



**Narrative Report on Year 3 of the
Proli-FaNS (Promoting local innovation in
Food and Nutrition Security) project
(August 2018–July 2019)**

Compiled by Beza Kifle, Prolinnova–Ethiopia coordinator

August 2018, Addis Ababa

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION HOW THE REPORT WAS PREPARED

The report was prepared by the Prolinnova–Ethiopia (PE) coordinator, Ms Beza Kifle. The sources of information used to prepare this report were: quarterly reports, back-to-office report, minutes and documents stored in this phase of the project. The site coordinators in the two action-learning sites in Axum and Enebse Sar Mider (ESM) helped by sending reports on each event undertaken in their sites.

2. CHANGES IN PROJECT CONTEXT DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

In June 2019, the Amhara Regional State Minister was murdered, as were some other government people working at federal level. The resulting political instability led to restrictions in movement in Amhara State, where the ESM learning site lies. A scheduled field visit to ESM to conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) to assess impact therefore had to be postponed.

The significant positive changes are that the farmers involved in the local innovation (LI) and participatory innovation development (PID) cases are very productive in developing their innovations and sharing them with others and also their capacity has been developed by their participation in various trainings and workshops. The farmer innovators are eager to develop other new innovations and to improve their innovations. In addition, some other farmers in the area are developing new innovations. Most of the farmers involved in this project are showing progress by growing vegetables in their gardens and increasing the number of meals consumed by their families daily and the women are also practising improvements in food processing.

On the subject of project management, the new Acting Director of Best Practice Association (BPA), Yosef Garede, has not yet been able to get approval from the federal government department for civil society. This is because the license of BPA could not yet be renewed. Some misunderstanding arose between the former Alem Birhan Manager, Atalay Yigrem, and BPA, but the PE National Steering Committee (NSC) fixed this issue by having an urgent meeting and solutions were found for all the confrontation points. Now everything is going smoothly.

The Alem Birhan Association, which coordinates the Proli-FaNS activities in ESM, now has a new manager, Tesfaye Mtiku, who is also responsible for coordinating the project work. In the period after the resignation of the previous coordinator and the appointment of the new one, PE worked with Aschalew Abiye, a staff member of Alem Birhan. During the visit for the FGDs, the PE coordinator had a chance to discuss with the new manager about the project.

3. IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT AND ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES

3.1 To what extent are the project objectives being achieved?

Objective 1: Rural communities develop their innovative capacities to effectively improve food security, nutrition security and nutritional diversity

To achieve this objective, PE carried out various activities:

- 1) A PID training workshop was held in each of the two action-learning sites. In Axum, it was on 12–15 October 2018, and five cases of PID were discussed by different stakeholders: farmers, Axum Research Centre, Axum Agricultural Office, Axum and Addis Ababa Universities, and an NGO (BPA). A total of 25 participants (including 9 women) took part in the workshop. Then, five farmer innovators presented their innovations, and the other participants – including farmers – raised some fundamental questions about the functions, challenges and future prospects of the innovations. The participants were divided into five groups based on the type of innovation and institutional affiliation to discuss the PID cases.

In ESM, a PID workshop was held on 26–30 October 2018 and involved different actors from the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College, the Mertulemariam Agricultural Office, the Mertulemariam College of Agriculture, two NGOs (Alem Birhan and Facility for Change) and farmers. A total of 29 participants (including 3 women) met in the meeting hall of the Alem Birhan Self-Help Community-Based Development Association (ABSHCBDA, also called Alem Birhan). After discussions in subgroups, representatives of each subgroup presented their discussion points in the plenary and each presentation was discussed, including questions and answers. In general, the participants agreed to develop, enhance and promote the local innovations and to spread the local knowledge of farmers within the community. All of the participants were ready to give inputs and to help the innovators in different ways, such as by giving advice, supplying materials and helping the farmers improve their local innovations. The farmer innovators expressed willingness to continue the PID until its final stage.

- 2) A farmer innovation fair (FIF) was organised as a farmers' learning event at each of the two action-learning sites. On 9 February 2019, an FIF was held in Axum at the Tahtay Maychew Agricultural Office and involved multiple stakeholders: farmer innovators, the Agricultural 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 Agricultural Office (DAO) gave a speech in which he indicated that the innovations of these farmers should 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 and DAO) have a role in promoting and improving these local innovations.

Farmer innovators presented their innovation, showing how to prepare them and the ingredients used. The participants made several suggestions, such as:

- People from Axum University suggested reducing 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 2019, an FIF was organised in ESM and involved representatives from the DAO, the Government Affairs and Communication Offices, Mertulemariam TVET College, Mertulemariam Agricultural College, innovative farmers from 17 rural wards (*kebeles*) in the district, Farmer Field School (FFS) members, and Alem Birhan 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 Birhan meeting hall. Aschalew Abiye, co-facilitator of the FIF, first outlined the programme and then opened the event by welcoming all participants.

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 six different innovations to the participants: pest control in field crops and vegetables, making soap by using botanicals, rat control, animal tick (*alqet*) control, irrigation and water-saving system, and curing animals suffering from cough.

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

Some of the suggestions made by the participants were:

- These innovations presented by farmers make a great contribution to increase production and productivity and 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 with farmers to promote local innovation.
 - The innovation fair paved the way for women farmers to enhance their participation and role in the innovation process.
- 3) 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 and 1-litre sprinklers. Also at the ESM site, such materials were used to facilitate the PID cases. The PE coordinator released funds to the site coordinators to buy materials that helped the farmers conduct their research.
- 4) A national workshop was held in the Panorama Hotel in Addis Ababa on 28 February 2019. 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) participated.

The facilitator, Yohannes GebreMichael from Addis Ababa University, started the workshop with self-introductions of the participants: 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 PE coordinator, Beza Kifle, briefly presented the general status of the project, including mention of Prolinnova’s and Proli-FaNS’ objectives, countries of implementation and basic activities implemented so far at the two action-learning sites. Her presentation was followed by questions and answers.

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.

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 innovations that fulfil these criteria. Based on the discussion during the national workshop, PE provided a list of local innovations with potential to fulfil the Ministry’s requirements and joined a meeting to describe more about the innovations, the Proli-FaNS project and BPA. Now a board within the Ministry is in the process of selecting innovations.

- 5) Farmer innovators from both sites attended the 9th celebration of cultural biodiversity in Konta in southern Ethiopia. This aimed to promote the culture of different regions in the



Farmer innovators in Konta, southern Ethiopia

country. Participants included high-school students from different regions, preparatory and university students, invited guests, farmers, the organisers and people from Konta. The celebration included an exhibition, where students showed their different cultural foods, clothes, drinks, materials and dances.



Participants visiting farmer’s work

Our farmers presented their innovations i.e. potato bread, beetroot juice, dried cabbage, fuel made from weeds, local soap made from botanicals, biopesticide, biofertiliser, traditional foods, and vermicompost and its products. This programme creates a network with different partners, and observing other regions’ cultural practices makes it very colourful. Our journey was with nine farmers (six men, three women) – three

from Axum, three from ESM and three from Assosa, a project site of the NGO PELUM (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management)–Ethiopia, which provided the vehicle.

The farmers’ innovations exhibited during the celebration were the following:

No.	Farmer’s name	Sex	Site	Local innovations
1	Yeshanew Abye	M	ESM	Fuel made from <i>mete arem</i> (weed)
2	Wudu Tesfaw	M	ESM	Local soap made from botanicals
3	Tekle Gidey	F	ESM	Juice made from beetroot, bread made from potato powder, dried cabbage
4	Yibeyin Assefa	F	Axum	Three-in-one cooking pot, local beehive
5	Aregawi Seare	M	Axum	Biopesticide and local medicine for dogs
6	Alem Gush	F	Axum	Traditional food <i>hilbet</i>
7	Fanta Mohamed	M	Assosa	Vermicompost with its products
8	Alifa Eismael	M	Assosa	Biofertiliser, biopesticide
9	Abass Suleyman	M	Assosa	Traditional food of Benishangul Gumz



Farmers in the exhibition describing their work to participants and cultural dance of Konta, Ethiopia

Our display was different from the others because it showed farmers’ own innovations, and the other participants were very excited about and interested in the farmer innovators’ work. During the evaluation of the programme, the farmers raised some points to be improved for the next time:



- To have a participation certificate for the farmers
- To bring other traditional materials which describe the culture of their locality including traditional clothes
- To show the participants how to prepare the new technologies (biopesticide, biofertiliser, potato powder...).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

The PE coordinator and Yohannes GebreMichael from Addis Ababa University visited the Axum action-learning site to conduct a PID meeting on 12–15 October 2018, which also served for M&E purposes. The PE coordinator visited the ESM site to conduct a PID meeting on 26–30 October, which likewise served for M&E purposes. The PE 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. According to the action plan developed in the Proli-FaNS partners’ annual meeting in Senegal in May 2019, one of the activities was focus group discussions (FGDs) and the following plans were made for the FGDs in the learning sites in Ethiopia.

No.	Names	Site	Date
1	Tafesse Mesfin and Beza Kifle	ESM	25–27 June 2019
2	Yohannes GebreMichael and Hailu Araya	Axum	21–23 June 2019

The visit to the Axum site was made at the planned time by Yohannes and Hailu but the visit to ESM had to be postponed to 8–11 July 2019 because of security issues in Amhara Region.

Objective 2: Women are more widely recognised as innovators and are supported in further developing their innovations, from which they control the benefits.

In the Axum learning site, six of the local innovations identified were developed by women, while women were involved in seven other local innovations that were identified at this site (these innovations were by husband and wife). In the ESM learning site, the farmers are conducting their innovation and experimentation in FFSs in three wards (*Kebeles* 010, 018 and 022) in which a total of 56 farmers are members, including 18 women. The table below shows the involvement of male and female farmers in other activities related to LI and PID:

No.	Activities	Male farmers	Female farmers	Place	
1	Workshops	National workshop	16	5	Addis Ababa
		PID workshops	16	9	Axum
			26	3	ESM
2	Farmer Innovation Fairs	22	7	ESM	
		34	4	Axum	
3	Cultural biodiversity celebration & exhibition	4	3	Konta, Southern Ethiopia	
4	Focus group discussions	7	0	ESM	
		5	2	Axum	
Total		130	33		

Objective 3: Subregional Prolinnova platforms support national CPs to develop capacity for collective learning, mobilising resources and effective policy dialogue.

The Subregional Coordinator (SRC) for Eastern & Southern Africa, Amanuel Assefa, supported PE by taking part in various meetings, including NSC meetings. During the national workshop organised in Addis Ababa on 28 February 2019, the SRC led the session on how the Ethiopian partner organisations could collaborate in the future in supporting farmers to improve their innovations and their livelihoods. He also identified relevant organisations that could join and extend the PE network.

In the discussion on fundraising during the Proli-FaNS annual partners' meeting in Senegal, the PE coordinator mentioned that two project proposals that included PE were submitted to FAO and ILRI, but no positive response was received. Also the four innovations submitted to the Ethiopian Ministry of Technology and Innovation was mentioned. The PE coordinator took part in the discussions in Senegal about strengthening the regional platform. Yohannes GebreMichael from Addis Ababa University had already been named by PE as a member of the subregional taskforce that is supporting the SRC. In Senegal, the participants also co-opted the PE coordinator into this taskforce so as to give additional support to the interim SRC, Brigid Letty, especially in terms of ensuring good communication between PE and the other members of the subregional platform.

Risks and/or unexpected opportunities

Exclusion of PE from the follow-on phase of the Proli-FaNS project brings the risk that PE partners may not be able to continue supporting farmers to develop and improve their innovations or to continue networking with relevant organisations to create a favourable policy environment for promoting local innovation and farmer-led joint research.

An unexpected opportunity was the interest of the Ministry of Technology and Innovation in supporting local innovators. PE submitted four project proposals related to local innovations to this Ministry and is awaiting response from the evaluators.

4. CONCLUSION

In each of the two action-learning sites where the Proli-FaNS project is being carried out in Ethiopia, the targeted number of local innovations was identified and documented. Farmer innovators are improving their innovations through the ideas they receive from other stakeholders in various organisations during interaction in PID, and some farmers are developing new innovations. In different workshops, training sessions and experience-sharing learning events, the farmers are participating actively. These activities enhance farmers' capacity in securing their families' food and nutrition, especially through knowing how to protect their crops better and thus increase production.

In this year, the farmers took part in the cultural biodiversity celebration and exhibition in Konta. This created links with new partners and gave the farmers an opportunity to observe cultural practices in other regions of Ethiopia. The farmers' innovations that were exhibited during the celebration were: fuel made from *mete arem* (weed), local soap made from botanicals, beetroot juice, bread from potato powder, dried cabbage, three-in-one cooking pot, local beehive, biopesticide, local medicine for dogs and preparing a local dish called *hilbet*.

To improve the implementation of the Proli-FaNS project, the NSC and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) were helpful in participating in meetings, and in writing and editing reports. We submitted four innovation proposals to the Ministry of Technology and Innovation, and are awaiting its response.