

## AGRA Impact Series



# Preventing post-harvest losses and promoting agribusiness development through mechanized threshing in Mozambique

Maria Santissima

For 49-year old Maria Santissima, investing in a threshing machine was like getting a heavy load lifted off her back. She no longer bears the pain of seeing so much of her harvest going to waste due to manual threshing that always resulted in grain spillage, incomplete separation of the grain from the chaff, and breakage due to excessive striking.

“I do not have to cajole my son into helping out with the work anymore. This investment has allowed me save time and money to thresh my maize as well as helped generate some income to recover my investments and also buy some family needs, and my son is happily employed,” she says.

Maria operates a small business, providing threshing services to neighbouring farmers in Macanga district, Central Mozambique. Like most of the farmers in this high-potential region of Mozambique, her occupation was characterised by low yields due to limited access to quality inputs, extension services and lack of knowledge in good agricultural practices.

A considerable portion of yield was also being lost to poor post-harvest practices, including

the manual, back-breaking and time-consuming threshing of maize.

To reduce the impact of such challenges that have for long kept farmers food-insecure and poor, AGRA has been working with the Kugulissa consortium in Mozambique, under a USAID COVID-19 response intervention through mechanization, to develop markets and support adoption of agricultural technologies, aiming to increase yields and income of smallholder farmers, agrodealers and small business enterprises.

Introduced in 2017, the AGRA consortia model enhances collaboration with the local governments, farmers, and businesses to deliver integrated programming at farmer-level. The government, development agencies, and businesses come together within a defined geographical area to collaborate to achieve agriculture transformation, with smallholder farmers as the primary target.

“In Macanga district, we aim to reach 25,171 smallholder farmers, including 56 village-based advisors, two Hub agrodealers, 23 agrodealers and 41 SMEs,” says Benvindo Verde, AGRA Programme Officer in Mozambique.



Maria is one of the MSME owners who has benefitted from the AGRA programme. She was trained in post-harvest management techniques (harvesting, pre-drying, threshing, drying, storage and management of warehouse pests, use of airtight bags), basic maintenance of threshers and business management.

After the training she contributed MZN 182,400 (USD 2,605), being 40% of the cost of a threshing machine, and was linked to two village-based advisors who mobilized farmers to get mechanical threshing services from her.

"I can now thresh 4,800 kg of maize at Ms. Maria's place in just four hours at the cost of MZN 2,880 (USD 41), compared to MZN4,500 (USD 64) that I used to spend on manual threshing. Previously it used to take about six days and six labourers to do the same work," says Arlindo Eusebio, one of Maria's customers.

Maria started threshing operations in September 2020, and today employs two young men, including her 22-year-old son. In her first three months of operation, she threshed 120 MT of maize (28MT of her production and 92MT from 115 smallholder farmers), earning MZN331,200 (USD 4,731) from the threshing services and from selling her own maize.



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**Benvindo Verde,**  
AGRA Programme Officer in Mozambique.

She projects that she will soon reach over 1,000 farmers with the threshing service, which will enable her business to grow and to finance her children's studies.