

Local Innovation Support Facilities/Funds: (LISFs)

PROLINNOVA experiences and lessons



SULCI-FaNS Partners Meeting

23–25 November 2020

by Zoom

What I am going to talk about ...

- 1. What are Local Innovation Support Facilities/Funds (LISFs)?**
- 2. Why did the PROLINNOVA network decide to pilot LISFs?**
- 3. How does an LISF work?**
- 4. How did smallholder farmers use the LISF resources?**
- 5. What impacts did this approach have?**
- 6. What lessons can be drawn from this?**
- 7. What are the policy implications?**

What are Local Innovation Support Facilities / Funds (LISFs) ?



Ethiopian farmer Kes Malede, developed water-lifting devices
(Photo: Ann Waters-Bayer)

- Resources managed or co-managed by grassroots organisations
- For supporting farmer-led experimentation and innovation
- Local people decide what will be investigated, how and by whom – including bringing in experts / scientists to support this
- *Communities can thus drive their own adaptation to change and explore new opportunities*

Why did the PROLINNOVA network decide to try out LISFs?

- *Vision*: A world where women & men farmers play decisive roles in ARD for sustainable livelihoods
- **Most “participatory ARD” in technology-transfer mode to:**
 - test or demonstrate scientists’ technologies
 - explore scientists’ rather than farmers’ questions
- Resources for “participatory ARD” controlled by scientists



- *Need to change power balance so that farmers decide*
- **Idea of piloting LISFs raised by network at a Prolinnova annual workshop**

What did we want to achieve through facilitating LISFs?

- **To encourage farmers to take the lead in joint experimentation / research with “outsiders”**
- **To make research more accountable to and relevant for smallholders**
- **To strengthen local community capacity to govern local ARD processes**
- **To scale up this approach to decentralised participatory ARD**



Ethiopian farmer comparing modern beehive & her local improvement on it (Photo: Tesfahun Fenta)

How does an LISF work?

- **Multistakeholder (national) team facilitates implementation**
- **It sets up & builds capacities of local LISF Management Committees (LMCs)**
- **LMCs make open calls for proposals**
- **Farmers submit simple proposals**
- **LMCs select grantees (individuals or groups) & provide resources**
- **Farmers lead research & share results**
- **Participatory M&E & impact assessment**



Kenyan farmer Joe Ouku experiments with locally made feed supplements (Photo: Laurens van Veldhuizen)

Main screening criteria defined by each LMC but similar across countries

- **Idea driven by farmers (men and/or women)**
- **Sound in economic, environmental & social terms**
- **Applicable by resource-poor**
- **Applicants willing to share (*public resources for public goods*)**
- **Proposal for *experimentation and learning*, not farm investment**



FMC members screening LISF applications in Uganda

LMCs decided to use LISFs mainly for:



Farmer-led PID in fish farming in Tanzania
(Photo: Laurens van Veldhuizen)

- i. Farmers' own experimentation
- ii. Improving farmer innovations
- iii. Farmer-led experimentation together with researchers (PID)
- iv. Learning visits by farmers

Grants made in 8 pilot countries* over 4 years

No. of applications received	Percentage approved	Average grant value (€)	Range in grant value (€)
1224	64%	84	5 – 1670

* Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda

Multiple levels of mutual learning

- *Community:* local research and M&E by farmer groups and LMC
- *District:* as extension, NGOs, researchers, college staff support farmer-led experiments, organise innovation fairs, facilitate M&E
- *Country:* through reflection workshops and joint impact assessment by national multistakeholder platforms



Kenyan farmers & researchers jointly monitor farmer's experiment

Example of use of LISF grant

Simon Masila, Machakos Region, Kenya

Innovation: Finger millet nursery and transplanting into fields to make maximum use of limited and uncertain rainfall



Result: Harvest when millet crops of neighbouring farmers failed

Received LISF grant for:

- further developing the innovation
- collecting data more systematically
- analysing results with other farmers
- making results more widely known, e.g. through adult literacy classes

Leading to PID with national researchers



- **Scientists first did own on-station trials to learn about new technique themselves**
- **Then did joint experiments in field with Simon and other farmers on:**
 - timing of planting nurseries
 - timing of transplanting seedlings
 - spacing seeds in nurseries & seedlings in fields
 - labour-saving ways to water nurseries (often women's task)
- **Simon Masila given award as outstanding innovator at Kenya National Council of Science and Technology (NCST) exhibition**

What impacts did the LISFs have?

Involvement of different actors in LISF:



- **Generated site-specific improvements** in smallholder farming with potential to improve livelihoods more widely
- **Strengthened social organisation** around managing local ARD and resources 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 extension & research** to support farmer-led PID

Ethiopian farmer explains his agroforestry trial to MoA staff
(Photo: Ann Waters-Bayer)

Some lessons from experience with LISFs in eight countries in Africa and Asia

- Smallholders can manage resources for locally relevant innovation development
- **LISF needs to be custom-designed depending on local capacities, degree of organisation & available support services**
- **Constant efforts needed to prevent scientists from “taking over”:**
 - stimulate reflection by scientists to realise that farmers have own questions



Policy implications

- *LISF is a promising mechanism that gives farmers direct access to resources for innovation according to their priorities*
- It should be integrated into regular research and extension activities to support **decentralised experimentation by farmer-led local learning groups**
- Farmers with experience in LMCs can prioritise research in higher-level multistakeholder platforms, i.e. co-govern publicly funded ARD



Vision



**A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles
in agricultural research and development
for sustainable livelihoods**



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