Hi Joshua:

I wanted to report back to you on our experience so far with the GreenSeeder Hand Planter.

I am attaching 2 photos here: one of a Rwanda-based Seed Co agronomist demonstrating to some female farmers how to use the GreenSeeder Hand Planter which I purchased from you at last Christmas time; and one of a female farmer giving it a try, too!

Through our USAID-funded Seed Cooperative Alliance (SCA) project, I was able to purchase two of the GreenSeeder Hand Planters and hand carry them with me to Rwanda and Tanzania in order to try them out here with our partner in this project, Seed Co.

While we are not yet in the rainy season or maize planting time, and we may not be ready to plant for a few more weeks (mid-October possibly?), we were able to demonstrate the new device to half a dozen cooperatives and their male and female farmer members.  The farmers loved this new tool, especially the women who do most of the maize seed planting in sub-Saharan Africa.  The women right away saw that it would, in their own words, “end the drudgery of farming, of hand planting and bending over at the waist all day long,” sometimes with a baby on their back.  The men wanted to take it apart and see if they could make on here and not have to pay $200-$250 for one coming from the USA.

The farmers are wondering, would this work in wet or most soil?  Given the tight space between the two “blades” at the mouth, probably not.  We can see that the wet soil or even mud would get jammed in there and this would prevent seeds from being released.  So, I am writing to you to ask what kind of modifications could be made, or do you plan to make or what would you suggest be done to overcome that challenge?

They engineers seemed to have done pretty well in designing it so that it delivers a seed in a hole about 90-95% of the time we experimented with it in Rwanda.  We are going out to try it in Tanzania on Wednesday.

Initially, the brushes inside seemed to keep the maize seed from coming out upon a jab, but I think that this was just caused by the stiff “new” quality of the brushes because on the second day we demonstrated it in Rwanda, we got 100% seed release, one seed per hole.

Farmers will need to be carefully trained on it – like anything new.  Some farmers grabbed it and did not tilt it at the correct angle to jab the seed into the soil; or they released the seed as they withdrew the tool from the hole – leaving the seed above – and not below – the ground.  But like with anything new, if we can teach the farmers well and watch them as they practice, male and female farmer alike will soon be able to perform this operation by themselves.

I wish we had one or two large maize and/or soy production projects going on in sub-Saharan Africa right now, with a robust project budget for equipment, so that I could bring more of these out and let smallholder farmers see the labor-saving highlights of this simple tool.

How did your use of it with Winrock International in Vietnam in January 2015 work out?  Did you have issues with using it in wet or damp soil?

Thanks for your role in bringing this to our attention in the International Development division of Land O’Lakes, Inc.

Sincerely,

Tom

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**Dr. Thomas J. Herlehy** / Practice Area Manager - Crops  
202-370-1625 (direct) / [tjherlehy@landolakes.com](mailto:tjherlehy@landolakes.com)  
Skype**:** Tom.Herlehy.lol