

## SHELLING MAIZE MADE EASIER

The medium-sized machine made a loud cracking noise as it gobbled several maize cobs the operator, Douglas Opio, had placed in one of its compartments.

It took seconds for the petrol-run machine to separate the maize from the cobs. While the maize went into a gunny bag placed on an outlet on the left side of the machine, the cobs fell out on the ground in hundreds.

In four minutes, the machine, known as a maize Sheller or thresher, had completed processing a 100 kilogram bag. The Sheller is on display at farm tool dealers such as China North Machines, China Huangpai and Musa Body in Kampala. “Several farmers employ workers or family members to shell maize with bare hands, which is a labor-intensive exercise. But here is a machine that does that work in seconds,” explains Opio.



## **Moisture free**

Opio who works with China North Machines, an agro machinery company as a senior agronomist in-charge of farm tools, cautions that one must ensure the maize is moisture-free to use the grinder. “If the grains still have moisture, it becomes difficult to grind the cobs as it will stick onto the grinder affecting the Sheller,” he advises. The speed of the grinder can be adjusted, Opio says.

## **Installing**

The machine, according to Opio, shells a100 kilograms of maize in about four minutes.

“The speed can be increased, but four minutes is a reasonable time. The shelling kit is easy to install, remove and re-attach in case of repair or when cleaning. It works with most engines,” says Opio.

According to the agronomist, five liters of petrol shells 40 to 50 of 100 kilograms bags of maize. The machines go for between Shs3m and Shs4m depending on the speed and capacity.

Amooti Solomon Byenkya of Kisindizi village in Masindi District has been using the Sheller for the last four years. Byenkya confesses that he reduced on costs since embracing the tool. “I used to spend more than Shs250, 000 paying workers who would thresh the cobs manually,” says Byenkya. “The maize Sheller has been and remains a useful tool in my farm.

I encourage both small-scale and large-scale farmers to embrace it. It is portable, easy to operate and maintain, making it affordable for the small farmer,” says Byenkya.

Eliab Baryakashanga, a mixed crop farmer in Rukungiri, says adjusting farm work from threshing maize using hands to advanced farm technology of using a maize thresher has saved him more farm costs.

“When I am not on the farm, I operate the machine myself,” he says.

### **How it works**

Like most Agricultural machines, the maize thresher equally runs on diesel fuel which is the main source of energy, while water is used for cooling the engine as it runs.

“You do not have to change the cooling water. You just have to keep topping up after every 30 minutes when the engine is running,” Douglass Opio the sales manager at China North Machine advises.

In an hour, the maize thresher consumes 0.5 liters of fuel, with a total output of approximately two tones in the same time period.

According to Opio, this means that the amount of work (threshing) the machine can do in one hour is equivalent to what 10 men or women can do in a week.

“There are farmers who thresh their maize by hitting it. It may work but in the process, some maize is crushed and this is an uncalculated loss for the farmer. When you use the maize thresher, there is a very small percentage or no losses incurred at all,” Opio observes.