

ENHANCING CAPACITY TO INNOVATE: KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PROLINNOVA strategy 2016–20: main points

PROLINNOVA is an international network of people and organisations of diverse institutional affiliations that recognise the innovative capacity of small-scale farmers (SSFs) as key to sustainable development.

Vision: A world in which women and men farmers play decisive roles in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM) innovation processes for sustainable livelihoods.

Mission: To stimulate a culture of mutual learning and synergy among diverse stakeholder groups to actively support and promote local innovation processes in agriculture and NRM.

Goal: To contribute to equitable and inclusive development of resilient and sustainable farming communities.

Objectives:

- *Develop new methods and approaches to enhance local capacities to innovate in agriculture and NRM and provide evidence of the effectiveness of these methods and approaches*
- *Strengthen the capacities of actors in agricultural research and development (ARD) to support local innovation and farmer-led joint experimentation*
- *Scale up participatory approaches to agricultural innovation in ways that enhance local innovative capacities*
- *Strengthen multistakeholder partnerships (MSPs) in promoting local innovation and farmer-led participatory research.*

Outcomes that the network seeks to achieve in the period 2016–20:

- Farmers are supported by all relevant stakeholders in local innovation and participatory innovation development (LI/PID) activities.
- A growing proportion of young people are involved in LI/PID related to agriculture and food.
- Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs) are more widely used to support farmer innovators' activities.
- Policies are changed to include PID and other farmer-led approaches to research and innovation.
- Diverse partners are sharing resources, responsibilities and recognition in MSPs at various levels.
- Educational institutions promote LI/PID and other participatory approaches.
- CPs' capacity is built in inclusiveness, fundraising, networking, applying PID and influencing ARD policy.
- LI/PID approaches are integrated into agricultural research and advisory services at different levels.
- Information about LI/PID is shared with a wider audience.

Strategy components and associated activities in the period 2016–20:

- ***Promote farmer-led participatory research & development approaches:*** Document and understand local innovations / innovation processes, especially by women; encourage farmers to see selves as researchers; facilitate farmer-led research; promote LISFs to enhance SSF governance over ARD; encourage local innovators to engage in advocacy and capacity building; assess impact of LI/PID on livelihoods and environment.
- ***Create enabling policy environment for LI/PID:*** Provide evidence of potential of alternative funding and advisory mechanisms that stimulate LI/PID processes; promote ARD programmes to build on and strengthen LI through PID; engage in policy dialogue about LI/PID with farmers playing a key role.
- ***Strengthen current CPs to promote LI/PID:*** Sustain involvement of CP members; assess CP coordination to learn how best to strengthen MSPs; strengthen CP capacities to be financially sustainable; involve additional relevant stakeholder groups in CPs to support PID and associated policy dialogue.
- ***Build capacity in LI/PID:*** Facilitate learning by all stakeholders through practice-based interaction and sharing experiences, document successes and failures in LI/PID approaches with attention to social-inclusion issues; encourage Country Platforms (CPs) to train PID trainers; support capacity building through electronic means.
- ***Mainstream LI/PID into key stakeholder institutions:*** Integrate LI/PID concepts into tertiary-level curricula; help research, extension and educational institutions understand the role of LI/PID in rural development; forge strategic alliances with organisations committed to fostering LI/PID processes; gathering and sharing evidence to influence policy and stimulate institutionalisation of LI/PID approaches; support joint analysis and learning by CPs to understand good mainstreaming practices.
- ***Facilitate regional learning about LI/PID:*** Strengthen multi-CP collaboration through South–South backstopping and experience sharing; building regional programmes; strengthen links with regional ARD fora; manage information generated within CPs to make this available for learning by other CPs and regional fora.

- **Promote innovation by youth in agri-food sector:** Facilitate youth's participation in decision-making about PID, e.g. managing LISFs to support youth innovation in agri-food sector; encourage inclusion of youth in exchange visits, farmer innovation fairs etc; feature young innovators in media; incorporate LI/PID modules into schools; collaborate with organisations that target youth in agriculture and NRM.
- **Use modern & conventional communication tools for sharing:** Make LI/PID more widely known through social media, radio, video and mobile phone; compile travelling photo exhibits on LI/PID for ARD stakeholders and general public; continue to publish diverse printed materials on LI/PID.
- **Produce better evidence through better monitoring & evaluation (M&E):** Generate evidence of change and impact of LI/PID-related activities; develop cost- and time-effective ways to measure change and assess impact; facilitate CPs to adapt existing M&E framework to develop own context-specific M&E; external evaluation of specific types of activity and of entire network.

Thematic focus areas in the context of ecologically oriented agriculture & NRM:

- **Innovative methodologies:** developing, trying out and learning from better ways to promote LI/PID;
- **Resilience to change:** facilitating LI/PID to enhance community resilience to change, including climate change;
- **Nutrition & health:** facilitating LI/PID to improve nutrition & food safety;
- **Urban/peri-urban innovative food systems:** facilitating LI/PID in agri-food initiatives in and near towns to strengthen local food systems, especially for and with poor urban producers and consumers;
- **Gender issues in innovation processes:** more focused attention to gender issues in innovation;
- **Youth innovation in agri-food systems:** promoting innovation by youth in agri-food initiatives.

Organisational structure and roles

In 2016–20, the PROLINNOVA network will be decentralised into Regional Platforms, which will play a growing role in coordinating the collaboration, learning and advocacy activities within and between regions. A focal point in the North will play a small linkage role. The roles of the International Support Team will be progressively taken over by Southern partners. A culture of shared responsibilities across the network will be nurtured.

Country Platforms (CPs). Self-initiated and self-determined CPs will continue to try out and assess different ways of self-organisation, e.g. rotating host responsibility between partners after a specified period, and share what they have learned from these experiments. In countries without functioning CPs, individuals in organisations in the respective countries may serve as the national contact person to promote LI/PID in various ways.

Regional Platforms (RPs). The CPs will cooperate in RPs, each with a “virtual” secretariat. Funds for coordination tasks will be allocated from the regional and national projects/organisations involved. Each RP will define how it will operate. The RP secretariat will coordinate fundraising and manage funds for multi-CP activities. The CPs in the region will name a task force and coordinator to support CPs/partners to design regional activities. The RPs will promote FL/PID in regional fora for ARD and rural advisory services. Mature CPs will mentor younger CPs.

International Support Team (IST). The IST supports network activities at national and regional level through overall coordination, fundraising, capacity strengthening, mentoring, knowledge management, policy dialogue, networking and publishing. The current IST will involve more people from Southern-based organisations in training, mentoring and international policy-dialogue and publishing activities.

International Secretariat/Focal Point. RP secretariats will gradually assume roles of overall administrative and financial management of regional projects. They will coordinate with each other and communicate with a focal point in the North to link with donors in the North. Interregional networking will be mainly virtual, focused on issues identified by RPs as common concerns. The IST and POG – in consultation with CPs and the wider network – will decentralise the network and help RPs set up procedures for interregional learning and policy influence.

PROLINNOVA Oversight Group (POG). The POG as an elected governance mechanism for the global network will re-think its composition, responsibilities, terms of office and procedures in the context of the changes within the network. It will help raise funds from diverse sources for the functioning of the restructured network.

Friends of PROLINNOVA. This group of individuals who were associated with PROLINNOVA in the past and want to continue to add value to the network will mentor, assist in strategy development, help improve quality of proposals and publications, and link with new partners and funders. With the POG, this group will help create strategic visibility of PROLINNOVA and increase the network's influence in international debates.

Resource mobilisation

The network remains committed to supporting sustainable MSPs and processes at the lowest possible costs. To this end, the CPs' capacities to generate the required resources from diverse sources will be strengthened through mentoring and mutual learning between CPs, with support from the IST, POG and Friends of PROLINNOVA.