

Prolif-FaNs Project Year Three Quarter 2 progress report

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Photos from national workshop and farmer innovation fair

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Introduction

In Quarter 2 of Year 3 of the Proli-FaNS project, Prolinnova–Ethiopia (PE) is implementing basic activities of the project. Because of the late release of the funds for the first quarter, some activities were moved to the third quarter of the project, which is from May to July.

And in this quarter, we have heard that PE is excluded from the next phase of Proli-FaNS. This is offensive. We were trying to engage new National Steering Committee (NSC) members to strengthen the committee and to improve the implementation of the project based on its objectives, time plan and budget.

Basic activities carried out in Quarter 2 of Year 3

Farmer-led research activities

For the selected cases of Participatory Innovation Development (PID), the farmers are trying their innovations after receiving inputs from agricultural advisors during the PID workshop and the farmer innovation fairs.



A farmer innovation fair (FIF) was organised as a farmers' learning event at both action-learning sites, Axum and Enebse Sar Mider (ESM). On 9 February, an FIF held in **Axum** at the Tahtay Maichew Agriculture Office involved multiple stakeholders: farmer innovators, the Agriculture Office, Axum University, the District (*Woreda*) Administration, the Water Resource Sector and other farmers. A total of 38 people (including 4 women) took part. In his opening speech, the

action-learning site coordinator Hailu Debalke gave a brief description of farmer innovations in the Axum area and their importance for the society.

The invited Director of the District Agriculture Office (DAO) gave a speech in which he indicated that the innovations of these farmers have to be shared with other farmers, and there are also other innovative farmers in other places. By creating linkages with the farmers, it is possible to conduct more experimentation. Different government offices (Axum University, Research Centre, DAO) have a role in promoting and improving these innovations. He explained that the innovative women farmers Ms Yalem Guesh and Ms Birha Tadesse have done experiments on pest management to control fall armyworm (FAW), using different botanicals.

Then the farmer Gebreyesus Tesfaye talked about his biopesticide innovation, for which he uses over 50 bitter-tasting botanicals collected in a radius of about 2 km from his home. He grinds the botanicals, adds goat urine, stores the mixture for 25 days and then puts it into Highland (plastic) bottles and keeps it there for another 10 days to increase its strength. He uses the mixture by adding 0.5 litre of it to a container with 16 litres of water and sprinkles it on the plants being treated. This far, he has sold 48 litres of biopesticide at 150–200 Ethiopian Birr per litre to other farmers.

Another innovation he presented was liquid fertiliser. To make this, he uses various botanicals, especially weeds and broad-leaved plants. After grinding the botanicals, he mixes them with 1 kg of manure and then mixes 10 litres of the product with 10 litres of water. He stores the mixture for one month. When the plants germinate, he sprinkles the fertiliser at the base of the plants.

Ms Birha Tadesse showed her innovations, which are tomato salsa, tomato marmalade, tomato with sugar and tomato pemmican. She buys the tomatoes when the price is lower. The shelf life of tomato pemmican is six months. To prepare this, she cuts the tomato into four parts, but to prepare the salsa, she completely chops the tomato.

Ms Yibeyin Assefa's innovations are a three-in-one cooking pot and a two-in-one pot, both made of clay. These pots can save time, labour and firewood, and can improve the taste of the food. At the innovation fair, foods prepared using these clay pots and using a cast iron pot were presented. The participants could detect the taste difference and all agreed that the food prepared in the clay pot tastes better.

Suggestions from the participants in Axum

- People from Axum University suggested to reduce the number of botanicals used in the biopesticide. The farmer uses around 50 botanicals. One could conduct an experiment using fewer botanicals and, for example, use the neem fruit instead of neem leaves.
- Yohannes Gebremichael, a lecturer from Axum University, expressed appreciation of all the farmer innovators and promised that Axum University would work with farmers to help them improve their experiments.
- There should be better media coverage about these innovations to share and disseminate the farmers' ideas more easily to other farmers.

On 3 February, a FIF organised in ESM involved representatives from the DAO, the Government Affairs and Communication Offices, Mertulemariam Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) College, Mertulemariam Agricultural College, innovative farmers from 17 rural wards (*kebeles*) in the district, Farmer Field School (FFS) members and Alem Berhan Self-Help Community Based Development Association (ABSHCBDA, also called Alem Berhan) Board and staff members – a total of 29 people (including 7 women).

The event was held in Mertulemariam, the main town of ESM District, in the Alem Berhan meeting hall. Schalew Abiye, co-facilitator of the FIF, first outlined the programme and then opened the event by welcoming all participants. Atalay Yigrem, General Manager of Alem Berhan, thanked all participants on behalf of the association for their coming to attend this special and most important event. The facilitator explained the purpose of the event and encouraged the participants to actively share innovative ideas and experiences that could benefit the association in its efforts to ensure food and nutrition security of the farmers through recognising local knowledge and farmer-led research. He presented the objectives of the event to guide the participants through the process towards attaining the expected outputs.



Farmer innovators presented/displayed their innovations to the participants; some are listed in the table below:

S/N	Name of innovation	Farmer innovators	Description of innovation
1	Pest control in field crops and vegetables	018 Kebele FFS members	The FFS members tried to control pests, most commonly weevil (locally known as <i>negez</i>), in crop storage by using leaves of local poisonous plants such as <i>kinchib</i> , <i>mirez</i> and <i>Aleo vera</i> . They also use <i>azo hareg</i> , <i>geber enbuy</i> and animal urine to prevent the vegetable pest locally known as <i>kishkish</i> .
2	Making soap	022 Kebele FFS members (innovator Sifrash Mengesha)	Preparing soap using locally available <i>endod</i> and <i>geber enbuy</i> plants by drying and pulverising their leaves.
3	Rat control	022 Kebele FFS members (innovator Sifrash Mengesha)	Preventing rats from damaging crops in the field and at home by mixing wheat grain powder with the botanical <i>geber enbuy</i> , which the rats eat and die.
4	Animal tick (<i>alqet</i>) control	010 Kebele FFS members	Controlling tick (<i>alqet</i>) damage to their livestock by adding powder of local plant known as <i>domi</i> upstream in the river where there is high accumulation of <i>alqet</i> .
5	Irrigation and water-saving system	Bamlie Abtie	Irrigating the land and then covering it with plastic to prevent water loss.
6	Curing animals with cough	Ms Genet Abi (woman innovator)	Giving a locally available plant called <i>keberich</i> to animals affected by cough.

After the farmer innovators had presented their innovations, the participants were divided into three groups to allow for lively discussion about the innovations. This helped the participants clearly understand the innovations, especially their contribution to food and nutrition security.

Some suggestions from the participants in ESM

- These innovations presented by farmers make a great contribution to increase production and productivity.
- These innovations should be promoted and scaled up and out to other areas.
- Farmers became innovators when they faced multiple problems in their lives; such situations triggered them to find possible solutions for the problems they faced.
- Each and every stakeholder should work together with farmers to promote local farmers' innovations.
- The innovation fair paved the way for women farmers to enhance their participation and role in the innovation process.

Materials were supplied to farmers at both action-learning sites, and the farmers in Axum learned about organising an FFS. At individual level, the materials were protective clothing, including gloves and shoes, plastic containers, 1-litre sprinklers. Also at the ESM site, such materials were used to facilitate the PID cases. The project coordinator releases funds to the site coordinators to buy materials that help the farmers conduct their research.

After the people from the TVET and Agricultural College had attended the training workshop together with the farmers, they started collaborating with the farmers in experimentation.

Advocacy

A national workshop was held in the Panorama Hotel in Addis Ababa on 28 February. Two



farmer innovators from each action-learning site and staff members of different relevant organisations took part: Addis Ababa University, Ministry of Agriculture, Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Ministry of Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Voice of Wilderness Development Organization (VWDO) and Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM)–Ethiopia. A total of 21 people (including 5 women) took part.

The facilitator, Yohannes GebreMichael from Addis Ababa University, started the workshop with a self-introduction of each participant: name, organisation, profession and expectations from the workshop. Then Tafesse Mesfin, the chair of the PE NSC, gave opening remarks on behalf of the NSC. He acknowledged all the participants for attending the workshop.

The project coordinator, Ms Beza Kifle, gave a brief presentation on the status of the project in general, including mention of ProInnova’s and Proli-FaNS’ objectives, countries of implementation and basic activities implemented so far at the two learning sites. Her presentation was followed by questions and answers.

After tea break, the farmers exhibited their innovations in the space provided, and they were given the floor to talk about their innovations. From the Axum site, two farmer innovators –



Gebreyesus Tesfaye and Ms Birha Tadesse – also showcased their innovations. Birka included a new innovation of hers involving a tea made of plants dried in the sun.

To conclude and to chart the way forward, the workshop participants discussed how other stakeholders could help the farmers in a sustainable manner. All the participants agreed that an official letter should be prepared and sent to the relevant organisations asking them to select one focal person to attend network meetings in the future and to help the farmer innovators.

The participants gave suggestions about the farmers' innovations, such as suggesting to Ms Birha Tadesse that, when she prepares her tea, she tries to compare drying the plants directly in the sun (her current practice) with drying the plants in the shade to see what effect this has on the taste and colour of the tea. For Gebreyesus' biopesticide, the participants suggested that he try using fewer botanicals instead of leaves from 50 plants. It was noted that the ESM farmers who are innovating in using botanicals are now planting the needed plants near their homes and are thus protecting biodiversity.

All the participants, especially from the Ministry of Technology and Innovation and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, are interested in giving awards and recognition for indigenous knowledge, but have not done so yet. They express keenness to help and encourage farmers and to work with PE in the future.

Among the participants in the national workshop was someone from the Ministry of Technology and Innovation, which is interested in innovations that are developed from indigenous knowledge, solve farmers' problems, can involve youth and women, and can reduce or avoid foreign currency investment. The Ministry will fund the innovation if it fulfils these criteria. Based on the discussion on the national workshop, PE provided a list of local innovations that have the potential to fulfil the requirements of the Ministry and joined a meeting to describe more about the innovations and the project and the organisation. Now a board within the Ministry is in the process of selecting innovations.

In addition to discussing the Proli-FaNS project and farmers' innovations and experiments, the workshop also had a learning session about the natural resources, culture and biodiversity of Ethiopia. Yohannes GebreMichael, Addis Ababa University, facilitated this session.

Documentation

Twenty local innovations from each learning site (40 innovations in total) have been documented, and the documentation is waiting to be finalised after receiving comments from the International Support Team. Video documentation was also carried out during the national workshop and the FIFs, when farmers were explaining their innovations.

Monitoring and evaluation

The project coordinator made a monitoring visit to the ESM action-learning site on 4–10 March and had discussions with the farmers in three FFSs in different wards.

Project coordination and management

On 28 January (9 pm–11 pm), an NSC meeting was held in the Best Practice Association (BPA) office in Addis Ababa.

Members present:

1. Tafesse Mesfin – NSC chairperson
2. Yohannes GebreMichael – NSC member
3. Elias Zerfu – NSC member
4. Tezera Getahun – NSC member
5. Tesfahun Fenta – NSC member
6. Ms Beza Kifle – PE Coordinator and Proli-FaNS Coordinator

Members excused:

1. Ms Sarah Assefa – AgriProFocus–Ethiopia, NSC member
2. Yosef Garedeu – new Acting Director of BPA
3. Amanuel Assefa – Technical Advisory Group member and coordinator of the Eastern and Southern Africa ProInnova Platform (ESAPP)
4. Hailu Araya – ex-PE Coordinator and ex-BPA Director

The NSC discussed the following agenda points:

- Institutional arrangements
- Annual work plan
- National workshop
- Other related issues
- Way forward

Institutional arrangements

The NSC discussed about the new Acting Director of BPA, Yosef Garedeu. Even if he is selected to be the Director of BPA, the Civil Society Agency has not approved him for this position because BPA did not renew itself as an organisation and the audit report submitted to the Agency was not accepted.

The NSC proposed two possible plans:

- **Plan A:** To register the Proli-FaNS project as an organisation; based on the new policy, each NGO is to be registered as a new organisation and also projects can be registered as organisations; the registration of all NGOs has started already;.
- **Plan B:** Until the Agency approves the new Director of BPA, to continue with Hailu Araya in order to be able to continue implementing the project activities within the given timeframe.

Annual work plan

The project activities were looked at in the annual work plan. As upcoming activities, the FIF at each learning site and the national workshop were mentioned.

Farmer Innovation Fair (FIF): This was planned to be held earlier but was postponed because, in order to organise the FIF in a good manner (e.g. for showing the three-in-one pot at the Axum site, the food to be prepared in the clay pot and the metal pot will be exhibited for the participants to taste), such innovations from both learning sites will need to be well exhibited and well prepared.

National workshop: The NSC decided that, before holding the national workshop, the institutional arrangements should be settled and then, at the workshop, the NSC can give inputs about this in different ways, e.g. commenting on the proposed Terms of Reference (ToR).

Way forward

The NSC decided to implement Plan B and keep Hailu in the Board of BPA. Even if he has resigned from his position as Country Platform coordinator, he is willing to assist the project. Based on this agreement, two NSC members (Tafesse and Tesfahun) were assigned to discuss

this matter with Hailu. The NSC agreed to conduct the workshop after this discussion with Hailu in order to clear up any ambiguity and then the ToR for the workshop will be reviewed.

Challenges faced and lessons learned

The main challenges faced were the communication with Alem Birhan and BPA; by having the NSC meeting, these issues were clarified. The other point is the exclusion of PE from the next phase of the Proli-FaNS project, just as we are trying to strengthen the NSC by inviting new members. Unfortunately, the decision has already been accepted by the donor.

Conclusion

In Quarter 2 of Year 3, basic activities were conducted such as farmer innovation fairs, a national workshop, an NSC meeting and supplying materials to farmer experimenters.

The Ministry of Technology and Innovation is collaborating with PE. Based on their request, we have selected local innovations that have potential to solve farmers' problems, involve youth and women, and reduce or avoid foreign currency investment. The Ministry will fund an innovation if it fulfils these criteria.

The exclusion of PE from the next phase of the Proli-FaNS project makes us feel sad, because we are trying to strengthen the NSC by inviting new members and then suddenly we heard this decision.

As a final statement: in Ethiopia, we have wonderful and energetic farmer innovators and also ample resources, so it is better to give a chance to implement the project.