

Recognising local innovation:

Experiences of PROLINNOVA partners

compiled and edited by

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Cover photo: Mrs Machonco Dlamini, a woman innovator in Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, with a catalogue in which her innovation is published by PROLINNOVA–South Africa. [Monique Salomon, Farmer Support Group, University of KwaZulu-Natal]

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Acronyms

ARC	Agricultural Research Council
ARD	Agricultural Research and Development
BASED	Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery
BoARD	Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development
CECIK	Centre for Cosmvision and Indigenous Knowledge
CEDAC	Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture
CEOSS	Coptic Evangelic Organization for Social Services
CIS-VUA	Centre for International Cooperation, Free University of Amsterdam
COMPAS	Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development
DA	Development Agent
EA	Environmental Alert
GTZ	Germany Agency for Technical Cooperation
IIRR	International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
IPRs	Intellectual Property Rights
IST	International Support Team
ISWC	Indigenous Soil and Water Conservation
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LDA	Limpopo Department of Agriculture
LI-BIRD	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development
LISF	Local Innovation Support Fund
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MU	Mekelle University
MVIWATA	Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (Network of Farmers' Groups in Tanzania)
NAARI	Namulonge Agricultural and Animal Research Institute
NaCIA	Nalukonge Community Initiatives Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGLWG	North Ghana LEISA Working Group
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSC	National Steering Committee
NTH	Northern Typical Highlands
PEA	Participatory Extension Approach
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
PID	Participatory Innovation Development
POG	PROLINNOVA Oversight Group
PROFIEET	Promoting Farmer Innovation and Experimentation in Ethiopia
PROLINNOVA	Promoting Local Innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and NRM
PTD	Participatory Technology Development
PV	Participatory Video
USD	United States Dollars

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This booklet wouldn't be if not for farmer innovators. The challenging and enduring work of many such innovators has motivated us to recognise them truly as key movers of agricultural research and development. Although we have tried to acknowledge them in the text whenever particular innovators were mentioned, it has not been possible to name every farmer who has been involved in the collaboration described in this booklet. However, we are most grateful to them all, not just for sharing their experiences with their fellow farmers and even further afield, but also for daring to take risks and to be innovative.

All the partners in the PROLINNOVA programme are doing admirable work in getting to know such farmer innovators and in promoting farmer innovativeness in their own countries. Many partners and colleagues (see list on last page) have contributed to this booklet with articles and with answers to our innumerable questions, and have thus made it possible that we can share their experiences widely. Our thanks to all of them!

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Chesha Wettasinha, Mariana Wongtschowski and Ann Waters-Bayer

Summary

This booklet compiles experiences of people in various parts of the world who are joining hands to enhance local processes of innovation in rural areas, within the framework of a programme called PROLINNOVA: “PROMoting Local INNOVATION in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management”. Non-governmental organisations initiated this programme and are the facilitators in building partnerships among major stakeholders to promote local innovation in research and development in their countries. They encourage recognition of local people’s own initiatives and stimulate learning about how to strengthen local capacities to adapt to changing conditions, in collaboration with other stakeholders. The programme seeks to integrate participatory approaches to innovation development into the regular work of agricultural research, extension and education institutions in Africa, Asia and, more recently, Latin America.

The term “local innovation” refers to the process by which people in a given locality discover or develop new and better ways of doing things. The outcomes of this process are “local innovations” (with an “s”), such as farming techniques or ways of organising, e.g. marketing, that are new for the area. Discovering local innovations serves as an entry point to a process of Participatory Innovation Development (PID) that combines local and outside knowledge.

This booklet – one in a series on promoting local innovation – focuses on field-applied approaches and methods to identify innovation processes and to recognise the innovations that emerge from such processes. It includes many examples of how partners in country programmes have defined innovation, and how the very process of defining it stimulated them to think more deeply about the subject. Partners describe how they found local innovators, and the particular challenges they faced in finding innovative women, who are less visible in many rural societies.

When formally-educated agricultural professionals discover local innovations, they start to see farmers as creative sources of good ideas and as valuable partners in research and development. By showing genuine interest in what farmers themselves do to tackle problems and to grasp opportunities, by documenting these accomplishments and by awarding outstanding innovators, they give recognition to the capacities of small-scale farmers. This raises the self-esteem of farmers, who begin to see themselves as people who are rich in knowledge, ideas and ingenuity in surviving under difficult conditions – as people who are admirable. Being recognised as researchers in their own right makes farmers more confident and prepared to collaborate with the outsiders who admire them. Giving recognition to local innovation also helps open up other farmers’ eyes to opportunities that are within their reach.

Many local innovators in agriculture and NRM share their new knowledge freely, for “knowledge is like fire which someone may get free from the neighbours”. To intensify and expand this informal farmer-to-farmer communication, programme partners are using various means of documenting and sharing information about local innovations, including catalogues, posters, farmers’ magazines, fairs, community radio, participatory video, and both conventional and digital photography. The booklet includes numerous short examples and four case studies of documenting and thus giving value to local innovation.

Finally, the booklet gives a brief glimpse of how the PID process continues after local innovativeness has been recognised. It describes some initial experiences in preparing for participatory research and development (e.g. through workshops in which farmers design experiments), facilitating joint experimentation, and stimulating policy dialogue and institutional change in research, extension and education, and in farmer organisations. This process is still underway and will be documented in later booklets in this series.

Resumen

Esta publicación recopila las experiencias de diversas personas en varias partes del mundo que, coordinadamente, trabajan con el objetivo de apoyar a procesos de innovación campesina. Estas experiencias se han construido en el marco del programa PROLINNOVA (Promoviendo la Innovación Local en agricultura y manejo de recursos naturales). El programa lo iniciaron y lo moderan organizaciones no gubernamentales (ONGs). Estas ONGs coordinan plataformas multi-institucionales que reúnen a diferentes actores sociales involucrados en esa área temática (investigadores, extensionistas, educadores, etc). Estos actores promueven el reconocimiento de las iniciativas campesinas y estimulan el aprendizaje de cómo fortalecer el desarrollo de iniciativas que aporten a la adaptación a un ambiente (dinámico). El programa objetiva la incorporación de metodologías participativas en el trabajo diario de ONGs, extensionistas, investigadores y educadores en África, Asia y, más recientemente, Latinoamérica.

El término “innovación local” (singular) es entendido como el proceso de generación de nuevas prácticas bajo iniciativa propia de agricultores, campesinos, indígenas, pastores, recolectores, etc, sus familias y/o organizaciones. El resultado de ese proceso se denomina “innovaciones” (en plural), como por ejemplo nuevas tecnologías agrícolas o maneras de organización comunitaria para comercializar un producto. “Descubrir” innovaciones locales es el punto de partida para experimentos participativos usando la metodología de Desarrollo Participativo de Innovaciones (DPI), que combina ambos conocimientos locales y de fuera de la localidad.

Este libro – parte de la serie “Promoviendo la Innovación Local” – se enfoca en metodologías para la identificación y la valoración de procesos de innovación a nivel local así como sus productos. El libro incluye ejemplos de cómo las organizaciones participantes buscaron definir “innovación”, y cómo este proceso los llevó a entender más a fondo la temática. Los diferentes socios describen como encontraron innovaciones campesinas y los retos que enfrentaron cuando buscaron innovaciones llevadas a cabo por mujeres, que suelen ser menos evidentes en muchas sociedades rurales.

Cuando los profesionales que actúan en áreas rurales descubren innovaciones locales, empiezan a ver a los campesinos como una fuente creativa de ideas y socios importantes en el desarrollo y la investigación. Ya sea a través de la documentación de sus innovaciones o de la premiación de los innovadores, los profesionales muestran su interés por las ideas campesinas y valoran sus capacidades. Eso conduce a un aumento en la auto-estima de los campesinos quienes se enorgullecen de sus conocimientos locales y creatividad frente a la necesidad de adaptarse a unas condiciones de vida muy difíciles. Al ser reconocidos como “investigadores”, los campesinos se sienten más seguros

y preparados para colaborar con agentes externos. Valorar la capacidad creativa de algunos campesinos hace que otros estén más atentos a hacer uso de las oportunidades a su alcance.

Muchos de los innovadores comparten sus conocimientos libremente, ya que “el conocimiento es como el fuego, que uno puede recibir como regalo de sus vecinos”. Con la idea de intensificar y expandir ese trueque y cambio informal de informaciones campesino a campesino, los socios del programa usan diversas maneras de documentarlas y compartirlas, como por ejemplo: catálogos, pósters, revistas, ferias, radio comunitaria, video participativo y fotografía (digital y convencional). El libro incluye varios ejemplos y cuatro estudios de casos más detallados de ese tipo de documentación.

Para terminar, el libro da al lector una idea de cómo se lleva a cabo el proceso de desarrollo participativo (DPI) que proviene de la identificación de la innovación local. Describe algunas experiencias iniciales con la preparación del proceso investigativo (por ejemplo, a través de talleres en los cuales los campesinos detallan los experimentos que quieren realizar), moderación de la investigación participativa, incidencia y dialogo político e institucionalización de métodos participativos en investigación, educación y extensión. Ese proceso se está desarrollando todavía y será documentado en publicaciones subsecuentes de esta misma serie.

Résumé

Dans cette brochure sont consignées les expériences de diverses personnes de par le monde, qui s'unissent pour renforcer les processus locaux d'innovation en milieu rural dans le cadre du programme international appelé PROLINNOVA ('Promouvoir l'innovation locale en agriculture écologique et gestion des ressources naturelles (GRN)'). Ce sont les organisations non gouvernementales qui furent les initiatrices de ce programme et à présent, elles jouent le rôle de facilitateurs dans le développement de partenariat parmi les acteurs sociaux clés pour promouvoir l'innovation locale dans la recherche et le développement de leurs pays. Elles encouragent la reconnaissance des initiatives locales et stimulent l'apprentissage sur la manière de renforcer les capacités à s'adapter aux conditions changeantes en collaboration avec les autres acteurs sociaux. Le programme cherche à insérer les approches participatives de développement de l'innovation dans les programmes réguliers de la recherche agricole, de la vulgarisation et des institutions d'éducation d'Afrique, d'Asie et plus récemment d'Amérique Latine

Le terme 'innovation locale' se réfère au processus par lequel des populations dans une localité donnée, découvrent ou développent de meilleures façons de faire les choses. Les résultats de ce processus sont les 'innovations locales' (avec un "s") telles que des techniques de culture ou des formes d'organisation (ex. le commerce) qui sont nouvelles dans une localité. L'identification des innovations locales sert de point d'entrée au processus de développement participatif de l'innovation (DPI) qui combine les connaissances locales et externes.

Cette brochure est un élément de la série sur la promotion de l'innovation locale. Elle se focalise sur les approches et les méthodes de terrain pour identifier les processus d'innovation et pour reconnaître les innovations issues de ces processus. Elle contient beaucoup d'exemples sur la façon dont les partenaires des programmes nationaux ont défini l'innovation et comment la définition de l'innovation les a stimulés à réfléchir plus en profondeur sur le sujet. Les partenaires décrivent comment ils ont identifié les innovateurs locaux et les défis particuliers rencontrés lors de l'identification des femmes innovatrices qui, dans beaucoup de sociétés rurales, sont moins visibles.

Lorsque des professionnels de l'agriculture, ayant bénéficié d'une éducation formelle, découvrent les innovations locales, ils changent d'avis sur les paysans et delà les considèrent comme sources créatives de bonnes idées et comme des partenaires valables dans la recherche et le développement. Lorsque ces professionnels montrent un intérêt franc sur ce que les paysans font d'eux-mêmes pour les résoudre des problèmes ou saisir des opportunités, documentent ces réalisations et récompensent les innovateurs exceptionnels, ils reconnaissent ainsi les capacités des paysans à faibles ressources. Cela ravive l'amour propre des paysans qui commencent à se considérer comme des individus riches en connaissances, idées et créativité pour survivre dans

des conditions difficiles; en d'autres termes, ils se voient comme des gens admirables. Le fait d'être reconnu comme des chercheurs dans leur propre droit, rend les paysans plus confiants et mieux préparés à collaborer avec des gens de l'extérieur qui les admirent. La reconnaissance des innovations aide aussi à ouvrir les yeux des paysans aux opportunités qui sont à leur portée.

De nombreux innovateurs locaux en agriculture et GRN partagent gratuitement leurs nouvelles connaissances car pour eux les 'connaissances sont comme le feu que l'on partage gratuitement entre voisins'. Afin d'intensifier et répandre cette communication informelle de paysan à paysan, les partenaires du programme utilisent des moyens divers pour documenter et partager les informations sur les innovations locales: catalogues, posters, journaux paysans, foires, radio communautaire, vidéo participative, photos conventionnelles et digitales, etc. La brochure contient de nombreux exemples brefs et quatre études de cas de documentation et donc de valorisation de l'innovation locale.

Finalement la brochure donne un bref aperçu sur la façon dont la méthodologie DPI continue une fois que le processus de l'innovation locale ait été reconnu. Elle décrit quelques expériences initiales dans la préparation à la recherche et développement participatifs (ex. à travers des ateliers où des paysans conçoivent des expérimentations), dans la facilitation des expérimentations conjointes et dans la stimulation du dialogue politique et du changement institutionnel dans la recherche, la vulgarisation, l'éducation et au sein des organisations paysannes. Ce processus est toujours en cours et sera documenté dans les prochaines brochures de cette série.