

# ESWATINI CANE GROWERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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# The Executive Editor's Note

By Sipho Nkambule

I take immense pleasure in presenting to you the latest in-house ECGA newsletter. Due to change of staff the first quarter version was not published for which we sincerely apologise. In this issue we are pleased to reconnect with our members and other stakeholders. We update on developments covering period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

We kick off by updating our members on key ongoing strategic projects. We also update on the ECGA Annual General Meeting held on 28 August 2024 highlighting the records broken in attendance. From Human Capital development we welcome Ms Simphiwe Dlamini who joined as an accounts intern. The annual small scale grower competition is an event to look forward to. This year it was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2024 at the elaborate and state of the art Komati Downstream Project Farmers Federation (KDDPFF) Conference Centre at Sihhoye. We celebrated excellence and encouraged transition from struggling to stardom. We congratulate our members who shone on the day and encourage others to aspire. We also salute the sponsors and organisers for making the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event a day to remember.

Networking and continuous learning are virtues worth pursuit. The ECGA Chairman, the CEO and other members of the Eswatini Sugar Industry attended the South African Sugar Technologists Association (SASTA) Congress held from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024, in Durban. Insights from the event are highlighted in this issue.

ECGA is a member of the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers (WABCG). The WABCG annual meeting was held in Fargo (North Dakota State) in the United States of America (USA). The CEO and Executive Committee (ExCo) member Mr CM Shabangu represented the Eswatini growers at the event. Read all about it herein.



# UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PROJECTS AND OTHER MATTERS RELEVANT TO CANE GROWING

By Sipho Nkambule

We kick off this edition with updates on ongoing strategic initiatives.

Good news! The Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) sponsored study on the Feasibility of Solarization of sugarcane Irrigation in Eswatini has been concluded. The public and private sector stakeholders are studying the report in preparation for recommendation for approval and implementation.

The study of the formation of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) is also in its final stages. Presentations were made to the Executive Committee (19 July and 24 August 2024) and highlighted to the AGM (28 August 2024). The Executive Committee will now be working towards presenting the final product to members for their approval.



In other news, the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC) is calling on power consumers with generation plants, within the national grid, to register such plants with them. A number of users have responded. We encourage all affected growers to heed the call to avoid disruption of their operations and ensure safety through compliance to national and regional grid standards. Growers intending to install new plants are encouraged to consult the Irrigation Engineer at Eswatini Sugar Association (ESA) Technical Services, prior to procurement, to get guidance and direction on requirements by Government, the Regulator and the Power Utility.

Growers are further reminded that this is the year when the Power Utility will apply for a multi-year adjustment of tariffs. The application is usually submitted in November. Almost immediately thereafter the Regulator arranges public hearings wherein consumer views are gathered to inform decision making by the Regulator. Growers will be informed of dates and venues near sugarcane growing zones. Growers are encouraged to attend such hearings not only to demonstrate the interest on the matter but to make their voices heard.

At the time of reporting another key development is happening. The bylaws to enable growers to feed surplus power to the grid have been prepared and are currently undergoing stakeholder engagement. The office is actively participating in this process; updates will be communicated in due course.

# ECGA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM): 2024 AN UNPRECEDENTED EVENT

By Sipho Nkambule

The Eswatini Cane Growers Association (ECGA) is very strong on member participation, at grassroots level. Feedback meetings, between Branch Executive Committees and members are held quarterly. In addition to these the Constitution provides that an all member (quota holders) meeting should be held annually before end of September.

We are happy to report that this year's elective Annual General Meeting, held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2024 at Mhlume Country Club, was a success. "Sakha Kwetfu!" The meeting saw a record breaking 387 (71%) quota holders attending. The spirit was electric and the participation was robust yet cordial. This reflects growers' passion and keen interest in shaping their businesses and the Association. This response from growers is humbling, encouraging and greatly appreciated by the ECGA Office.

Key decisions taken at the meeting include;

- Approval of past year's Report and Audited Financial Statements
- Approval of financial estimates for ensuing year (beginning April 2025)
- Approval of external auditors for current year that ends in March 2025
- Giving direction/guidance/mandate to Executive Committee regarding strategic issues

Special thanks go to ExCo for wise oversight, Office and organisers, Extension Officers for technical and logistical support and the Royal Eswatini Police Service for their support and assistance.

The ECGA Office has taken note of evident growth in numbers and interests. We will improve logistical capacity accordingly for the next AGM. We take this opportunity to wish our members the best crop and milling campaigns in upcoming seasons.



## A WARM WELCOME TO SIMPHIWE

By Sipho Nkambule

The Office takes this time to welcome Ms Simphiwe Dlamini who joined ECGA on 1 August 2024, as an accounts intern, for a period of 9 months. Growers will have already seen her visible figure while making ensure that things go well at the AGM. Simphiwe is a resident of Bethany, in the Mahlanya area, and is in her last year of her B. Comm in accounting degree at the University of Eswatini. We trust that the internship will be mutually rewarding to both her and ECGA.



In her own words Simphiwe has this to say;

“Gratitude doesn’t even begin to appreciate the honour that it is to be a part of this establishment. As experience is a great teacher, I too have learnt that, as an accountant, my work is my pride, it should be honest and speak for itself even where I am not there to defend it. I have also learnt to treat everyone that walks through our door with utmost respect regardless of who they are and where they come from. These are lessons of great value to me and I hope that in my time here I can repay such kindness by being of value to the association and the growers with whom/ for who we work.”

# SMALL SCALE GROWER COMPETITION

BY SIBONGILE LANGWENYA

Once again, the year would not end without honor and appreciation being shown to small scale growers in the Small-Scale Grower Competition. This year's event was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2024 at the Komati Downstream Development Project Framers Federation (KDDPFF) in Sihhoye. The event was very beautiful, exciting and extra special this year as the competition was celebrating 20 years since its inception.

In attendance, the Acting Minister of Agriculture, Undersecretary Ms Gugu Shabangu, graced the event with her presence, along with management from the mill companies and Eswatini Sugar Association. The various sponsors of the competition were also present, including Financial Institutions such as Nedbank, First National Bank, Standard Bank, FINCORP, Stakeholders like EWADE, EEC, ESRIC, ECGA, Ubombo Sugar Company, Times of Eswatini and others. They joined hands with ESA to ensure the success of the competition by securing befitting prizes that ranged from farming equipment, farming inputs, capacity building and cash.



The Grower Competition Sponsors.

Competition Winners were as follows.

A. In the Swazi Nation Land Category:

- 1.Sivukile Farmers Association, won E53 939 towards Capacity Building plus a laptop
  - 2.Matsandzabutongo, won E52 689 towards Capacity Building plus a New Shape knapsack
  - 3.Vuka Sive SaMaja Investments, won E33 000 towards Capacity Building
  - 4.Khwanyani Investment, won E30 000 towards Capacity Building
  - 5.Makhabeni Farmers Association won E30 000 towards Capacity Building
- Position 6 to 16 won E18 550 that would go towards capacity building.
- Position 17 to 20 won E16 829 towards Farm input (Fertilizer)

## SMALL SCALE GROWER COMPETITION

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B. On Title deed land:

- 1.Packard&Wright, won E21 829 towards Farm input (Fertilizer) plus a laptop
  - 2.Baobab Farm, won E20 579 towards Farm input (Fertilizer) plus a new shape knapsack
- Position 3 to 5 won E16 829 towards Farm input (Fertilizer)

C. Vuvulane's Top Performers and their prizes were as follows:

- 1.Margaret F Nkambule, won E21 829 towards Farm input (Fertilizer) plus a laptop
  2. Sellinah Z Ndzimandze, won E20 579 towards Farm input (Fertilizer) plus new shape knapsack
- Position 3 to 5 won E16 829 towards Farm input (Fertilizer)



The Winner's Trophies

# SMALL SCALE GROWER COMPETITION

BY SIBONGILE LANGWENYA

The most consistent growers won E37 500 cash, and these are Matsandzabutfongo and Mavelemphini Dlamini.

The total prizes were worth E732 720. Congratulation to all the 2024 winners!

We can't wait to see how next year's competition will turn out.



Correctional Services playing a note.



The CEO delivering his speech.

# SASTA CONGRESS 2024

By Sipho Nkambule



Some familiar Eswatini faces at the SASTA Congress.



The chairman, Mr Stuart Geldenhuys and ECGA CEO, Dr Sipho Nkambule, attended the 2024 SASTA Congress from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2024. The Congress, held in Durban, was themed “Industry Sustainability”. Guest speaker, Prof. Narendra Mohan, from India spoke of India’s experience and highlighted the following in his speech.

- Sustainability should be founded on diverse revenue streams.
- “All of us must look beyond sugar”
- “There was no fixed formula for world sugar sustainability.”
- Bagasse value goes beyond energy.
- “Identify your issues and make a plan.”
- Indian industry sustainability is built on pillars of National Policy and Productivity. Align Government policy with diversification.
- Start with products that are needed locally and have a better assured market.

Later on in the meeting, aviation fuel, biodegradable cups and bags and non-allergic flours were unpacked as some of the products from cane.

Presented papers explored subjects such as climatic change and emerging pests and diseases. Yellow sugarcane aphid was also highlighted as a growing problem in regional sugar cane and growers are struggling to adapt to agriscience technology for the now extreme weather patterns.

# WORLD ASSOCIATION OF BEET AND CANE GROWERS (WABCG) ANNUAL MEETING

By Sipho Nkambule

The sugarcane world came together, in the form of 36 countries meeting in Fargo, North Dakota, in USA, to share ideas and experiences to take the industry to even greater heights. Eswatini was represented by the CEO and Executive Committee (ExCo) Member, Mr CM Shabangu from Mhlume Planters' Group. This year's rotating mid-year Council was on from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2024.

At conclusion of the meeting members issued a statement highlighting the following.

- The need for beet and cane growers to create awareness about the benefits of their products, their activities and their organisations for society as a whole and for food security
- Crop potential for product and revenue diversification
- Importance of modernising their farming activities towards more efficient and sustainable practices
- Recognising the mission of WABCG to promote independent, robust and recognised national and regional sugarcane grower organisations

At the end of the meetings the delegates spent a day as guests to Dave Thompson's Sugar beet farm in Minnesota. We were mesmerised by the size of individual family farms, the level of mechanization and precision farming.

ECGA acknowledges the financial subsidy support from WABCG which enabled attendance of the meeting. The next mid-year meeting will be held in Australia from 25 to 27 June 2025 (venue and dates still to be finalised).



Delegates at the WABCG Meeting in Fargo, USA.



## LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

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