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Wednesday, October 14, 2009

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Nut sheller can do work of 30

(10-10-2009)

HCM CITY — Ngo Quang Ngoc, a farmer in Binh Phuoc Province's Bu Dop District, has invented a cashew nut-shelling machine that can do the work of 30 people.

The machine, which took Ngoc nearly six years of research to perfect, can process 300 kilogrammes an hour, using just 1.5 litres of petrol.

It costs just VND10 million (US\$505) and is likely to reduce with scale.

"I was determined to study the working [of the machine] after watching my family and neighbours work very hard to shell cashew nuts for many years," Ngoc says.

"I needed six years to make it because I only had a few hours a day to work on the machine besides earning my family's livelihood. I also did not have the technical knowledge or funds," he recalls.

His invention has interested many local cashew farmers. "Most of the machine's parts are cheap and easy to buy. It is also very easy to use," Ngoc says.

Ngoc has not registered his invention for a patent, saying he does not know how to do it.

Ngoc is one of possibly hundreds of farmers who share a passion for making useful farm machines. But most of them find it difficult to manufacture and market their inventions.

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RATES	
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CAD	17,826
CHF	17,971
EUR	27,227

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Nguyen Thanh Dien of An Giang Province has invented two kinds of agricultural machinery: rice shoveller and insecticide spraying machine.

"We have sold 70 machines in An Giang and neighbouring provinces. Because of lack of capital we manufacture the machine only when we receive an order," Dien explains.

"We ask buyers to pay us 50 per cent in advance. We only have enough money to remain in business but not to develop it."

Dinh Duc Tho, a farmer in Tra Vinh Province who has developed a simple and durable television antenna favoured by many locals, faces a similar situation.

"[We] cannot supply enough products to the market since we do not have the capital to expand our business," Tho says.

"I once applied for a preferential Government loan but I did not have property for use as collateral."

Encouraging innovation

According to officials at provincial science and technology departments, the Government has many policies to encourage creative efforts by farmers and rural enterprises but they are not widely known.

Ton That Hanh, director of the Ben Tre Department of Science and Technology's Information Centre, says that over recent years many farmers have been manufacturing equipment like coconut husking machines and cacao seed-grinding machines.

GBP	29,130
HKD	2,377
JPY	205
SGD	13,190
THB	562
USD	17,853
Vietcombank October 13	



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"To support them, in 2007, the department launched a programme to provide financial support equivalent to 30 per cent of their total costs to buy equipment," Hanh says.

"In one year, just 11 enterprises benefited from the programme. This was because many rural enterprises did not know about the programme."

Ta Ba Hung, director of the National Centre for Scientific and Technological Information, says: "The Government has always greatly appreciated farmer-scientists and enabled them to participate in national exhibitions and fairs to showcase their products."

The Ministry of Science and Technology has issued a decree ordering local science and technology departments to assist rural enterprises and farmers to apply their inventions and upgrade their equipment.

But the inventive farmers need to closely co-operate with scientific agencies and enterprises also to market their products. — VNS

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Copyright by Viet Nam News, Vietnam News Agency
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Publication Permit: 599/GP-INTER

Granted by the Ministry of Culture and Information on
April 9, 1998.