



PROLINNOVA Platform for West and Central Africa
Plateforme PROLINNOVA d'Afrique Occidentale et Centrale

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Acronyms

ACEFA	Project to Support the Competitiveness of Family Farming
BF	Burkina Faso
CP	Country Platform
FaReNe	Farmer-led Research Networks (Project)
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
GRC	Global Resilience Consortium
IPW	International Partners Workshop
IST	International Support Team
LMP	Local Multistakeholder Platform
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NRM	natural resource management
NSC	National Steering Committee
PID	Participatory Innovation Development
POG	Prolinnova Oversight Group
Proli-FaNS	Promoting local innovation in Food and Nutrition Security
PROLINNOVA	<u>P</u> romoting <u>L</u> ocal <u>I</u> nnovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM
WCA	West & Central Africa

Introduction

This report summarises the achievements of the active PROLINNOVA Country Platforms (CPs) in West and Central Africa (WCA) during 2016. The CPs in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Senegal have been very active in identifying local innovations and implementing participatory innovation development (PID) on some of them. These achievements, despite the many challenges the partners have faced, have been firmly embedded in the norms and principles of the PROLINNOVA network, as it supports rural men and women to play decisive roles in agricultural research and development for sustainable rural livelihoods. In the following, I present a brief summary of the activities of each CP, some key results obtained and the difficulties they encountered. I conclude by highlighting the current situation of PROLINNOVA in the WCA subregion.

Burkina Faso

The activities of the CP in Burkina Faso in 2016 are part of the implementation of two major projects: FaReNe (Strengthening Farmer-led Research Networks in the Sahel) and Proli-FaNS (Promoting Local Innovation in Food and Nutrition Security). The Burkina Faso partners have continued to implement the FaReNe project, which is hosted by the international non-governmental organisation (NGO) World Neighbors. They have strengthened the capacities of staff members in implementing PID, and held feedback sessions at the project sites. Ongoing joint experiments have been monitored, a farmer research network has been set up, and a mechanism for establishing the Local Innovation Support Fund (LISF) has been put in place.

PROLINNOVA–Burkina Faso (BF) took part in the inception workshop of Proli-FaNS project held in Accra, Ghana, on 14–19 November. As a result of its involvement in Proli-FaNS, and to ensure good achievements, the implementation of Proli-FaNS in Burkina Faso was entrusted to the NGO Diobass, after internal discussions aimed at resolving the problems associated with the earlier designation of Réseau MARP to carry out this project. During community consultations conducted to select 20 innovations that could be subjected to PID, the objectives of the Proli-FaNS project were widely shared with the various local actors. The CP in Burkina Faso was also heavily involved in preparing and implementing the PID training workshop for building and upgrading capacities in the African francophone CPs involved in Proli-FaNS.

As part of capacity building and networking, PROLINNOVA–BF took part in several international meetings. It was represented at the capacity-building workshop on research methods, organised for the McKnight Foundation-funded organisations and held in March in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. PROLINNOVA–BF was represented at the International Partners Workshop (IPW) held in Thiès, Senegal, on 16–19 March, as well as at the meeting of CPs in the FaReNe project held on this occasion. The Burkina Faso partners also benefited from a leadership training workshop organised from 30 May to 2 June 2016 in Ouagadougou by the McKnight Foundation.

PROLINNOVA–BF is currently facing some governance issues. The transition from 20 organisations at its creation in 2007 to three organisations in 2016 reveals the extent of the decline it is experiencing. The coordination of the CP by the same organisation, Réseau MARP, since the platform was set up also reflects a certain form of heritage that has affected the operation and development of the network. As a result, there is a lack of commitment by member organisations, which no longer take active part in network initiatives. To solve these problems and relaunch the CP so that it becomes more dynamic, the Burkina Faso partners – on their own initiatives – held several meetings to discuss openly the difficulties that undermine their CP. These meetings revealed the need to re-organise the network through the establishment of new management bodies, including a National Steering Committee (NSC), which will be the main governance and control structure, and a Coordination Team as the executing and coordinating body for the day-to-day activities of the network. To achieve this, the content of PROLINNOVA guidelines No. 11 on the organisational structure of CPs, as well as other advice and recommendations from the inception workshop of the Proli-

FaNS project in November, were widely shared with stakeholders from all member organisations. This made it possible for all national partners to have the same level of information, which is necessary for the success of the reforms envisaged and collectively decided.

Cameroon

In 2016, the CP in Cameroon took part in several international meetings. It implemented several activities within the framework of the Proli-FaNS project, in particular the activities aimed at identifying farmer innovations. It also celebrated the International Farmer Innovation Day, which was very positive for national networking and successful policy dialogue.

On 16–19 March, PROLINNOVA–Cameroon took part in the IPW, during which the 2016–20 strategy of PROLINNOVA was adopted. Regionalisation and southernisation of PROLINNOVA were decided during this meeting, which also led to setting up a subregional taskforce for WCA, of which the CP Coordinator, Jean Bosco Etoa, was selected as a member.

The CP in Cameroon represented the PROLINNOVA international network at an agricultural extension workshop organised on 3–6 October by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) in Limbe in southwest Cameroon. It was an opportunity for the CP to realise the need for PROLINNOVA to strengthen its collaboration with GFRAS, which also supports the recognition of local innovations by rural advisory services in the context of promoting agripreneurship. PROLINNOVA–Cameroon contributed to disseminating the principles of PROLINNOVA in the field of agricultural research and development through two major actions: i) publication of a blog on [“Identifying local initiatives: a promising approach for extension services to promote agricultural entrepreneurship”](#) during the preparatory phase of the forum; and ii) disseminating the key concepts of PID through a 15-minute [oral communication](#) and a sharefair stand. The blog and presentation were posted on GFRAS website and included in the USB drives distributed to the participants in the meeting.

On 14–19 November, PROLINNOVA–Cameroon took part in the inception workshop for the Proli-FaNS project, during which it shared with the PROLINNOVA network the results of the community consultation with the Local Multistakeholder Platform (LMP) of Nkometou/Ekoumdouma, as well as the provisional plan for Proli-FaNS activities in the country. This meeting was a good opportunity for the three Cameroon partners present to improve their knowledge of PROLINNOVA’s project management guidelines and to strengthen their managerial capacities, through presentations and exchanges with partners from other countries.

After taking part in the Proli-FaNS inception workshop, PROLINNOVA–Cameroon invested heavily in identifying farmer innovations to be the subject of PID. Eight potential local innovations were identified during 2016. These cover a wide range of areas: (i) mushroom growing (*fungiculture*) with reduced time inputs and improved yields; (ii) producing maize beer using a local starter; (iii) processing roots and tubers such as cassava and potatoes into flour for bread; (iv) improving honey production through a new type of beehive called “*fonje*”; and (v) processing non-timber forest products such as *Ricinodendron heudelotii* nuts into multipurpose oil. These innovations, which have been tentatively identified, will be the subject of a careful evaluation which will make it possible to retain them finally for PID. This is an important achievement for the CP, which has so far never implemented PID.

On 14 December, PROLINNOVA–Cameroon took active part in the celebration of the International Farmer Innovation Day, normally in 29 November, but this date had coincided with the Proli-FaNS inception workshop in Ghana. Fifty-two farmers from the nine member organisations in the Nkometou-Ekoumdouma LMP attended this event held in Ekoumdouma village. About 200 visitors followed the presentations of the farmer innovators and bought the exhibited agricultural products. This strong mobilisation of actors and the influx of visitors offered men and women innovators an important market for selling their various products. The event enabled PROLINNOVA–Cameroon to strengthen exchanges and explore opportunities for collaboration with the officials of the Project to Support the Competitiveness of Family Farming (ACEFA) in

Lékié Province and at national level. As the ACEFA project is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries (MINEPIA), it offers a good perspective for the implementation of policy dialogue planned by the CP. The media coverage of the celebration by the ACEFA communication team is a good sign that the CP could benefit in future from the support of ACEFA for its advocacy and lobbying initiatives towards policy- and decision-makers.

Ghana

PROLINNOVA–Ghana continued in 2016 the sharing and learning activities based on selection of local innovations and the implementation of PID, in collaboration with various local and regional partners. It organised or participated in several meetings in relation to internal governance, networking and fundraising.

On 16–19 March, the PROLINNOVA–Ghana coordinator, Joseph Nchor, took part in the IPW in Thiès, Senegal. This meeting was an opportunity for the CP to be involved in discussions on the PROLINNOVA’s 2016–20 strategy and the Proli-FaNS proposal. It was also on this occasion that the CP volunteered to host the 2017 IPW in Tamale, Ghana.

In September, the interim NSC and the Coordination Team of PROLINNOVA–Ghana held a meeting to discuss Proli-FaNS, which ACDEP as a member of the CP had agreed to host. During this meeting, the CP coordinator gave a summary of the activities carried out at the IPW held in Senegal and the main decisions taken there. As part of the implementation of Proli-FaNS project, the meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss and select two action-learning sites, as well as the respective local NGOs to be ACDEP’s partners in implementing the project locally. In December 2016, PROLINNOVA-Ghana also organised a meeting to validate the annual work plan and budget for Proli-FaNS project at the request of its interim NSC.

On 14–19 November, PROLINNOVA–Ghana organised, through ACDEP, the inception workshop for the Proli-FaNS project in Accra. Although many local NGOs are using the PID approach in their food security and agricultural livelihood interventions, Proli-FaNS preliminary activities since August 2016 and the inception workshop in November gave new impetus to the PID activities that developed since then. The involvement of the CP in the Proli-FaNS project allows its governing bodies and members to become more involved in PID-related initiatives and policy dialogue. In this context, several activities have been carried out and include: (i) organising sensitisation and planning meetings on the key concepts of PROLINNOVA and Proli-FaNS; (ii) identifying 53 innovations by or relevant for women in Bongo and Yendi Regions; (iii) setting up two local LMPs in the Proli-FaNS sites to coordinate project implementation; (iv) setting up an interim NSC for the CP, which is composed of seven members, including two women; (v) organising PID training at the two Proli-FaNS sites for the project officers and staff of the local partner NGOs, the LMP members and the CP Coordination Team; (vi) starting up the Proli-FaNS project at the two sites of Bongo and Yendi, with the involvement of men and women farmers, as well as political decision-makers in the framework of strengthening policy dialogue.

With support from the International Support Team (IST) including IIRR (International Institute for Rural Reconstruction), ACDEP updated PROLINNOVA–Ghana’s page on the PROLINNOVA website and created a webpage for the Proli-FaNS project (www.prolinnova.net/fns). This webpage allowed online publication of the various guidelines developed for the project in both English and French, with the aim of providing useful and sufficient public information and good management tools to Proli-FaNS’s partners. The main documents made available were: (i) guidelines for communication in Proli-FaNS and PROLINNOVA; (ii) guidelines for identifying local innovations; (iii) guidelines for setting up LMPs; and (iv) guidelines for documenting local innovations.

Despite these efforts, PROLINNOVA–Ghana is facing huge financial difficulties which do not allow its extension beyond the northern region of Ghana, where it was created and has been operating since 2004.

However, the interim NSC is strongly involved in developing various strategies for mobilising funds, including submission of spontaneous and call-specific proposals to both local governments and international donors. The CP is also facing technical difficulties, since many of its members more experienced in promoting local innovation and PID retired or were promoted to higher positions, and had to leave Tamale. In order to solve this problem, the current Coordination Team is being trained in PROLINNOVA's approach and concepts through some training sessions, field monitoring and backstopping activities, within the limits of the available financial resources.

Mali

The activities of PROLINNOVA–Mali in 2016 are directly linked to the actions planned for the third year of the third phase of the funding obtained from Misereor for PROFEIS (Promoting Farmer Experimentation and Innovation in the Sahel) activities, namely governance of the CP, continuation of joint experiments and mainstreaming of the PID approach.

In terms of governance, the NSC of 13 members held its annual meeting to discuss the CP's orientation and to validate the annual programme developed, as well as the budget used in 2016 and the budget for 2017. The multistakeholder innovation platform of 22 members from various local organisations held its fifth meeting in April, as part of its mandate to advise and provide technical support for the success of CP's activities. PROLINNOVA–Mali's technical or Coordination Team is currently composed of four structures: (i) a professional network of farmer organisations, (ii) an NGO, (iii) a public research institute and (iv) the national extension service. Throughout 2016, the Coordination Team has effectively assumed its responsibilities for planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the network activities, in collaboration with farmer innovators, local communities and various partners.

Four cases of farmer-led joint research are underway at various learning sites of the CP:

- 1) New farmer innovations for controlling striga have been identified, characterised and validated in the Segou and Mopti Regions. These innovations were added to those that were already known to the CP and were the subject of 12 treatments with 12 farmers on one of the most striga-infested sites in the Segou area.
- 2) The biopesticide based on the *potokolonimbo* plant was widely disseminated during 2016, which led to wider adoption by women vegetable farmers. An advisory support officer was involved with the farmers in analysing and comparing the effects of this biopesticide on agricultural production and yield. The results were very conclusive by revealing that the use of *potokolonimbo* significantly improved the income of women producing tomatoes, by generating an average income of 1383 CFA francs (USD 2.77) per liter of the biopesticide. The success of this innovation has considerably strengthened the value chain from the producers to the retailers who sell tomatoes in the local market. The number of buyers of tomatoes treated with the *potokolonimbo* aqueous solution increased by 70%.
- 3) The innovation of the clay incubator has entered into an experimental phase in a research station. With the aim of accompanying poultry farmers in increasing the number of fertile guinea-fowl eggs (which can become guinea fowls), PROLINNOVA–Mali initiated an on-station trial in collaboration with the Department of Poultry Science of the National Research Institute. This joint experiment, which is currently underway, looks at different female/male ratios (e.g. 1 male/1 female, 1 male/2 female, 1 male/3 female and 1 male/4 female) in order to find the best ratio to reduce the number of infertile guinea-fowl eggs in local farms.
- 4) The initiatives of the women's cooperative of Djela also benefit from the support of PROLINNOVA–Mali. To take advantage of the clay incubator, the women of this cooperative decided to contribute 18,000 CFA francs (USD 36) each to buy eggs of the hybrid chicken breed called "Yassa", from which they can harvest fertile eggs throughout the year. In support of these committed and dynamic women, the project decided to experiment with a solar clay incubator at village level to see if it improves the yield

in terms of fertile poultry eggs. Two experiments were carried out with 100 eggs. Successful results to date have enabled the Djela women to sell chicken eggs at the price of 500 CFA francs (USD 1) and even 100 CFA francs (USD 0.2) for the particular case of eggs from the *Yassa* hybrid hens breed provided by the project as part of the experiment. This has had a positive impact on the entire value chain of the local poultry sector. New players, such as retailers, are emerging in the sector, and demand for poultry products is also on the rise. Some members of the cooperative have built their own clay incubator to benefit more from this emerging market. The women's cooperative of Djela has also built a new headquarters and is in the process of expanding their poultry-breeding business. Five farmers outside the village of Djela, including two in Sikasso Region, and a local farmer association have requested information and training on the clay incubator to take advantage of the new economic dynamics in the poultry sector. These impacts noted at the local level are communicated beyond the borders of Mali, where requests are sent to PROLINNOVA–Mali, either by email or by telephone, about the clay incubator from countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Conakry, Nigeria and Togo.

All of these initiatives of PROLINNOVA–Mali were documented and shared through four bulletins, two of which were translated into local languages (*Bamanankan* and *Fulfé*). Two more bulletins are being edited and funds are lacking to complete the process. The CP produced a new catalogue of 50 farmer innovations, 38 of which come from the Segou Region and 12 from the Mopti Region. The CP in Mali has also carried out several other activities in networking, training and other forms of capacity building. A round table was organised on 18 February and was attended by 80 people from various national and international organisations, including the FAO. A workshop also held on 6 May, in which 15 people (13 elderly men and 2 elderly women) debated on local knowledge as part of a better understanding of community rights on local innovations. On 7–19 July, 27 farmers from Djela village were trained in the use of the solar clay incubator and poultry healthcare. PROLINNOVA–Mali benefited from backstopping by Bara Gueye on M&E tools oriented towards institutionalising the PID approach.

Senegal

The CP in Senegal held four meetings of its NSC, with the aims of: (i) preparing for the IPW 2016 in Thiès; (ii) reporting to members on the activities of the Global Resilience Consortium; and (iii) reporting on the IPW 2016 to NSC members who could not attend it.

On 16–19 March, PROLINNOVA–Senegal, through Agrecol Afrique, successfully organised the IPW in Thiès, which mobilised 44 participants from 22 countries. This meeting was very important in the life of the PROLINNOVA CP in Senegal, as major decisions were taken there. It was in Thiès that PROLINNOVA's overall 2016–20 strategic plan was adopted, and the process of regionalisation and southernisation of the international network was initiated. It was also at this meeting that Djibril Thiam, coordinator of PROLINNOVA–Senegal and member of the PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG), was nominated as the Focal Point of the taskforce for the West and Central Africa PROLINNOVA Platform (WeCAPP). All these events led to new and positive dynamics in functioning of the CP.

In 2016, the Global Resilience Consortium (GRC) organised an information and goal-sharing session on its food and nutrition security project. PROLINNOVA–Senegal took part in this meeting and helped improve the project's intervention approach. During this meeting, the representatives of the CP put special emphasis on activities related to agroecology and promoting food and nutrition security, so that they respond to the principles of PROLINNOVA. In November, the CP took part in another workshop organised by the GRC to enhance nutrition in Senegal. During this second meeting, the national context of malnutrition in Senegal was well elucidated in order to raise awareness and action from farmer and other civil-society organisations. The actors to be involved in the consortium's nutrition project and the funding for implementing the project activities were discussed. All this took place under the support of the Malnutrition Unit in Senegal, which was also strongly represented, offering PROLINNOVA–Senegal a good opportunity for networking for the success of its policy-dialogue initiatives.

Also in 2016, PROLINNOVA–Senegal took part in a workshop on farmer seed supply systems. Through many of its members, the CP was very active in making this multistakeholder meeting a success. Ibrahima Diedhiou of the University of Thiès and member of the CP shared with the workshop participants the advances in research on farmer seed management issues. Another CP member, the GREEN Senegal NGO, shared with the participants the approach of recovering old seeds in Fatick. The expertise and successes of PROLINNOVA–Senegal in the conservation of crop seeds were highlighted during this meeting.

On 14–19 November, the coordinator of PROLINNOVA–Senegal took part in the inception workshop for the Proli-FaNS project in Accra, Ghana. He joined in the debates and decisions that took place during this meeting on several points, including: (i) implementation of M&E within the CPs, in the specific projects mentored by the PROLINNOVA IST and in all activities of the PROLINNOVA network; (ii) improvement in the overall governance of the PROLINNOVA network, as well as the governance of the CPs; (iii) strengthening communication and information sharing within the PROLINNOVA network, within CPs, in country-specific projects, and with external partners and donors; (iv) starting the regionalisation and southernisation of the PROLINNOVA network; (v) administrative and financial management of the Proli-FaNS project in relation to the requirements of Misereor and the internal procedures within ACDEP. The PROLINNOVA–Senegal coordinator also made a backstopping mission to the younger CP of Cameroon within the framework of South–South mentoring, which is expected to be strengthened during implementation of the PROLINNOVA network’s 2016–20 strategic plan.

Conclusion

The CPs in WCA were very active during 2016 and achieved numerous successes in promoting local innovation and PID initiatives and also internal transformations through the organisation of and/or participation in several local, regional and international meetings. Most of the CPs held several meetings in the framework of good governance of their country network, but also with the perspective of sharing information, identifying and validating local innovations, and preparing and/or implementing PID. As part of the international networking, many of the CPs took active part in meetings organised or co-organised with other organisations such as ACEFA, GFRAS, GRC and the McKnight Foundation.

The CPs in WCA also played an important role in the decision-making about and the process of regionalising and southernising the international PROLINNOVA network. All the CPs covered by this synthesis report participated actively in the IPW in Thiès, Senegal, and in the inception workshop for the Proli-FaNS project in Accra, Ghana. These meetings enabled the CPs to interact with each other and also to interact with the international decision-making and guiding bodies of PROLINNOVA, namely the POG and the IST. As a result, the CPs’ access to information has improved considerably and their capacities have been strengthened towards better respecting the principles of the network, better managing the CPs and better managing the projects in the various countries, in particular Proli-FaNS.

Despite these successes, a number of challenges have impacted negatively on the CPs, including weak governance in some cases and insufficient availability of technical and financial resources to carry out the various activities they would have liked to. However, the CPs are making considerable efforts to overcome these difficulties and to succeed in their initiatives. This is highly encouraging and shows a promising future for PROLINNOVA in the WCA subregion in this period of transition within the international network.