

Linking technical and social innovation in PROLINNOVA

(PROmoting Local INNOVAtion in ecologically oriented agriculture & NRM)



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What I am going to talk about

1) Introduction to PROLINNOVA

- What it tries to achieve
- Underlying convictions

2) Technical and social innovation

- Our understanding of these concepts
- Examples of how they are linked in PROLINNOVA

3) Case example: Community-managed innovation fund

4) Insights into linking technical & social innovation



PROLINNOVA: PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM

“Global Partnership Programme” under Global Forum on
Agricultural Research – initiated by NGOs



Nepalese researchers learn
from farmer innovator

Community of practice (CoP) focused on
smallholder farming communities

Seeks to foster a *culture of mutual
learning* in local innovation processes

Vision: World where women and men
farmers play decisive roles in agricultural
research and development (ARD) for
sustainable livelihoods

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International CoP of diverse actors united in conviction that:



- Farmers are creative and generate relevant local innovations = *locally new & better ways of doing things*
- Linking local creativity with other sources of new ideas builds more resilient innovation systems to deal with change
- Recognising local capacities lays basis for true partnership with other knowledge-holders in ARD

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Country Platforms (CPs) = national CoPs



- In 20 countries
- **Diverse actors: farmers, rural advisors, scientists, academia**
- **Promoting farmer-led participatory innovation development (PID)**
- **Each CP designs country-specific approach to do this**

Africa: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda

Asia: Cambodia, India, Nepal

Latin America: Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru

Main ideas behind PROLINNOVA

- Recognising local innovation is *positive entry point* to working with communities
- Analysing local innovation gives community focus to examine opportunities and its own (research) questions
- Engaging in PID strengthens:
 - *community organisation* for development
 - capacities of rural services to support *endogenous development*
 - *farmer voice* in decision-making about ARD also at higher levels



Farmers and researcher monitor joint aquaculture experiment in Tanzania

Common to all country-driven activities



- **Creating evidence: identifying and documenting local innovation and PID**
- **Strengthening national & subnational multistakeholder platforms to work, share and learn together**
- **Building capacity of all actors**
- **Engaging in policy dialogue to mainstream PID**

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Recognising local innovation

- **Hundreds of inspiring local innovations identified & documented**
 - **Farmer-to-farmer visits**
 - **Innovation fairs**
 - **Catalogues**
 - **Posters**
 - **Farmer magazine**
 - **Pamphlets**
 - **Community radio**
 - **Video (also participatory)**
 - **Mass media: newspapers, TV**
- **Through participatory assessment, most of them selected for sharing through:**



Both technical and social innovations

Technical user-innovations
often developed by individuals



Farmer innovator in water technologies in Ethiopia

Socio-organisational innovations
developed by groups/communities
(but individual
may have
initial idea)



Farmers assessing local innovations in South Africa

***Joint assessment of technical innovation
can inspire social innovation***

Social innovation inspired by technical innovation: examples

- Forming new relationship between large- and small-scale farmers to market an introduced crop (South Africa)
- Innovative woman farmer trains other women in ox-ploughing – challenging social norms (Ethiopia)
- Integrating experimentation with millet nursery innovation into adult education (Kenya)



South African farmers preparing to market cherry peppers

Local innovation as starting point for farmer-led joint experimentation

- Salt lick for cattle using local minerals (Ghana)
- Improving traditional ovens to dry fish (Niger)
- Combatting bacterial wilt in *enset* (southern Ethiopia)
- Comparing local “modern” and introduced beehives (northern Ethiopia)



Making innovation processes more intensive and equitable

Not just developing and scaling out technical and social innovations

Also scaling up more intensive innovation processes

Not just trying to change attitudes and behaviour of actors towards each other

Also trying to change power relations within innovation systems

Example: Community-managed innovation fund

- Still tendency for scientists or rural advisors to dominate in PID process
- Generally, most “participatory ARD” involves testing scientists’ ideas
- Some competitive funds exist for participatory ARD but mainly controlled by scientists
- Can power balance in ARD funding be changed?
→ farmers “call the tune”



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Exploring complementary ARD funding mechanism

- so farmers can decide what will be researched, how and by whom
- to make ARD more accountable to and relevant for smallholders
- to develop and test models of farmer-governed ARD that can be scaled up



Extension workers visit farmer innovators
at technology fair in Ethiopia

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Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)

- Piloted by PROLINNOVA partners in:
Asia: Cambodia, Nepal
Africa: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania & Uganda
- Main question in the action learning:



Can funds for experimentation and learning be efficiently channelled through smallholders?

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How does an LISF work?

- Local Fund Management Committee (FMC) makes call for proposals
- Farmers submit simple proposals
- FMC selects grantees and provides resources
- Farmers lead (joint) research
- Farmer researchers share results
- Participatory M&E and impact assessment



Cambodian farmer experimenter

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Main screening criteria similar across piloting countries

- Idea driven by applicant(s)
- Innovation sound in economic, environmental & social terms
- Applicable by resource-poor
- Applicants willing to share (*public funds for public goods*)
- Proposal for *experimentation and learning*, not farm investment



LISF committee screening applications in South Africa

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Multiple levels of mutual learning

- **Community:** local research and M&E by farmer groups and FMC
- **District:** as rural advisors, NGOs, researchers, college staff support farmer-led experiments, organise innovation fairs, facilitate M&E
- **Country:** thru reflection workshops and joint impact assessment by national multistakeholder platform



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Grants made in 8 pilot countries over 4 years

No. of applications received	Percentage approved	Average grant size (Euro)	Range in grant size (Euro)
1224	64%	84	5 – 1670

Use of funds as decided by FMCs:

1. Farmers' own experimentation
2. Improving farmer innovations
3. Farmer-led experimentation with research and/or extension staff
4. Learning visits by farmers



Participatory impact assessment

Involvement of different actors in LISF:



Ethiopian farmer explains his experiment to MoA staff

- Strengthened social organisation around managing local ARD and funds for it
- Built smallholders' capacities to formulate own needs and access relevant information
- Increased smallholders' confidence to interact with "outsiders" in joint innovation
- Stimulated interest of rural advisors and scientists to support farmer-led PID

Insights from LISFs

- Smallholders can manage funds for locally relevant innovation development, with appropriate initial support
- LISFs stimulate social innovation: giving farmers more say in technical and social innovation processes



Vision



A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in research and development for sustainable livelihoods

