

## RECOGNIZING LOCAL INNOVATION IN RURAL ADVISORY SERVICES TO PROMOTE AGRIPRENEURSHIP



PROLINNOVA (PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management)

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Promotion of agripreneurship must be based on local people initiative, using local material to improve their livelihood and bring change to the community



*Rural women in Cameroon preparing cassava partly for cooking (direct consumption), partly for transformation (« baton de manioc »)  
Photo credit: Etoa Jean B.)*

## PROLINNOVA: PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM

- An international multistakeholder network led by NGOs in order to scale up an approach that builds on farmer innovation.
- Prolinnova is active in 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- The network promotes agripreneurship **through local innovation & innovators**, working with a Participatory Innovation Development (PID) approach, Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs) and Farmer Innovation Fairs.



## Participatory Innovation Development (PID)



Farmer innovator and scientist observe effect of treatment on enset plant.  
(Photo: Tesfahun Fenta)

- The entry points for PID are such cases of local innovation, which Prolinnova defines pragmatically as “a process in which local people develop new and better ways of doing things, using their own resources and their own initiative”.



## Participatory Innovation Development (PID)

- Farmers are creative, innovative and can generate relevant local innovations.
- But many cases of informal research carried out by farmers and jointly with extension agents are undocumented. At the same time their findings are used every day by them as it coincides with their local realities.
- With PID we can facilitate dialogue between stakeholders (formal researchers, extensionists, farmers, NGOs) so that there is a two-way flow of information from farmers to researchers and from researchers to farmers.
- The idea for a joint experiment can come from a farmer, extensionist and/or researcher.



## How can PID support Rural Advisory services in recognizing innovation?

- It is of high value for extensionists to learn about the local realities of farmers. Extensionists must understand that innovation is not only the domain of research institutions but is also something in which they themselves and farmers are involved in.



Ethiopian extensionists learn from farmer innovator (credit : Chesha Wettasinha)



## Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)

The LISF is another tool used by Prolinnova to promote local innovation and agripreneurship.

Farmers are able to manage their own funding for research.

It can be used to support farmer-led experiments and joint learning, including trying out new ways of local processing and marketing of agricultural products.



*The heart of LISF is innovation and joint learning, here in aquaculture in Tanzania  
(Photo credit: Laurens van Veldhuizen)*

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## LISFs (cont'd)

Three basic principles of LISFs are:

- Farmers or groups of farmers have direct access to funds and not through development agencies.
- Funds are used for farmer-led experimentation, local innovation and farmer learning.
- Community-based and/or farmer organisations play an important role in deciding about allocation and managing the funds.

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## farmer innovation fairs

### How farmers innovations fairs promote agripreneurship

- Farmer Innovation Fairs (regional and national) and other events like farmer to farmer visits or celebration of farmers initiatives are used to exhibit and spread innovation processes (both technical and socio-institutional innovation)
- Farmer Innovation Fairs are platforms that recognise and celebrate the creativity, ingenuity and innovativeness of small-scale men and women farmers.
- Fairs at national or regional level are events to bring many different stakeholders (extensionists, farmers, policymakers, civil society) together in one place, to get to know each other and exchange ideas and experiences.

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West African Farmer Innovation Fair, May 2015  
 (Photo credit: Assane Ouedraogo )

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The National Farmer Innovation Fair in Bolivia  
(Photo credit: Prolinnova Bolivia)

## Farmer innovation fairs (cont'd)

- A fair is an open forum with room for social learning and development of farmers' communicative skills.
- Fairs help to boost the farmer innovators' self-esteem and confidence.
- Publicly calling for recognition of farmers as important actors in agricultural research and development can lead to promotion of agripreneurship.

## Farmer innovation fairs (cont'd)

- When a farmer's innovation / adaptation is presented as an example at a farmer innovation fair, this is a source of motivation for her/him and others. In case other farmers are inspired by the innovation, they will try to do better, which leads to development of initiatives of agripreneurship.
- To be able to present their innovations at fairs, farmers need to be confident and able to explain the local conditions and the issue they are trying to address. Extensionists must therefore work to learn from the viewpoint of the farmer in order to increase their confidence.



## Conclusion

- Development of people must first of all be “people-centred”. There should be increased local commitment from whom concern development questions, which may contribute to promote agripreneurship.
- Farmer Innovation Fairs or farmer to farmer visits can be given a new and different orientation for better implementation of agripreneurship through interaction between extensionists and farmers.

