



# MINUTES OF THE 38<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD ON 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2019

IVY ROOM, THE CINNAMON GRAND HOTEL, COLOMBO

The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Lanka Fruit & Vegetable Producers, Processors and Exporters Association (Limited by Guarantee) was held on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 in the IVY Room of The Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo 02 at 5.15 p.m. Her Excellency Tanja Gonggrijp, Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Sri Lanka was the chief guest at the AGM.

## Member Companies Present

- (01) Amalgamated International (Pvt) Ltd
- (02) CBL Natural Foods (Pvt) Ltd
- (03) C R Exports (Pvt) Ltd
- (04) Dilarshad Enterprise
- (05) Development Interplan (Ceylon) Limited
- (06) Eastern & Allied Agencies (Pvt) Ltd
- (07) Ellawala Horticulture (Pvt) Ltd
- (08) Expolanka (Pvt) Ltd
- (09) Gulf International Maritime (Pvt) Ltd
- (10) H J S Condiments
- (11) Maddatenna Estate
- (12) Nidro Supply (Pvt) Ltd
- (13) Royal Fresh Exports (Pvt) Ltd
- (14) Serene International (Pvt) Ltd
- (15) Transgrow (Pvt) Ltd

Mr. Zuraish Hashim called the meeting to order.

The following matters were taken up for discussion.

## Notice Convening the Annual General Meeting

Notice convening the Annual General Meeting was read by the Chairman, Mr. Zuraish Hashim.

## Read & Confirm Minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (which was circulated in advance), was taken up as read and were confirmed to be in order and adopted, proposed by Mrs. Dawn S. Austin and seconded by Ms. Charindi Ranasinghe.

Chairman declared the Minutes duly confirmed.

## **Read & Adopt the Annual Report of the Board of Directors for the year 2019/2020.**

The Annual Report of the Board of Directors (which was circulated in advance) was taken up as read and unanimously adopted, proposed from the chair by the Chairman and seconded by Ms. Charindi Ranasinghe.

## **Read and Adopt Audited Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2019.**

The Audited Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet (which was already circulated) was presented to the House by the Hony. Treasurer.

Commenting on the Accounts presented, Mr. Zuraish Hashim commended the Hon. Treasurer and the Past Chairman for the exceptional job done on behalf of the general membership and thanked them for their commitment.

The Annual Audited accounts were unanimously adopted and was proposed from the chair by the Chairman and seconded by Ms. Charindi Ranasinghe.

## **Address by the outgoing chairman, Mr. Zuraish Hashim**

Quote:

I take the opportunity to thank the Board and the membership for the confident placed on me to carry out the Association for the last three years. Especially the support extended by the two vice chairs, Mr. Imdadh Marikar and Mr. Suresh Ellawala and also the guidance and support extended by the Past Chairs, Mrs. Dawn Austin, Mr. Annes Junaid, Mr. S Gnanaskandan and the Board which is always greatly appreciated. When I took over the Association, it was a challenge and I was walking into something which I didn't know where it was leading. But looking back to the three years where I started, jotting down to write down a speech which I did over and over again and I got two other people to go through it as well. Then I thought it's no point reading out the achievements because what we have achieved is already on record. We were a bunch of people who got together, started doing things and now we have professionally started doing things with a plan. I am happy to leave at this juncture before you guys decide and throw me out, because Mr. Suresh who is taking over from us is much more capable person than me. As the name stands I am an exporter and Mr. Suresh being a producer and an exporter and a processor is going to bring a complete different dimension into the association. His entry into the association in the last couple of years has been, we have seen the difference in the association and he has brought professionalism into the association. So it was Mr. Imdadh who should have taken over but due to work commitments I always look up to him for divine intervention, if I can't see God next thing is I see him because he's there when I need him. But these two guys, they helped and abled it by the proportionate gender equality now with Ms. Charindi Ranasinghe, Ms. Shenali Panabokke, you, all of you all joining in. I'm sure we are going to really be a very strong outfit in future. What we have done in the past, we have committed, we have done with a lot of commitment and I think the future is going to be looking very good for us and

some of the results are already there. Only one thing which is really pending is the commitment that we have signed with the Chinese Wholesalers Association which we are unable to take forward and I'm sure Mr. Suresh would guide all of us and take the association there where we have the produce to go. So finally once again thank you very much although I am stepping down, I'm not leaving I'm definitely going to be here and my support to the association and the membership is always there.

Thank You.

Unquote

### **Appointment of Chairman**

Mr. Hashim proposed the name of Mr. Suresh Ellawala as the Chairman the ensuing year 2019/2020. In the absence of any other nominations, Mr. Suresh Ellawala was elected as the Chairman for the period 2020/2021.

### **Address by the incoming chairman, Mr. Suresh Ellawala**

Quote

Thank You Mr. Hashim and thank you everybody else in the board. I'm very humbled by you'll appointing me as the Chairman of this association which is a very long standing and prestigious association which has had many distinguished Chairman and Chairpersons before . I'm pretty much a new kid on the block in this environment and I'm most humble that you have chosen it appropriate to appoint me as your chairman. Thank you Mr. Zuraish and Mr. Imdadh everybody body else having in this period of time, shown me where this association originated, what its role is and how we can take it forward. I will not speak too much at length because I have to speak again and there may be people out there waiting but I look forward to the support of everybody and I hope as difficult as it may be that we can have a strong period like during the leadership of previous chair.

Thank You

Unquote

### **Appointment of Office Bearers**

New Chairman, Mr. Suresh Ellawala announced the names of the new office bearers.

- 1st Vice Chairman – Mr. Jagath Fernando
- 2nd Vice Chairman – Mr. Imdadh Marikar
- Hony. General Secretary – Ms. Charindi Ranasinghe
- Hony. Treasurer – Ms. Shenali Panabokke

He informed that the Directors of the Board will be appointed at the 1<sup>st</sup> board meeting scheduled for 05<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

## **Resolution nominating Signatories to the Association Bankers & Financial Instruments**

It was unanimously agreed and resolved by the general membership that signatory powers for all Association financial instruments and banking facilities to be nominated as follows; and that the names and signatures of the following office bearers be presented to all banks and financial institutions that the Association may conduct dealings, currently or in the future and are empowered by the general membership, to jointly use their discretion with regard to any and all of the Association's financial transactions.

- (1) Mr. Suresh Ellawala & Ms. Shenali Panabokke
- (2) Or Mr. Jagath Fernando & Ms. Shenali Panabokke
- (3) Or Mr. Imdadh Marikar & Ms. Shenali Panabokke
- (4) Should the circumstances warrant, then the Board Members to decide on signatory powers at a Board Meeting of the Board.

### **Appointment of Auditors**

The house unanimously re- appointed Messrs. RN Associates (Chartered Accountants) as auditors for the current year and this was seconded by Mr. Annes Junaid.

Chairman then obtained the approval of the general membership and declared RN Associates as the Auditors for the year 2020/2021.

### **Any other business for which prior notice has been given.**

#### **i. Membership discontinuation in respect of long overdue subscriptions**

A resolution was passed and adopted to discontinue the members of the Association in respect of long overdue annual subscriptions.

#### **ii. Revision of annual membership subscription**

A resolution was passed and adopted to remove Rs. 5000/= annual membership subscription category and charge only Rs. 20,000/= as the annual membership subscription of the Association.

#### **iii. Resolution nominating two industry experts to serve on the Board for one year**

A resolution was passed and adopted to nominating two industry experts by invitation to serve on the Board for one year. Invitees names to be decided at the 01<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting scheduled for 05<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

**iv. MOU between Lanka Fruit & Vegetable Producers, Processors & Exporters Association (LFVPPEA) and National Agri Business Council (NAC)**

A resolution was passed and adopted to sign the MOU between the Fruit & Vegetable Producers, Processors & Exporters Association (LFVPPEA) and National Agri Business Council (NAC) to share the resources such as office space and staff. The proposal has made to seek the approval from the membership. MOU to be legalized and finalized for the adaptation at the 01<sup>st</sup> Board Meeting scheduled for 05<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

Chairman declared that the business of the Meeting had been concluded.

Chairman advised that the Post Business Session would commence in a very shortly, at which the Chief Guest and Invitees would be present.

Mr. Suresh Ellawala welcomed Her Excellency Tanja Gonggrijp, Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Sri Lanka and distinguished invitees, past Chairpersons and members to the Post Business Session of the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General meeting.

## **Address by Mr. Zuraish Hashim, Outgoing Chairman of LFVPPEA**

Quote

Thank you Ms. Charindi, Thank you for that kind words,

Good Evening Madam Ambassador, ladies and gentleman and my duty here is to introduce our Chairman elect Mr. Suresh Ellawala. Although Ms. Charindi has been so kind enough to say a few good words about me, thank you. Mr. Suresh has been as for the ones who joined the second half of the AGM, We have done the business part with prior to this meeting and the election of the new Chairperson of the association has already ceremonially done. So Mr. Suresh Ellawala is the new chair of the Lanka Fruit and Vegetable Association. I think we need to give him a round of applause. Mr. Suresh has been in the committee lastly serving as the vice chairman, very abled gentleman who has given a lot of knowledge and his experience which he brought into the association. The most important criteria he brings into the association is that he is not only a producer he is a processor and he is also an exporter. So the multi-faceted thing that he has I don't think a few of us who has served as chairpersons before who have not been there. So without further due I would like to pass on to Mr. Suresh to say a few words.

Thank you.

Unquote

## **Address by Mr. Suresh Ellawala, Incoming Chairman**

Quote

"Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Sri Lanka Mrs. Tanja Gonggrijp, members of the head table, distinguished invitees, my fellow association members,

Dear members, thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you as your Chairman. This is an association with a history whose leadership has come primarily from amongst the exporters, and I am one of a few producers or farmers to take up the position of Chairman. I am humbled by the trust you have placed in me.

I would like to share some thoughts with you today, especially in relation to key goals for the association in the coming year.

As my good friend and our past Chairman Gnana always says "Give me quality produce at the right price and I will sell any quantity". But the challenge we face is that we have limited volume of quality produce at the right price to compete in the international marketplace. Already, our own larger exporters have moved a significant part of their sourcing to other countries in the region.

What should we do if we want our farmers and exporters to compete in the global market place?

While welcoming the concessions granted to the agriculture sector by the new government, I wish to focus attention on a few areas where change can bring about a significant difference – that is, availability of seed and planting material, The Plant Varieties Protection Act and Land Use.

For commercial agriculture to succeed, the farmer must have access to the best available inputs with seed and planting material being the first item on the list. This will enable him to supply in demand produce, have better yields and make him more competitive. Regulations and procedures that prevent this must be looked at carefully and roadblocks removed.

While importing the best available seed, how do we enable innovation and development of our own varieties? Our laws do not protect property rights in relation to planting material. This is a disincentive for companies to invest into research and development of new varieties. Further, it prevents the latest patented varieties of seed from being imported to Sri Lanka as they have little protection under our laws.

The proposed Plant Varieties Protection Act will enable this. It has not been enacted due to fear of infringing on rights of farmers, but to my understanding, the act addresses their concerns. We call upon our political leaders and administrators to pass this act in to Law as a matter of urgency.

We worked previously with Verite Research who prepared a report on domestic non-tariff barriers to agricultural exports. Both these areas were highlighted in the document. The government agencies paid heed to the report and improved upon certain procedural and informational barriers. Whilst acknowledging that the Department of Agriculture has always given us a hearing and helped resolve specific issues of our members, we want to engage with them further to bring about faster progress in the sector.

The third area I mentioned was land use: More than 40% of our land is used in agriculture. 25-30% of our workforce is in agriculture. They contribute only 7% of GDP. It goes without saying that ours is a small country and it is not sustainable to open up more land for agriculture. Our existing forest cover is a non-negotiable asset and in fact we should try to increase it. Therefore, the land that we have under agriculture should be put to its most productive, sustainable use.

As our country grows economically, our farming population is being left behind. It is now an aging community, with very few young people coming into the field. Policies and laws must enable farmers to have a viable plot size to generate the level of income required for his income to be in keeping with national per capita income levels.

I welcome the Overarching Policy on Agriculture developed under the leadership of the TAMAP team and we hope it will pave the way to rationalize these issues.

We have with us here today the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands. Netherlands is a great example of a country with both good laws and great innovation with regard to agriculture. We must adopt the best practices of other countries as we seek to make progress. We thank the Dutch Government for their support to the agriculture sector and our association looks forward to continuing the engagement.

If we want to move forward, we need to look hard at the bottlenecks mentioned previously and bring about change. It will be the responsibility of LFVPPEA to raise these issues at every possible forum and create a discussion at national level.

The association has also developed its 5-year strategic plan with the support of the ITC and STDF. The association sub-committees have been re-organized accordingly.

One of the key areas in the plan is strengthening our Secretariat. I am happy to say that the plan is now in place and we will have a full-time secretariat working for the benefit of our members and the sector. Our current agreement with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce will continue and I thank the Chamber and staff for their great support.

We have also been in discussion with the National Agri-business Council on having a Memorandum of Understanding on sharing of resources. I believe this is a great proposition and it will strengthen the association.

Two other areas that the strategic plan covers are advocacy and market development. As I have already spoken about what our focus is in terms of advocacy, I will not go into it again.

With regard to Market and Value Chain Development, we have a dynamic sub-committee ably led by our young female board members and I am sure you will be hearing very soon of their plans for 2020. The Export Development Board's initiative of participation in ExpoDubai will be a key part of our immediate activities. I would like to note my appreciation of the initiatives of the EDB, its past Chairperson and staff. Our engagement in the National Export Strategy advisory committee meetings and quarterly meetings chaired by the Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture provides a forum for us to share ideas and take up matters of concern on a regular basis.

The final area of focus for your association is technology, research and innovation. In this rapidly evolving world, our members need to keep abreast of the all that is taking place around us. Your association will come up with targeted programs to share knowledge and information with its members. This will include seminars, field trips and visits to other countries. We hope this is an area that we can look to the Netherlands for cooperation.

LFVPPEA will continue to work together with government and multi-lateral agencies on policy matters and I look forward to the robust participation of our board members in these discussions. I also look to the advice and guidance of our senior members, past chairs and SLEDB at all times.

I wish to note that Sri Lanka is investing very significantly in upgrading its agriculture through the World Bank Agriculture Sector Modernisation Project with assistance from the European Union. It is important that these investments bring tangible results. We appreciate the engagement that these projects have had with our association and I encourage all our members to participate in the project, which will both ensure the success of the project and help companies obtain assistance in key areas.

Associations are always challenged with the amount of time that members can volunteer to its work. I acknowledge all the hard work done by the Immediate Past Chairman and his team during the last term and I look forward to the continued active participation of our board members. As discussed in our strategic plan, we would like to foster more

involvement from our general membership by inviting our general membership to a board meeting every quarter. This will help the board to maintain a continuing focus on the needs of the membership.

Finally, I look forward to serving as the LFPVPEA Chairman and thank everyone for your presence here today”.

Unquote

**Address by Chief Guest Her excellency Tanja Gonggrijp, Ambassador of Kingdom of Netherlands in Sri Lanka**

Quote

Thank you very much. Yes I think I’m the one who has to apologize because you were waiting for me. I got stuck in traffic and I’m happy you are here waiting for me because I’m very pleased actually to be here at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Lanka Fruit and Vegetable Producers Processors and Exporters Association and I would like to say special thanks to Mr. Zuraish Hashim outgoing chairman for inviting me and of course sincere congratulations Mr. Suresh Ellawala for incoming chairman of this association and I wish good luck in the coming year. Even though I’m missing out of the normal procedures of this meeting, I’m still very happy to be able to talk to you and it’s interesting to be at this meeting rewriting history between our nations. This export and import five different crops with our countries have been engaging has let us share our experiences. Even our languages have been improved by this. Look at our similar words for pineapple, “Annasi” and “Ananas” or for beans “Bonchi” or “Bonen” in Dutch or Czech we say. These are close to a long history of fruit and vegetable exchange between the Netherland and Sri Lanka and when I visited Peradeniya two months ago somebody even told me that I think it was a Ramadan fruit came from Redondance that make me smile because I realized very much that we have far from the climate in Redondance to grow such an exotic fruit but I guess that word indeed the Dutch who brought it to Sri Lanka from Indonesia in VOC times. So there was some truth in it but we cannot take the credit. Chain has not stop between our nations of course in those times. Raw vegetables and fruit exported from Sri Lanka to the Redondance have a value of around seven billion US\$ per year and this is most tropical fruit. And the train from Netherlands to Sri Lank is small right it’s only around US\$ 2million in year. This is mostly potatoes so “Arthapal” which is “Aardappelen” in Dutch. Both Sri Lanka and Netherland are prominent in agriculture and Netherlands is a country which is the second largest agriculture exporter in the world and we are quite small as you might know and Sri Lanka is a country which one quarter of population is engaged in agriculture and it is actually on this basis that we want to built. The Netherlands has been involved in several projects for horticulture sector in Sri Lanka and as we speak a delegation of Sri Lankan horticultural business and representatives for the agriculture sector modernization projects of the ministry of primary industries are in attendance for trade mission. They will visit horticulture operations in Netherlands as well educational institutes, horticulture supply companies and tissue culture companies and we hope this visit will strengthen the connections between the Dutch and Sri Lankan horticulture sector, we hope to build on this for creation of a four more Dutch partners in business group for horticulture sector. And we want to create this group of Dutch companies

who are willing to make commitments for involvement in Sri Lankan horticulture sector. With this group we hope to establish long term business connections between the Dutch and Sri Lankan horticulture sectors. We have also been acting in bringing depth Dutch knowledge in own to Sri Lankan sale. The integrated personality trainings have been positively received around an 150 trainers have participated in this courses on integrated personnel management and trainings were focused on reducing pesticides use with technological innovations using the appliances of pests and ensured pesticides uses unforeignable its term in the right amount and with proper safety precautions. The trainers have said they have learned a lot from the program but they also said that the information and new way of doing things takes time to reach the level of the farmer which are well aware understand. Change is difficult as something I we look at the test to, for instance for example from Netherlands a few weeks ago a thousand Dutch farmers brought their tractors through the Heik. The Heik is our police cop Capital where our Government is sited. They brought us the government because they brought again stricken rules for sustainability in the Dutch agriculture. This context involving France all over the country driving in a tractors cost the worst traffic jams in Dutch history. But their frustration is understandable yet these changes have to be made. Good Agricultural Practices and more sustainable ways of doing things must be promoted. In Both Netherland and Sri Lanka the climate is changing the Netherland had unusual hot summers and damaged crops and Sri Lanka rainy seasons have become more unpredictable we have to make agriculture climate vigilant but also environmental friendly and if we do not do that we will not only harm the people and the planet but also the production in the long run also on local skill we need more moving to good agricultural practices can be seen and already spoke about integrated personal management we noted pesticide used in Sri Lanka has negatively impacted the health of farmers and it has given rise to increase kidney problems in Sri Lankan consumers. And these are things we must change; farmers must be safe in the working environment and consumers in food they purchase. And we are grateful to Sri Lankan agricultural business and government access in that support of our IPM training to try agriculture protecting decisions. Pesticide use is not only damaging towards the environment, people or the market it also damages the business. As countries in EU like Netherlands as you know have extremely high standards of food safety they put limitations on what can be imported. So reducing pesticides is important not only for Sri Lankan consumer but also for Sri Lankan business. And miss-relevance was just mentioning the importance of forest and existence of forests in Sri Lanka and actually importance of extending the forest and that made me think of other Dutch sustainable practices that we have. We are working on the concept of fruit a forest which is quite interesting concept these are forests that have fruit trees in the forest and that does not only safeguard or ensure biodiversity and also actually you get really nice fruits from that. So it's not like you are very effective for growing and combining different meet and you are actually have sustainable product in the end, end of them a tasty one which is quite important. So I think Sri Lanka has a unique opportunity. Government and private sector access are positive towards Good Agricultural Practices and if change comes soon around or later we can avoid tractors on roads of Colombo and make sure the traffic doesn't get any worse. Sri Lanka is a small island we have brought the interest in sustainability and if this course is sustained I see future where no matter where we are when we pick up a mango and it has Sri Lanka, you know it has been grown sustainably and that is so important because that is a possibility and an opportunity to brand Sri Lanka as a sustainable fruit and vegetable hub in the region which

makes you more attractive to the Dutch your BM. That's really important. And I believe this is possible when get together we can achieve this. So on behalf of the Dutch embassy I wish all success in your endeavors and I hope to work together with the fruit and vegetable sector in Sri Lanka in the future. Both these trade partners as well as sustainability partners. I wish the new board success in the work and hope for a fruitful partnership.

Unquote

### **Vote of Thanks**

Honorary Secretary, Charindi Ranasinghe delivered the Vote of Thanks.

Quote

“Her excellency Tanja Gonggrijp, Ambassador of Kingdom of Netherlands in Sri Lanka, distinguished invitees , past chair persons fellow members and ladies and gentlemen it is my privilege who have been asked to propose a vote of thanks for the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Lanka Fruits and Vegetable Producers Processors and Exporters Association on behalf of our LFVPPEA I would like to thank our chief guest Her Excellency Tanja Gonggrijp for accepting our invitation and being here at this evening its quite her decision. I also thank our past chairperson Mr. Zuraish Hashim and Mrs. Dawn Austin who has supported LFVPPEA in numerous ways in this year and in the past and Mr. Gnanskandan and Mr. Junaid thank you very much all the senior board members. Thank you very much. But everyone who has helped association in every way possible. Thank you very much. We also thank the members of LFVPPEA for extending their support and co-operations at all times. A big thank you to all of the support extended for making this event a success. On behalf of the association I also thank the Chamber of Commerce for providing secretarial work and the Export Development Board for the numerous services rendered to us during the year, a special mention the excellent service rendered by Ms. Manori Dissanayaka thank you so much for the work from background and Ms. Ushani Dassanayake I wish to express our sincere gratitude. And also the media coming to today's event, thank you very much. I also thank the hotel management and the staff for the excellent arrangement. Last but not least on behalf of the management and the committee I thank all the members and guests for being here with us today this evening. Thank you very much”.

Unquote

There being no other business, the Honorary Secretary called the Annual General Meeting to an end, and invited the guests and members for the fellowship and cocktails.

**Ushani Dassanayake**  
**For Secretary**

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*19<sup>th</sup> October 2020*