

## PROLINNOVA Guidelines 11:

### Guiding principles for National Steering Committees (NSCs)

*At the inception meeting for Proli-FaNS (Promoting local innovation in Food and Nutrition Security) in November 2016, the participants contributed ideas about principles to guide the composition and functioning of the National Steering Committee (NSC) as a governance body overseeing a PROLINNOVA Country Platform (CP). These guiding principles were discussed by the other CPs at the International Partners Workshop in May 2017 and have been ratified by the POG.*

#### **Roles**

- Types of roles: Provide overall guidance and oversight to contribute to the development and implementation of CP strategies and programmes; formulate policies, strategies and plans to realise CP objectives; monitor CP coordination and implementation to facilitate improvement; promote development of a strong and vibrant network; ensure transparency and financial accountability of the CP; approve workplans and budgets of projects under the CP; assist in resource mobilisation; engage in policy dialogue on behalf of the CP; facilitate networking with relevant national and international networks and organisations.
- The role of governance/oversight by the NSC should be strictly separated from the role of implementation by the CP's core team.
- The CP coordinator is supervised by the NSC and is answerable to the chairperson of the NSC and therefore cannot take on this role. The CP coordinator should be an *ex-officio* member or secretary to the NSC, taking part in discussions but without voting power.
- In cases where the CP is involved in a multi-CP project under the umbrella of Prolinnova, the NSC should approve the CP workplans and budgets before these are sent to the project coordinator.

#### **Composition**

- Type of person to be included in the NSC:
  - committed to participatory agricultural research and development (ARD) to promote local innovation processes in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management (NRM) and to institutionalise this approach
  - willing and able to give time and thought to guiding the PROLINNOVA CP
  - ideally, experience in ARD in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM
  - ideally, experience in mobilising resources for ARD projects and programmes.
- Diversity: The membership of the NSC should cover a variety of stakeholder groups (e.g. farmer organisations, NGOs, government agencies, extension, research) and types of expertise.
- Only one person from a member organisation should sit in the NSC; an exception may be made when a second person brings in expertise or perspective that would otherwise be missing.
- Gender balance should be sought; all NSC members should have an understanding of gender dynamics and issues and, if this is not the case, relevant training and mentoring should be given.

- The NSC should have a minimum of three members from different types of institutions; an NSC with more than 10 members would be unwieldy and expensive, especially if travel costs are covered. The ideal size of an NSC is probably in the range of 5–9 members.
- The NSC members should have the capacity to establish and strengthen linkages (both horizontal and vertical) with various partners and stakeholders and at various levels. This networking should strengthen the CP's capacity in implementing activities, mobilising resources, obtaining technical support, disseminating information and engaging in advocacy and policy dialogue.

### **Procedures**

- The NSC should have terms of reference that outline its roles and responsibilities, composition (including gender composition), nomination and/or election process, terms of office, procedure for naming chair or co-chairs, procedures for calling and conducting meetings, establishment of subcommittees, procedures for internal and external communication etc.
- The NSC can and should involve people from different parts of the country and should meet at least once a year face-to-face but could otherwise discuss by email or Skype or telephone conference calls. Information should be provided in writing (by email or in a Dropbox or the like) before major decisions are made.
- Participation in the NSC is voluntary without financial compensation. Only necessary costs such as for travel, communication and meals will be reimbursed, subject to availability of funds.