality in the SADC region. He has also conducted applied research on access to finance, digital financial services, and the role of inclusive payment systems in promoting economic participation in rural communities.

“Joining ECGA is an exciting opportunity to contribute to an organization that plays a vital role in supporting cane growers, who drive the country’s largest economic sector. I look forward to working closely with growers to improve their access to affordable finance, strengthening field support, and build sustainable, climate-resilient cane farming systems,” says Mxolisi.



Outside the professional space, Mxolisi is a piggery farmer, he enjoys travelling and exploring new places within the Kingdom and learning new cultures across the African continent. A history enthusiast who likes reading how pivotal moments in history shaped the present world.

We warmly welcome Mxolisi to the ECGA family and encourage all growers, stakeholders, and partners to connect with him as we continue building a stronger, more inclusive sugar industry together.

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF BEET AND CANE GROWERS

BY: SIMPHIWE DLAMINI



The World Association of Sugar Beet and Sugarcane Growers, that is, 36 sugar beet and sugar cane growers' associations from 34 countries, met yet again in 2025. The place to be on June 23 - 25, 2025, was Cairns, Australia. Fuelled by zeal, the members of the WABCG emphasize the prominence of maintaining respectful dialogue between nations in these times of major geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties. The meeting was conducted with this objective in mind, with members also keen on representing this commitment even in their respective sectors.

Diverse agricultural models based on recognised growers' organisations were a major point of discussion. These were noted especially for their role in economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Innovative technology, measures to control and mitigate price risk as well as the exceptional diversification of beet and sugar cane are practices that must be greatly encouraged.

The meeting also involved the election of a new Executive Board, in which Mr. Owen Menkens, a cane grower from Australia, was unanimously elected as President. We would like to extend our congratulations to the newly elected board. With trust placed in their leadership and vision, we are excited to see where they lead us next.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETINGS

BY: SIMPHIWE DLAMINI



Mhlume- 20 May 2025



Simunye – 22 May 2025



Big Bend- 21 May 2025

The month of May this year was a milestone for Sugar Cane Growers in Eswatini. On the 20th, 21st and 22nd of May 2025, growers convened special AGM's to sign off on two matters of great importance; the amendment of their constitution and the creation of a Special Purpose Vehicle. Having been tasked with these matters, we were happy to present the final report to growers and have them make their final say.

A total of 10 clauses were amended in the constitution. Under the revised Section 24, electronically transmitted messages are now recognized as valid written notices. Section 30 has also been updated to allow a member to appoint an immediate family member and employees as a proxy to attend, speak, and vote on their behalf at any General Meeting. These and all other amendments were well received by the growers and approved unanimously.

The final step will be gazetting of the amendments by the Minister of Agriculture after which amendments will take effect.



Farmers also overwhelmingly endorsed the study Report on the feasibility of establishing a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), which, among other functions, will support growers in accessing affordable finance and other critical services. The immediate next step is the formal registration of the SPV, including developing the SPV's establishing documents (Articles of Association), which will outline clear rules and guidelines for growers participation in the SPV. The mood among growers is highly positive, marked by enthusiasm and eager anticipation for the project's launch, as it holds strong potential to bring meaningful benefits to their livelihoods.

The future shines brightly- and grows brighter with every step we take toward it !!

AGRICULTURAL FINANCE CORNER

BY: MXOLISI HLOPHE



I introduce a new feature of our newsletter called “Agricultural finance corner” where I tackle topical matters related to smallholder’s access to agricultural finance. Finance is a critical element that cannot be ignored in the development of smallholder farmers.

The financing needs for cane growers vary, from financing infrastructure projects such as irrigation systems, financing equipment and heavy plant purchase, climate finance related to the installation of solar irrigation systems, transitioning to climate-smart and sustainable farming practices and financing the procurement of production inputs including fertilizers, and pesticides.

To meet these financing needs, cane growers need development finance capable of providing finance solutions that are best suited for meeting smallholder’s needs. Development finance refers to structured financial support, from local development finance institutions such as FINCORP, Eswatini Bank, the Industrial Development Company of Eswatini (IDCE), Eswatini National Industrial Development Corporation (ENIDC), government funds such as Eswatini’s Agricultural Development Fund (EADF), multilateral development banks including the African Development Bank (AfDB), World Bank, IFAD, as well as funds from development agencies.

These funds often come with favourable terms like low interest rates, flexible collateral requirements, technical support and are largely developmental in nature, meaning that it focuses on achieving long-term social and economic transformation, especially in sectors like agriculture.

Going forward, *Agricultural Finance Corner* will highlight key finance topics, share practical tips, and spotlight funding opportunities for cane growers. By improving access to relevant financial information, we aim to support smallholders in making better decisions, increasing productivity, and building resilient, sustainable farms. Let’s use finance as a tool for growth.

MARK YOUR CALENDER!

BY: SIMPHIWE DLAMINI



We end our publication with updates on events to be on the lookout for. First are the Feedback Meetings, taking place in the following order:

1. Mhlume PG- 19 August 2025 @ Hambanathi Community Hall
2. Big Bend PG- 20 August 2025 @ Phumulamcashi Hall
3. Simunye PG- 21 August 2025 @ Caritas, Manzini.

Registration starts at 9 am and the meeting itself at 10 am.

Our Annual General Meeting at Mhlume Country Club, comes on the 27th of August 2025, which is the following Wednesday, after the feedback meetings. Farmers will receive their AGM Packs at their respective feedback meetings. Other logistics will be communicated as the date draws close.

Eyes on the Calendar..... it's almost time!

LET'S KEEP THE CONNECTION ALIVE!!



Physical Address:

2nd Floor Nkhotfotjeni
Building, Cnr Msakato &
Dzeliwe Street

We're on the Web!

www.ecga.co.sz

Our Socials:

Eswatini Cane
Growers Association

Call Us:

+268 2404 3561

Send a Fax:

+268 2404 4061

Email us:

info@ecga.co.sz