



Vision: A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in ARD for sustainable livelihoods

In several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, diverse organisations have joined forces to promote local innovation processes in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM). After analysing their own experiences in agricultural research and development (ARD), they formed Country/Regional Platforms (CPs/RPs), designed their own programmes and agreed on joint international activities for mutual learning and policy dialogue. Thus, a Global Partnership Programme (GPP) was built from the bottom up, in the spirit of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), and remains a vibrant community of practice.

PROLINNOVA is an NGO-initiated international multistakeholder platform to promote local innovation processes in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM. It focuses on recognising the **dynamics** of indigenous knowledge (IK) and enhancing capacities of farmers (including pastoralists, fishers and forest dwellers) to adjust to change – to develop their own site-appropriate systems and institutions of resource management so as to gain food security, sustain their livelihoods and safeguard the environment. The essence of sustainability lies in the capacity to adapt.

The network builds on and scales up farmer-led approaches to participatory development that start with finding out how farmers create new and better ways of doing things. Understanding the rationale behind local innovation transforms how research and extension agents view local people. This experience stimulates interest on both sides to enter into joint action. Local ideas are further developed in a process that integrates IK and scientific knowledge. Joint action and analysis lead to social learning.

How it all started

PROLINNOVA was conceived in 1999, when Southern and Northern NGOs – supported by GFAR, the NGO Committee (CGIAR) & the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs – met in France to explore how participatory approaches to ARD based on local initiatives could be scaled up. Participants asked ETC, a Dutch NGO, to help build up a GPP from country level. NGOs in Asia and Africa Asia facilitated multistakeholder design of country platforms (CPs) that agreed to:

- document local innovation and experimentation by smallholder farmers and communities;
- strengthen links between farmers, development agents, scientists and other actors to refine local innovations and encourage others to try them out;
- create awareness of and skills in participatory innovation development (PID) through a variety of learning mechanisms;
- develop and expand mechanisms that give farmers more influence over formal research & extension;
- institutionalise PID approaches in research, development and education.

PROLINNOVA seeks to:

- demonstrate the effectiveness of farmer-led participatory innovation for sustainable development
- build partnerships in agricultural innovation
- enhance capacities of farmers, researchers and extension agents in participatory approaches
- facilitate decentralised funding mechanisms to promote local innovation
- engage in national and regional policy dialogue to stimulate and enhance local innovation processes
- set up platforms for reflection, analysis and learning about promoting local innovation processes
- integrate participatory approaches to farmer-led innovation into institutions of research, extension and learning.

Participatory design of the global network

Starting in 2003, organisations engaged in ARD in Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda – supported by IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) – collected experiences in recognising local innovation and promoting PID. They held workshops to analyse the experiences and plan PID upscaling. From 2004, DGIS (Dutch Directorate General for International Cooperation) partly funded the 3 CPs and supported similar processes in Cambodia, Nepal, Niger, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania. In 2006, a francophone network PROFEIS expanded in West Africa to include Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal. Later, groups in several other countries in Africa and the Andes joined.

Composition and activities of the CPs are assessed annually and the network governance body decides whether CPs are still genuine and active.

Activities differ between CPs depending on history, experience and self-identified capacities to recognise IK dynamics, engage in PID and scale it up. However, common elements include:

- bringing farmers, extensionists and scientists together to plan and implement joint experiments, starting from jointly prioritised local innovations;
- creating multistakeholder platforms to learn about and mainstream local innovation and PID;
- building capacities to identify and document local innovation and to engage in PID, through training workshops for farmers, extensionists and scientists

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- participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of joint activities, outcomes and impacts;
- creating awareness and influencing policy through innovation fairs, publications, mass media and dialogue with policymakers in research, extension & education to create enabling conditions for PID.

At annual meetings since 2004, partners define the international networking and other support needed to reinforce their work. Participatory planning at international level thus mirrors the approach at national and grassroots level: partners develop their own programme based on self-defined needs and interests.

Structure of the decentralised network

In each country, normally a local NGO is secretariat for a **National Steering Committee (NSC)** with members from research, extension and education, other NGOs, farmer groups and the private sector. The NSC defines the CP activities; gives strategic guidance; helps mobilise resources; and is the apex structure for accountability. A smaller core team coordinates day-to-day implementation of activities.

Subregional/regional platforms are forming in West & Central and Eastern & Southern Africa and in Asia.

An **International Support Team (IST)** supports the national activities through coordination, capacity strengthening, coaching, policy dialogue, web-based information management, networking and publishing. The Royal Tropical Institute (Netherlands) currently hosts the network's International Secretariat.

The **PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG)** serves as governance mechanism to ensure accountability to the CPs, their constituencies and donors.

PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG)

- **Ann Waters-Bayer**, Germany (waters-bayer@web.de)
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- **Pratap Shrestha** (co-chair), Nepal (pshrestha@usc-canada.org)
- Andes CP seat currently vacant

The POG is composed of up to 4 people from CPs, one from the IST and 4 independent persons, elected by the CPs and the IST to serve 2-year terms. The POG meets face-to-face at least once a year and communicates otherwise by email and Skype. It has drawn up several guidelines for the network, posted under www.prolinnova.net/content/prolinnova-guidelines.

Participatory learning and mentoring

In 2004, the first **International Partners Workshop (IPW)** was hosted by AgriService Ethiopia (ASE) / PROLINNOVA–Ethiopia. Local farmers explained how their innovations helped them achieve food security. Government and NGO participants from each CP shared experiences in farmer–extension–research–education partnerships and planned joint activities.

In 2005, the IPW was hosted by Environmental Alert / PROLINNOVA–Uganda prior to the FARA (Forum on

Agricultural Research in Africa) General Assembly, so that PROLINNOVA partners could join the pre-plenary meeting to set up an NGO ARD consortium in Africa. Since then, IPW hosts have been and will be:

- 2006 CEDAC, PROLINNOVA–Cambodia
- 2007 IED–Afrique, PROFEIS, Senegal
- 2008 ACDEP, PROLINNOVA–Ghana
- 2009 LI-BIRD, PROLINNOVA–Nepal
- 2010 ETC Netherlands (PROLINNOVA Secretariat)
- 2011 PELUM–Tz, PROLINNOVA–Tanzania
- 2012 ADAF–Gallè, PROFEIS–Mali
- 2013 KARI & World Neighbors, PROLINNOVA–Kenya
- 2014 CEDAC, PROLINNOVA–Cambodia
- 2015 PANE/Best Practice Association, PROLINNOVA–Ethiopia
- 2016 Agrecol–Afrique, PROFEIS/PROLINNOVA–Senegal
- 2017 ACDEP, PROLINNOVA–Ghana
- 2018 IIRR, PROLINNOVA–Philippines.

Capacity strengthening is central to PROLINNOVA. IIRR gave **international training in PID facilitation** in the Philippines (2004), Uganda (2006), Ethiopia (2007) and Kenya (2009). The participants trained research and extension staff in their own countries. With Nuffic funds, the International Support Team gave similar training in Kenya in 2013 and in Uganda in 2014.

In 2006, PELUM–Tz gave an international **course on policy dialogue**. A mini-workshop on this was held at the 2007 IPW in Senegal. Further training in policy dialogue was given in 2009 in The Netherlands.

A **writeshop on gender issues** in PID, based on the principle of learning through joint documentation by CP partners, was held in 2008 in Uganda; plus sessions on gender during several IPWs.

Similar **writeshops on piloting Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)** were held in 2008 in Ghana and 2012 in Mali, prior to publishing documentation.

An **M&E** framework with guidelines for the global and local PROLINNOVA tracking of results was developed in 2006. An international workshop to learn from the M&E experiences was held in Ethiopia in 2010. With support from CIRAD (France), the CPs developed a **participatory impact assessment** guideline in 2010.

South–South mentoring between CPs allows mutual learning and strengthens capacities to partner in ARD. In 2012 African consultants facilitated self-assessment of experiences and lessons learnt in multistakeholder partnership in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Thematic initiatives

CPs with common interests in specific themes have joined forces in several initiatives:

- **Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)**. Action research in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda helped develop mechanisms to channel ARD funds to farmer innovators, who lead participatory research. After start-up support from DURAS (Promoting Sustainable Development in Agricultural Research Systems), the Rockefeller Foundation provided co-funding through FAIR (Farmer Access to Innovation Resources) project.
- **Farmer-led documentation (FLD)**. PROLINNOVA, InSight and COMPAS (Comparing & Supporting Endogenous Development) piloted participatory video in Ghana to share local innovations. In 2006, PELUM–Uganda, PROLINNOVA and Oxfam–Novib held an inter-

national FLD workshop in Uganda. FLD was facilitated in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Niger, South Africa and Sudan. Collaboration with the NGO A Growing Culture started in 2015 to build a farmer knowledge commons.

- **HIV/AIDS and PID (HAPID).** In 2008–11 PROLINNOVA–SA coordinated action research in Mozambique and South Africa to explore implications of HIV/AIDS for PID and possibilities of using the approach in work with communities confronting HIV/AIDS.
- **Integration into education.** Several CPs have integrated PID into agricultural education, after they exchanged course designs and materials at a workshop in Uganda in 2009. In partnership with the University of Virginia, 16 students have interned with CPs in Cambodia, Ethiopia and Senegal in 2014–16.
- **PID and climate change.** In 2008–10, CPs in Nepal, Ethiopia & Niger studied how farmers innovate in the face of climate change. In 2012, LINEX–CCA started in Cambodia, India and Nepal with Misereor funds. PROLINNOVA worked with CCAFS (Climate Change, Agriculture & Food Security) on innovation, gender and climate-change adaptation and mitigation, especially in Cambodia, Kenya & Senegal.
- **Community resilience.** In 2012–16, the Eastern African CPs, supported by Rockefeller Foundation, strengthened community resilience to change in the CLIC-SR (Combining Local Innovative Capacity with Scientific Research) project. In 2015, CPs in West Africa initiated a similar project together with the NGO Groundswell in the Global Resilience Challenge.
- **Farmer-led research.** In 2014–15, working with the CGIAR Research Programs AAS (Aquatic Agricultural Systems) and CCAFS, PROLINNOVA explored the impact of farmer-led research. Field studies were made in 2016 to deepen knowledge of how this capacity was built. With McKnight Foundation, CPs in Burkina Faso and Mali support farmer research networks (FaReNe). A workshop on farmer-led research in West Africa was held in Ouagadougou in 2015, together with CCAFS, CORAF, McKnight, Misereor and SDC.
- **Food & nutrition security.** Since August 2016, the 3-year Proli-FaNS project seeks to enhance women's and men's innovation for food & nutrition security. The project, funded by Misereor, is coordinated by ACDEP in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Ethiopia & Kenya.

Networking, co-learning and policy dialogue

Information about PROLINNOVA activities is spread through magazines (e.g. *Appropriate Technology*, *Farming Matters*), Facebook, Twitter and the www.prolinnova.net website as the main tool for sharing. The PROLINNOVA Yahoo group serves as an open platform on ARD that builds on and enhances local innovation processes. PROLINNOVA shares concepts and experiences in participatory innovation through existing e-networks. To bridge the digital divide, it also disseminates printed matter and links with other media, e.g. radio, video.

Often with GFAR support, PROLINNOVA takes part in many international **ARD fora**. At the 2003 GFAR meeting in Kenya, ASE told how the CP was set up in Ethiopia. At GFAR 2004 in Mexico, Environmental Alert presented PROLINNOVA–Uganda. At the 2005 European Forum on ARD in Switzerland, LI-BIRD and Farmer Support Group presented their partnership experiences in Nepal and South Africa. The POG chair reported on PROLINNOVA progress to GFAR 2005 in Morocco, and an IST member

in 2006 in the USA. In 2006, CEDAC presented Asian experiences to APAARI (Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions) and PROLINNOVA–Nepal did so in 2007 and 2016.

PROLINNOVA experiences were shared at GCARD (Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development) in France (2010), Uruguay (2012) and South Africa (2016) and at PAEPARD meetings in Europe in 2011 and 2012.

At FARA's 4th General Assembly (GA) in South Africa in 2007, PROLINNOVA–SA organised an event together with Research Into Use (RIU), where farmers showcased their innovations in posters, brochures and videos. In 2010, Mali and Niger partners joined the GA in Burkina Faso.

PROLINNOVA collaborated with international research centres (CIAT-Africa, IFPRI and ILRI) and IIRR to hold the **Innovation Africa Symposium** in 2006 in Uganda. In 2009, it co-organised with CIAT-Asia and ICIMOD the **Innovation Asia-Pacific Symposium** in Nepal.

Several PROLINNOVA partners joined the **Farmer First Revisited** conference in 2007 in the UK (www.farmer-first.org). PROLINNOVA was featured in the Innovation for Sustainable Development in Agriculture & Food (**ISDA**) symposium in June 2010 in France.

POG Co-Chair Scott Killough attended the 1st meeting of **GFRAS (Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services)** in Chile in 2010. IST members attended the 2nd GFRAS meeting (2011) in Kenya & the 3rd (2012) in Philippines.

PROLINNOVA was involved in the EU projects **Including Smallholders in ARD (INSARD)** and **Joint Learning in Innovation Systems in African Agriculture (JOLISAA)**, both focused on Africa. In Kenya in May 2013, JOLISAA, CCAFS, AusAID and AgriProFocus organised the **Eastern Africa Farmer Innovation Fair (EAFIF)** and **Agricultural Innovation Systems in Africa** workshop (aisa2013.wikispaces.com). A **West Africa Farmer Innovation Fair (FIPAO)** was held in 2015 in Burkina.

LISF experiences were presented often in 2012–16, e.g. at World Bank's Agricultural Innovation Systems workshop, Washington DC; Coady International Institute, Canada; McKnight Foundation, USA; CTA Brussels Briefing on farmer-driven research, Belgium; GIZ-CGIAR Feldafing workshop on agricultural innovation, Germany; Agrinatura Science Days on family farming, Austria; Expo Milan, Italy; and European Migration Network, Malta.

In 2015, farmer innovator Joe Ouko from Kenya and 3 other PROLINNOVA members joined the Quaker United Nations Office workshop in Switzerland on **Small-scale Farmer Innovation in Biodiverse Systems**. In August, 4 POG members joined **GFAR's Constituent Assembly** in Bangkok and the network registered as GFAR partner. PROLINNOVA members are also active in movements for **family farming**, above all, with the World Rural Forum.

Sources of support

After inception funding from IFAD, DGIS was the main donor until 2011. Donors for specific activities include: ActionAid, CTA, EED (Church Development Service), Ford Foundation, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GFAR, ICRAF, McKnight Foundation, Misereor, RIU (UK), Rockefeller Foundation, SDC, World Bank & WorldFish. The partners in the IST and CPs cover over one fourth of total costs themselves. They seek funds to support new national multistakeholder platforms, new thematic initiatives, and core learning and networking coordinated by the International Secretariat.

Some PROLINNOVA publications and papers

- *Developing technology with farmers: a trainer's guide for participatory learning*. ZED Books, London, 1997 / reprint IIRR, Silang, 2004 (also in Spanish & Arabic)
- *Farmer innovation in Africa: a source of inspiration for agricultural development*. Earthscan, London, 2001.
- *PTD for agricultural improvement: challenges for institutional integration*. IIRR, 2002.
- *Advancing PTD: case studies on integration into agricultural research, extension and education*. IIRR, 2003.
- *IK Notes* (World Bank 2004–06):
 - 70. Ethiopia: a woman innovator speaks
 - 71. Participatory video: rural people document their innovations
 - 72. Regional radio in Tunisia
 - 74. Building MSPs to promote farmer innovation in Ghana
 - 76. Promoting local innovation: enhancing IK dynamics
 - 77. Burkina Faso: indigenous innovation in farmer-to-farmer extension
 - 78. South Africa: smallholder innovation in producing and exporting fruit
 - 85. Innovation Support Funds for farmer-led research
 - 96. Ethiopia: Endogenous and modern innovations
- Participatory approaches to ARD / Farmer innovation as entry point to participatory research and extension / PTD where there is no researcher / Developing partnerships to promote local innovation. In: *Sourcebook on participatory research and development for sustainable agriculture and natural resource management*. CIP-UPWARD, 2005
- *Facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships*. 2006.
- *Recognising local innovation*. 2008.
- *Innovation Africa*. Earthscan, London, 2008
- Building partnerships to promote local innovation processes. In: *Farmer First Revisited*, London, 2009
- *Farmer-led joint research*. 2010.
- Farmers take the lead in research and development. In: *State of the World 2011: Innovations that nourish the planet*, Worldwatch Institute, New York. 2011.
- *Strengthening local resilience to climate change*. 2011.
- *Farmer-led documentation*. 2011.
- Providing farmers with direct access to innovation funds. In: *Agricultural Innovation Systems*. World Bank. 2012.
- *Farmer Access to Innovation Resources: findings & lessons learnt on facilitating Local Innovation Support Funds*. 2012.
- *Scaling up Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)*. 2013.
- *Impacts of farmer-led research supported by CSOs*. 2014.
- Farmer governance of local agricultural research and innovation. *The African Technopolitan*. 2016.
- Small-scale farmers' perspectives on what enhances capacity to innovate. IFSA 2016 conference.
- *Small-scale farmer innovation*. Misereor / WeltSichten. 2016.
- *Some guidelines for organising a farmer innovation fair*. 2017.

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