



TingA's Potato Manager, Consolata Wachira on a potato plantation in Narok County. Photo Credit: TingA

Farm machinery renting drives up potato harvests in Kenya's Narok County

By Murimi Gitari

A LOW level of agricultural mechanisation or use of outdated equipment by smallholders is partly blamed for their declining production and meagre, if any, profits.

Even where the farm equipment is available, the high costs put them beyond the reach of a majority of the small-scale farmers.

TingA, a project of Quipbank Trust Limited, has sought to tackle this problem with a community short-term leasing plan that allows farmers to access farm equipment without having to buy or own it. To lease the equipment, individual farmers or groups are required to place an order by registering on its online-based platform using a mobile phone, a tablet or a personal computer.

TingA's community model concept allows farmers to access mechanisation services through already established units such as NGOs, informal investment groups (chama), savings and credit cooperative societies (saccos), or churches.

In Kenya's Narok County, TingA has helped potato farmers to significantly boost their production.

TingA's Potato Manager, Consolata Wachira, says their farm equipment services have helped improve the production by 300 percent and reduced post-harvest losses by 90 percent in the county.

Many small-scale farmers have limited access to specialised agricultural implements such as air seeders, harrows, chisel ploughs and cultivators.

"Many small-scale farmers have limited financial resources and are unable to purchase their own tractors. We are providing a platform where they can access these machines communally which is cheaper and very convenient," says Ms Wachira.

"We started offering our services six years ago. Since then, we have launched various E-Tinga platforms such as the E-Tinga app, and E-Tinga website and have also initiated farmer training campaigns all over Kenya to educate farmers on how to productively utilise modern farming machinery. All of these projects have allowed farmers to learn, book and share farming machinery.

So far, we have had the pleasure of benefiting over 10,000 farmers and 20 farmer groups all over Kenya."

The seeders used in planting, for example, reduces labour costs, improves quality of farm life and increase productivity.



TingA tractor working on a farm in Narok County where production of potatoes has increased due to the leasing of the tractors by the firm. Photo Credit: TingA

The firm also has a wide range of combine harvesters that cut, thresh and clean grains in one operation as well as pest control equipment.

The farm equipment lender opened a branch in Narok where farmers access the equipment easily.

“As residents of Narok, we are pleased to have the mechanisation experts around. We are excited to access their services and equipment which have been brought closer to us and we expect to improve our farm productivity and living standards with the help of TingA,” Reuben Salaon, a farmer in Narok’s Ntulele area notes.

The firm uses cutting-edge technologies to give farmers access to its farm equipment. One of these is its web-based platforms and mobile app, E-TingA, which allow farmers to register and order services as groups or individuals online. The app has an easy-to-use interface with a variety of options to suit all the farmers’ needs. Due to its user-friendliness, farmers can rent farm equipment from the comfort of their homes.

“We realised the growing demand for mechanised farming and since a majority of farmers are small holder farmers, renting machinery was far cheaper. Furthermore, due to current seasonal changes owning a tractor seemed impractical for many,” says Ms Consolata.

Through a partnership with AgriFi project funding awarded to VAELL leasing Limited by Self Help Africa, TingA has so far trained more than 10,000 farmers across the country, sensitising them on modern potato farming techniques. This has been achieved through partnerships with farmers associations and groups. The farmers have also been trained on how to share and book services through TingA’s online platform dubbed TingA Rental Store.

The farm equipment renter has replicated the success of its leasing model in Tanzania and plans to expand to other countries in the region such as Zambia and the DRC. Its expansion strategy involves establishing agricultural

hubs, strategic partnerships, and diversification of services leveraging on technology to meet a growing clients’ needs.

TingA’s innovation won the Key Industry Leadership recognition in the Pacesetters Awards Kenya organised by Jubilant Stewards of Africa (JSA), an NGO dedicated to improving living standards, social ethics, dignity and empowerment of communities.

The firm is currently constructing warehouses and storage hubs for farmers in the second phase of its expansion. Its state-of-the-art warehouse in Narok, under construction with the support of the European Union through the Agrifi Project, is expected to save farmers from losses caused by weevils and natural produce spoilage. The construction of facilities such as cold storage in the area will enable farmers to delay the sale of their crops such as potatoes for up to four months thereby helping them withhold harvest and wait for prices to rise.