

MINUTES
of the
2nd Annual General Meeting
of
UPPER MIDLANDS AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE
on
Thursday 8 December 2022 @ 09:00

1. Welcome & Apologies.

The Chairman, James Kean opened the meeting by welcoming all to the 2nd Annual General Meeting. Can members fill in the attendance register as well as any apologies.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes held on 13 March 2019.

Proposed: Peter Greene.

Seconded: Graham Armstrong.

3. Matters arising from the minutes.

No matters were discussed.

4. Report on Activities of UMATI – James Kean Chairperson.

- a) Farming becoming more competitive, and most farmers are having less time and resources for issues such as transformation. One staggering recent figure is that in 1999 there were over 30,000 dairy farmers in SA, this recently dropped under 1,000!! Unemployment and social unrest appear to be the biggest risks in this beautiful country, highlighting the critical importance of our Umati organization. We are living in an uncertain world with new challenges on American dominance, but maybe we are in a reasonable space being far south in BRICS. There are major indications that the western world is heading into one of the biggest recessions, what must we do to be more resilient?
- b) Two more major commercial farms have been bought by government in the past year, to add to the 64 which saw productivity decrease by over 80%, if this continues where is SA food going to come from???
- c) It is encouraging that over 60% of beef livestock in KZN belongs to emerging farmers, and a big thank you to AAM and other agents who add opportunities to commercialise these assets.
- d) There is little that I can comment on as Graham will report on most of the activities, after all he does most of the transformational interaction with communities and authorities in our region, we are really privileged to have him working here like a saint! Thank you, Graham.
- e) Necessity to do transformation has probably never been greater, however

the appetite to make contributions in kind and cash appears to be lower while social pressures increase.

- f) With the emigration of many young South Africans, it is essential that commercial farmers commit to growing new managers. Students on farms are proving to add value and many have advanced to being dairies managers and other positions. Maybe these upcoming farmers will add value to the government farms? Future farmers interview many students and can offer candidates with funding.
- g) There are many groups that have had continuous support going into impoverished communities and I would really like to express my appreciation Darren of One Life for driving these initiatives. In the height of covert One life has been the logistics hub for all contributors largely their members.
- h) WE have been hosting regular school environmental groups with the Jonny Lowe memorial trust, to advance understanding about sustainable farming within the full environment. The recent visit included 15 midlands headmasters learning about the interaction between the different soil, plant and animals in dairy pastures and natural grazing. As with our communities we are all interdependent!
- i) Water as the main catalyst for the birth of Umati remains a future opportunity for development of our area, under the control of the irrigation boards and MMAA it is their responsibility to allocate Umati members. MIP intellectual property should be retained as water supply development is high on SA priorities. I hope that the new generation will drive this possibility forward. As Dave Warroll used to say; "Its time for you young bucks to step up"

5. Report on Activities of UMATI – Graham Armstrong.

- a) This report covers the activities of this NPO and PBO supported and sponsored by the MMAA FOR THE 2021 & 22 years .
Last year the report dealt with and I quote “The most difficult times anyone of our generation had experienced this made specific reference to the horrific riots and looting that had just taken place and of course the devastating covid pandemic.
Not a year later we report some of the toughest times our farmers have had in their careers, this is a result of floods and extremely wet conditions at the beginning of the year, while we remain thankful for full and overflowing water resources. The more serious effect on our farmers has been the rocketing price of inputs, the weak rand and the ongoing woes of our Government and politicians , to even keep the lights on ,let alone keeping the roads open to traffic.
Thus it has been extremely difficult for our Umati members to pay attention to matters such as transformation issues while they themselves are having to pull on all their reserves to survive .
UMATI was recently invited to meet a delegation sent from The National Department of Transport (consisting of Dep Minister Chikango his DDG

and other officials from the National and Regional offices) to visit the Mpofana area and to get information on our problems in the area which are inhibiting the growth and sustainability of our agricultural economy in the region .

Our ongoing interaction as a facilitator of transformation with our local Municipality and Provincial and National Officials has been well received and has certainly enhanced the image and purpose of the MMAA .

Recently UMATI and MMAA were actively involved in the issues around a document distributed by our Municipality that is “Mpofana Land Use Management Policy ,” which had been badly drawn up by a Service Provider .Following on a number of meetings and interaction with Municipality ,Kwanalu Land Desk and others the matter would appear to have been rectified and resolved . Our members have been kept well informed on this matter.

UMATI continues to work with UMEDA (UMGUNGUNDLOVU ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY) .

We have an MOU with them which keeps us as an organisation in touch with what plans our District UMGUNGUNDLOVU has for Mpofana Projects planned still include an Agripark on Greenfields and other commercial activities that could be initiated in Mpofana area .

SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING FARMERS

During this past season UMATI was able to facilitate offtake agreements on some 6 Community owned Developing farms

Crops grown were 200 has of popcorn,40 has of vegetables , 20 has of potatoes and lesser quantities of beans .

- b) This season the same farmers in a similar agreement have recently harvested 56 has of wheat and have planted some 130 has of maize. The excessive wet weather had a massive damaging effect on potato and popcorn harvesting while other crops suffered during the wet growing conditions of last summer. What is important is that these activities created employment for at times 120 people who would otherwise not had work .

Unfortunately the Department of Agriculture s policy of support for those Developing farmers creating jobs and lively hoods for those who would otherwise be unemployed needs reviewing .

UMATI also assists a number of small farmers with advice and support in their farming practises .

While beef farmers are well accommodated on our monthly sales with the support and dedication of AAM and their staff.

- c) RPO supported by Angus Williamson continue to do excellent work with our developing farmers.

A Rabbit production pilot scheme with three families in Bruntville is being monitored and encouraged by one of our members.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

A number of our members especially Dairy farmers are involved in programmes where with the assistance of such organisations as Future

Farmers ,students are being trained on Dairy farms to be able to take up Managerial positions , we thank and commend these farmers for their commitment to this programme .

While the MMAA continues with its skills training courses .

EDUCATION

We still have 3 students being sponsored at Weston

There is ongoing financial support from our members for school transport for children having to travel out of Mooi River.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

UMATI continues to support the needs of community members when Municipality and community members make requests to UMATI for funeral funding and where there are Special requests for assistance .

Food parcel distribution when in a position to do so .

FUNDING

UMATI is sponsored largely by the activities of the MMAA

These include income from our Billboard as set up for MMAA as a commitment and agreement to the community to support Transformation in Mpofana .

Income from a percentage of Developing Farmer Sales on our monthly sales .

Generous donations from some of our members towards Education and scholars transport to schools .

UMATI thanks the MMAA Chairman ,Executive and members for their financial support as it is a community project that conveys to the entire community a sense of responsibility and good will .

Special thanks must go to all members for their ongoing support

We express special thanks to James Kean our Chairman for all the effort he puts into UMATI and The Mearns Farming Team for their ongoing support for a number of projects and initiatives.

- d) Thanks go to our commercial suppliers Forge, Mooimec, Twk and others who are supportive of Umati's activities.
- e) Lastly but certainly not least a big thank you to Tony and Ilze in our MMAA office who are always so willing to assist in so many ways your support is greatly appreciated.

6. Financial Report – Tony Le Roux

- a) Accounts prepared by Colenbrander and Ass have been completed for the year 2020/21 and have been submitted to SARS. 2020 financial year ended with a surplus of R26,681 after a provision for debt of R66k. 2021 financial year ended with a loss of (R87,853) which took away the surplus from the previous year. Unaudited accounts for 2022 reports a loss of (R80,753) which due mainly writing off the provision of R66k done in 2020. Colenbrander will obviously adjust for that provision which should reduce the loss accordingly. Colenbrander are currently working on the 2022 AFS.

- b) All contributions came from MMAA from the Billboard and emerging farmers commissions. Mearns Farming also contributed to UMATI

7. Confirm Board Composition.

JK proposed that the make up of the board should be made of as follows as a result of KVA and NRLA no longer wishing to represent: -

- a) 2 Members from MMAA.
- b) 1 member from each of the 2 Irrigation Boards.
- c) P. Greene.
- d) J. Chitja.

MMAA was already represented by JK and TN, the Irrigation Boards will go back to their respective boards to get their approval and if so put forward their representative. The board will continue to have outside representative which are PG and JC.

Greg Muirhead has officially resigned for the record.

8. UMATI Present and any planned projects.

GA advised that other than the 6 farms in the Middelrus area UMATi could not handle any further projects, mainly due to financial constraints. As the Chairman stated UMATI needs new blood to take it forward.

9. Education.

UMATI is down to 2 students next year and are not planning to take on anymore. AW suggested that before we continue with any education assistance UMATI need to have a plan in how these children will be become part of the agriculture future after Weston.

10. Irrigation and Water related Issues.

Umati as it has an MOU with UMEDA (UMGUNGUNDHLOVU ECONOMIC DEVELOPEMENT AGENCY) has been interacting with UMEDA & Bosch Projects (Hydrologists) who have been tasked by the Government to further investigate the feasibility of building the MIP and related infrastructures.

UMATI and its activities were initiated by the need to drive transformation on our area and to preserve and enhance our water resources.

The MRIB /LMRHIB have been advised that it is the intention of DWAS to implement the establishment of a WUASSN, Umati was an integral part of the transformation element when the WUASSN was submitted by the IRBs, so it will play an important role in the establishment of the WUASSN! The focus of Umati s future will be largely driven by matters relating to these water related matters

11. NPO and PBO Status.

UMATI is now registered with SARS as a NPO and PBO.

12. General.

- Both Irrigation Boards made mention that the boards were not included in the consultations of the Greenfields application for 90ha of irrigation from the river. All matters relating to river irrigation should go through the particular area of jurisdiction.
- Mr Mhlengi from Mpofana Municipality made mention that UMATI, UMEDA and the Mpofana Municipality work closely in establishing water security in the area.
- AW said he would like to see an educational plan going forward, any students coming through the UMATI funding need to be included in some program like Future Farmers so that they can come back to our area as an asset to the farming community.

13. Closure.

The meeting was closed at 10:40

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Minutes confirmed on: _____
Date