

DIRECT INVESTMENT IN FARMER-LED RESEARCH

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PROLINNOVA: PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM

“Global Partnership Programme” under GFAR –
initiated by CSOs

Multi-stakeholder community of practice (CoP)
focused on **smallholder farming**

Seeks to make **farmer-led joint innovation
processes** an everyday part of formal
agricultural research and development (ARD)

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



Nepalese researchers learn
from farmer innovator



International CoP of diverse actors who see that:



Pastoral women in Ethiopia developed new dairy marketing arrangements

- 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 *successful and equitable partnership* with other knowledge-holders in ARD



Main activities of PROLINNOVA partners

- Strengthening national & subnational *multistakeholder platforms* to work and learn together
- Showing the potential of *decentralised farmer-led ARD*:
 - Identifying processes of local technical and social innovation
 - Using these as entry points for *Participatory Innovation Development (PID)*
- *Building capacity* of scientists, rural advisors, collage/university staff, farmers and other local entrepreneurs to engage in PID
- Engaging in *policy dialogue* to mainstream this approach



Challenge

to change the power (im)balance in ARD

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



Experiences with decentralised ARD funding

Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)

- so smallholders 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 investment in farmer-governed ARD to be scaled up
- as a complement to conventional investment in ARD





Fund management committees' criteria for screening farmers' proposals

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



Fund Management Committee (FMC) screening applications in South Africa



Grants 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



Farmer improved his water-lifting devices with local blacksmith as partner

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



Ethiopian farmer explains his experiment to MoA staff

Involvement of different actors in LISF piloting:

- 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 (some) scientists to support farmer-led PID



Some challenges remain



- **Difficult to generate in-country funding:**
 - trying partial repayment by farmers: private investment in public goods
 - but should (also) be public funds available for this local learning
- **Still high transaction costs while piloting:**
 - 30–40% of total budget actually goes to farmers
 - rest for coordination, training, advisory support, M&E etc
- **Difficult to involve scientists**
 - farmers initially want to experiment on own, using local advice / partners
 - scientists have own agenda & little room to support farmer initiatives

But encouraging response from rural advisors exposed to LISFs



Steps towards scaling up LISFs



Partners are documenting workable models and preparing to scale them up *while retaining their smallholder focus and farmer-led character*

Scenarios being explored in different countries:



- Establishing LISF within **national farmer organisation**
- Integration into **local government administration**
- Integration into **MoA extension service**
- Integration into **government research**
- Establishing **National Innovation Fund (new entity)**
- Based in self-managed and self-resourced **CBOs**



What action is needed from us in GFAR?



- To support smallholder agriculture, focus attention in public-private-civil mechanisms on linkages of formal ARD sector with farmers (**PS + community actors**), **SMEs and CSOs at local level**
- Seek ways to support **manifold and locally appropriate mechanisms** instead of centralising and homogenising ARD for smallholders – and create spaces to learn from the diversity
- Create widespread awareness that sustainable smallholder agriculture needs **multitude of local learning platforms** to develop site-appropriate innovations – and to continue to do so.



What do we in PROLINNOVA offer?

Examples of alternative ways to approach ARD partnerships and funding that give smallholders a chance for more say, to learn with other knowledge holders and to contribute their knowledge to continuous and enhanced innovation processes

Towards action for scaling up by GFAR

- Seriously consider these alternative / complementary approaches
- Try them out in appropriately adapted forms in different settings
- Assess them together with local smallholders
- Learn from this & and from each other's experiences to improve what we have started, so that:



Vision



*Women and men farmers
can play decisive roles in
ARD for sustainable
livelihoods*



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in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management