

## 2015 Annual Report Contribution: PROLINNOVA–South Africa

### FUNCTIONING OF THE COUNTRY PLATFORM

The PROLINNOVA-South Africa platform is not currently active as such, although many of the members are continuing to engage in farmer-led research and development practices, for example, the NGO Mdukatshani continues to work with farmers to develop and test systems for providing goat kids with access to feed in order to reduce mortalities, while the Farmer Support Group, the outreach arm of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, continues to support farmers and farmer networking, through the Sivusimpilo Farmers Forum in the Bergville District. The Institute of Natural Resources (INR) has also been finding ways to integrate farmer experimentation into various projects. Some examples include experimentation on winter supplementation of livestock and the introduction of agroforestry practices and new multipurpose tree species to communities. Brigid Letty, currently the focal point for the South African platform, attended the 2015 International Partners Workshop which took place in the town of Axum, Ethiopia in April, which allowed for interaction and sharing of experiences with other country platforms.



**Figure 1: One of the farmers who tested protein supplements shares with the livestock association about how she made the block available to her cattle and the impact it had on their condition**

### NUFFIC TRAINING

Laurens van Veldhuizen (then based at ETC Foundation) approached Brigid Letty (Focal point for PROLINNOVA-South Africa) and mentioned that the Nuffic (Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education) programme offered opportunities for holding a participatory innovation development (PID) training in South Africa. Since the Institute of Natural Resources (INR) was to provide training support rather than being a training recipient, discussions took place with Erna Kruger, the Director of Mahlathini Organics, a small organisation that has recently been registered as a trust. A proposal was developed jointly and submitted to the Netherlands Embassy in Pretoria, from where it was passed on to Nuffic for consideration.

While the main focus of the capacity-building programme was to strengthen skills in joint experimentation or PID, the main theme of the first workshop was on activities related to more sustainable crop production (specifically conservation agriculture). The participants that were invited

to attend the workshop also reflected the focus of the training. Besides people from a number of NGOs (Mahlathini, INR, Zimele, Sinethemba, Lima, SaveAct and Farmer Support Group), two extension officers from the provincial department of agriculture also participated.

The first workshop was run over a 5-day period in August 2015 and included field trips to groups being supported by Zimele, Farmer Support Group and Mahlathini<sup>1</sup>. After the workshop, participants were invited to submit proposals for funds to support PID pilots that would allow them to integrate the PID principles into their work programmes. PID pilot activities were initiated in October / November 2015 and continued into 2016.



**Figure 2: Group work underway during the first PID workshop supported by Nuffic in South Africa**



**Figure 3: Group members evaluating different crop varieties in a participatory manner – part of the capacity-building process where workshop participants learnt to apply some PRA tools**

Prepared by:

Brigid Letty, Institute of Natural Resources NPC, bletty@inr.org.za

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<sup>1</sup> See workshop report on the PROLINNOVA website