



# **Farmer Access to Innovation Resources (FAIR): Local Innovation Support Fund (LISF)**

## **FAIR III: Transition Phase Report**

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## **List of abbreviations**

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIC	Agricultural Information Centre
ARD	Agricultural Research and Development
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CIGs	Common Interest Groups
CLIC–SR	Combining Local Innovative Capacity with Scientific Research
CREP	Community Rehabilitation and Environmental Programme
CSCs	County Steering Committees
FAIR	Farmer Access to Innovation Resources
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FLD	Farmer Led Documentation
KARI	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
KWFT	Kenya Women Finance Trust
LATF	Local Authorities Transfer Fund
LISF	Local Innovation Support Fund
LSCs	Local Steering Committees
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NSC	National Steering Committee
PI	PROLINNOVA International
PID	Participatory Innovation Development
PK	PROLINNOVA–Kenya
PROLINNOVA	Promoting Local Innovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM
SOFDEV	Solidarity Fund for Rural Development
WN	World Neighbors

## A: INTRODUCTION

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The objectives of the Farmer Access to Innovation Resources transition phase (FAIR III) are to consolidate and operationalise the findings and lessons from piloting Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs) into clear promising models for implementing and upscaling the LISF approach; to design a framework, structures, processes and steps for the upscaling; and to heighten the interest and commitment of key organisations and decision-makers to take part and to assume responsibility in LISF upscaling. To achieve this, PROLINNOVA–Kenya (PK) undertook the following activities:

- i. Developing, documenting and publishing Kenya’s LISF approach and model through undertaking a study to compare LISF lessons and successful approaches from the two LISF pilot regions; model formulation and writeshops; sharing LISF approaches and models with key stakeholders, identifying opportunities and formulating strategies for upscaling LISF approach in Kenya
- ii. Develop a LISF upscaling framework and action plan: supporting Local Steering Committees (LSCs) to develop upscaling strategies and action plans to broaden LISFs, developing collaborative relationships and strategic development and registration of the PK network to facilitate and support upscaling of LISFs
- iii. Developing and sharing PK policy strategy and implementation plan: reviewing the institutional and policy framework in Kenya on Agricultural Research and Development (ARD) to find upscaling options for LISF in Kenya
- iv. Policy advocacy and lobbying of relevant key organisations to take part in upscaling the operations of LISF through advocacy meetings with policymakers and other stakeholders and development of information and policy briefs.

## B: ACTIVITIES

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### 1. Developing, documenting and publishing Kenya’s LISF approach and model

The FAIR–LISF funding mechanism has been operating in Kenya since 2008 and has been able to support farmers in four pilot districts (Mwingi, Machakos, Nyando and Busia). The aim has been to explore alternative approaches to promote farmer-led Participatory Innovation Development (PID). LISFs have supported innovators and other farmers to conduct farmer-owned experiments and, in the process, have generated interest among scientists with relevant organisations such as Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and the University of Nairobi for PID and farmer-led documentation (FLD). However, to effectively enhance the operationalisation and upscaling of the LISF as a funding mechanism to support farmers’ experimentation and innovation, clear guidelines are needed to further enhance efficiency and attain impact. Consequently, a survey<sup>1</sup> was conducted within the piloted districts to consolidate and operationalise the findings and lessons from piloting LISFs into a clear and detailed description of the working modality of the LISF and, secondly, to design country-specific frameworks, structures, processes and steps for the upscaling. The study also assessed how other funding mechanisms in Kenya support farmers; this aimed at drawing lessons that could subsequently be used to package the LISF mechanism in the country.

To accomplish this, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held in each district: one with LISF key actors and the other with farmer innovators who applied and were not funded but are aware of the existence of the LISF. Other discussions were held with relevant local stakeholders such as the

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed study report available

Local Steering Committees (LSC), farmer innovators, and backstopping organisations such as KARI, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and PK members in the four pilot districts as well as other organisations managing similar or closely related funding mechanisms. These were Solidarity Fund for Rural Development (SOFDEV) in Machakos, Equity Bank in Mwingi and Nyando, Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT) in Mwingi, and Community Rehabilitation and Environmental Programme (CREP) cassava loans programme in Awasi, Nyando. The results of this study were shared, clarified and reformulated in a stakeholders' workshop. All these discussions focused on the structure, management and ownership of LISF at the local level; co-ownership at the national level; the process of mobilisation, administration and screening applications and disbursing funds; regulations and requirements for successful applications; monitoring and evaluation (M&E); the cost of the proposed model; and the process of introducing LISFs in new areas or districts.

Various models that could be adopted were suggested. In Machakos, for example, the LSC proposed that innovators form groups at the village level and from these groups representatives be elected to form the LSC at the district level, while the Nyando LSC suggested that the innovators be identified from Common Interest Groups (CIGs) at the sub-location level and these innovators form a group at the location level. At the location level, they would have a committee that would elect representatives to form the division committee (LSC) and this committee would then elect representatives at the county level.

To enhance the decision-making mechanisms, the suggestions included: holding Annual General Meetings (AGMs) to serve as the main strategic decision-making body of the LISF and ensuring that only decisions passed at the AGM are implemented by the various LISF-governing organs. To strengthen the governance and to interest the county-level political leadership, the setting up of County Steering Committees (CSCs) was suggested. The CSCs would be charged with a supervisory role to ensure that the LISF is managed well. The management and disbursement of funds to innovators would, however, be left to the LSC at the district level. CSCs would have district representation by farmers/innovators with a coordinator from a supporting institution who would have no voting power. The executive team (chairman, secretary and treasurer) would be composed of farmers/innovators. The role of the other stakeholders/partners (NGOs, researchers, government departments, private sector etc) as committee members in the CSC would be to support the committee in capacity building, proposal writing, coordination and management, resource mobilisation, M&E and organising events. At the national level, a management committee referred to as the National Steering Committee (NSC) would be formed and would have farmer innovator representatives. The NSC would be in charge of overall coordination, advocacy and resource mobilisation for the LISF.

## **2. LISF: Farmer-Led Mechanism Funding Workshop**

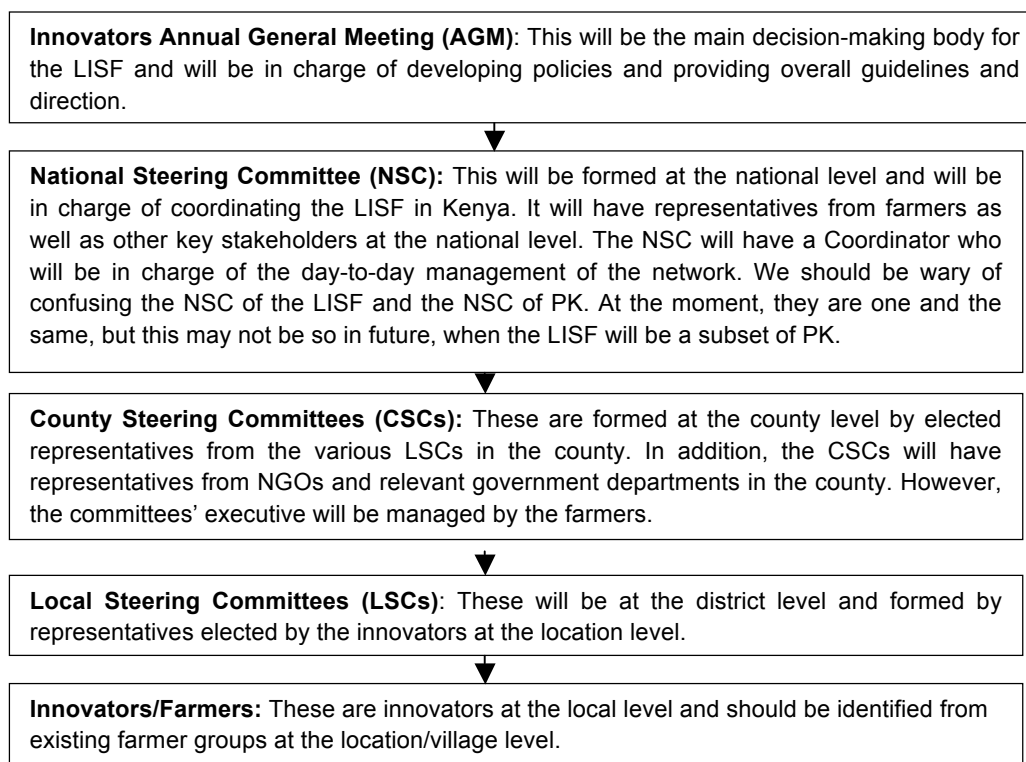
The workshop was a follow-up to the above-mentioned survey that aimed at assessing LISF and other funding mechanisms to draw lessons aimed at upscaling LISF. This was intended to support the LISF process in establishing the best way to implement a local funding mechanism based on the experiences and lessons learnt from the pilot regions and to formulate strategies for upscaling and outscaling the LISF process in Kenya. The workshop was held on 13–14 August 2012 at the Agricultural Information Centre (AIC) in Nairobi. The objectives were:

1. To share LISF experiences with key stakeholders and to contribute to the development of the LISF operating model
2. To compare LISF lessons and successful approaches in the four pilot districts
3. To identify opportunities and formulate strategies for upscaling the LISF approach in Kenya.

The workshop was attended by LSC representatives, district backstopping officers, PK NSC members and selected PK members. PROLINNOVA International (PI) was represented by Ann Waters-Bayer of ETC Foundation, Netherlands. Various presentations were made to support the participants in brainstorming on the way forward. The presentations included: Overview of PK network formulation, mandate, objectives, achievements and management arrangements; LISF lessons and successful approaches from the two regions; Piloting Local Innovation Support Funds in Eight Countries in Africa and Asia; Experiences from the Solidarity Fund for Rural Development (SOFDEV) in Machakos District; Experiences from Village Savings and Loan (VSL)-Cassava production and loan project in Nyando District; and finally presentation of the survey findings on the options available for managing LISFs.

The participants were in agreement that the LISF was worth scaling up, as it has created awareness on farmers' own research and that farmers are able to identify their own innovations at the local level. This has boosted farmers' confidence to participate in experimentation and utilise local resources and explore local knowledge without necessarily waiting for external support to address challenges facing them. The next phase of the LISF intends to link research scientists who have already shown interest with local farmers – the targeted end-users of the research outputs. This will enable formal researchers to recognise and appreciate the capacity of farmers to participate in research and development and in discussions on joint experimentation.

Based on the various models developed and suggested, the following structure was preferred:



Each level has specific roles. For example, the roles of the LSCs are to popularise LISFs, call for proposals, screen proposals, disburse funds to innovators, undertake M&E and follow up, while the roles of the CSCs and NSC are to create awareness, facilitate networking, mobilise resources, and engage in policy advocacy and capacity building. However, as the LSCs become stronger and gain the necessary capacity, the roles of the CSCs and NSC will be devolved to the local level so as to facilitate fast scaling out to all 47 counties in the country.

Disbursement of funds: Funds to farmers whose proposals have been approved will be disbursed through the LSC to the innovators/experimenters and the LSC will account for funds disbursed. However, to ensure prudent management and use of funds, the capacity of the LSC should be strengthened before the LSC effectively takes on this role. The funds are to be provided to the innovators as grants for experimentation on the basis of initial applications and as loans for disseminating or commercialising innovations or for second-time funding, unless experimentation is still ongoing.

Introducing LISFs in new districts: To support the expansion of LISFs to new districts, PK will publicise LISFs through pro-LISF governmental and non-governmental organisations working within the respective districts/counties. The organisations will also give support in identifying funding opportunities at the local and national levels in the new areas. Based on the new Kenya constitutional dispensation, PK will work with the various national structures that have been set up to support the counties, as the country waits for the finalisation and operationalisation of the county structures. PK will also focus on local institutions that are permanent and whose decision-making are not and will not be affected by restructuring at the county/local level. Since the counties are yet to be operational, the necessary bylaws are yet to be put in place by the county governments. This provides an opportune time to lobby to ensure that the LISF is entrenched within the county policies. PK will also approach specific ministries and government institutions to promote the LISF.

To support the launching of LISFs in the new areas, a percentage of administrative costs should be set aside by both PK and partner organisations. KARI, being a key national government institution charged with the responsibility of agricultural research in the country, could be approached to allocate a budget to support farmer-led research.

Popularising LISF: To get more buy-in at the county level, the following will be undertaken:

- Development of policy briefs for use by the LISF steering committees and PK members
- Participate in agricultural field days where innovators can exhibit their innovations and promote LISFs
- Publication of articles on LISFs and farmer-led experimentation and documentation in magazines
- Participation in budget-making processes at the county level and within the various local funding structures such as Constituency Development Fund and Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) to advocate for inclusion of budgets for farmer-led experimentation
- Lobbying the various institutions, including LSCs representatives in their committees
- Conducting seminars on the importance of LISFs to board members and programme managers of various organisations
- Establishing innovation and market centres at the county level
- Establishing linkages and networking with institutions of higher learning to facilitate co-research between farmer innovators and researchers.

Resource mobilisation: There are several avenues through which LISFs could access funds at the local level (district and county levels), such as:

- Constituency Development Fund (CDF): Lobby for the LSC to be part of CDF committees so as influence budget allocation for LISFs, and advocate at national level for apportioning a percentage of the national budget to farmer-led experimentation and innovation
- Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF): The LSCs/CSCs to participate in county council budget days and lobby the county council boards for LISF support.

- Youth Fund and Women Fund: Encourage youth and women innovators to write proposals to the Youth Development Fund and Women Enterprise Fund for support towards outscaling their innovations
- Other micro-finance institutions: Encourage innovators to borrow funds from micro-finance institutions, especially those at the local level such as SOFDEV for disseminating and commercialising their innovations.

### **3. Supporting upscaling initiatives by LSC**

The LISF is supporting a drought-adaptation innovation – the finger millet nursery – to establish sites for sharing and linking the farmer with researchers to further develop the innovation. The innovator farmer, who is also an adult education teacher, developed the idea of raising the finger millet seedlings in nurseries and transplanting at the onset of rains. This innovation has been perceived by many other farmers to be sustainable and reliable, and the concept has also been applied by farmers in experimenting with other crops such as maize, butternuts and watermelons, especially in Machakos. Also farmers in Nyando District have picked this up, especially for butternuts. The innovation has enhanced production of finger millet, a crop that had been neglected by farmers because prolonged drought led to high cost of seeds and loss of crops.

This innovation has also been picked by KARI, University of Nairobi and University of Reading scientists, and an initial planning meeting was conducted in Machakos. The researchers together with the farmers are developing joint research and experimentation plans, while the MoA together with INADES Formation will develop demonstration plots and engage in upscaling. This will be conducted starting in the long-rains planting season between March and May 2013.

### **4. Policy framework analysis**

PK is reviewing the institutional and policy framework in Kenya on ARD and has engaged a consultant to provide support in undertaking the assignment. This review will help PK strengthen its strategies for upscaling LISFs in Kenya.

Through its members, PK has been engaging in advocacy and policy dialogue with relevant key organisations, both government and private, to take part in upscaling the operations of LISF. However, the uncertainty in terms of the new government structures and working relationships between various government departments as a result of the new constitution and upcoming general elections has hindered meaningful discussions with policymakers. It is expected that, after the elections and actual implementation of the government structures as stipulated in the constitution, PK will be able to have significant discussions with policymakers and other partners to support the LISF and PID process in Kenya.

### **5. Innovation exhibition**

Two innovators from LISF pilot districts (Nyando and Machakos) participated in the 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Scientific Conference and Exhibition organised by KARI on 22–26 October 2012. The theme of the conference was “Agricultural Innovation System for Improved Productivity and Competitiveness in Pursuit of Vision 2030”. The conference provided a forum for promoting the LISF approach, networking, knowledge sharing and obtaining feedback on the innovations and the LISF process.



## **6. Project management**

The PK NSC held various meetings to discuss and plan FAIR–LISF and other PK activities, including the Rockefeller Foundation-funded project Combining Local Innovative Capacity with Scientific Research (CLIC–SR) and the Week on Agricultural Innovation Systems in Africa (WAIA). PK is in the process of institutionalising and developing a secretariat with offices. This will provide it with a legal status that has constrained its resource mobilisation efforts and authoritatively engaging with policymakers and other organisations in advocating and lobbying for PID.

Backstopping and M&E trips conducted by the PK coordinator and NSC members provided opportunities to discuss the progress of innovations with the farmers and LSC members and to identify ways of linking the innovators with various organisations, including research institutions.

## **C: CHALLENGES**

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1. The capacity of the LSCs and innovators is still low and needs to be strengthened further to facilitate upscaling of LISFs. Many smallholder farmers in Kenya have some experience with participatory development and the LISF programme can build on this to realise its goals.
2. The uncertainty as a result of the new constitutional dispensation and upcoming general elections has hampered lobbying and advocacy specifically with policymakers and government officials. This is as a result of the expected changes in government structures and management operations both at the local and national levels.
3. Local innovation and farmer-led experimentation are still fairly new concepts and are only slowly being adopted by various ARD organisations, despite the fact that many recognise the value of indigenous knowledge and farmer-led research.
4. Because of insufficient funding, interactions between the LSCs in Busia, Mwingi, Machakos and Nyando Districts have been limited.

## **D: CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD**

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PK is developing a proposal that looks at implementing the LISF model in other counties, upscaling the innovations that have gone through PID and strengthening the structure of PK as a multistakeholder platform of members. Further analysis and documentation of the LISF structure for further refinement, adoption and upscaling to other regions is also key.

PK will continue building the capacities of farmers, innovators, local organisations and other stakeholders to enhance PID. PK will achieve this through various strategies such as promoting farmer-led joint innovation and documentation that builds on the creativity of local farmers to improve productivity, enhance livelihoods and natural resource management. PK also intends to create awareness on relevance and effectiveness through sharing and learning by participating in workshops and exhibitions and by becoming involved in relevant local and national planning and technical committees on agriculture, environment, innovation and research. Mainstreaming PID within county and national policies and programmes will be a key strategy, as this will ensure entrenchment of PID within the operations of government and other relevant organisations.