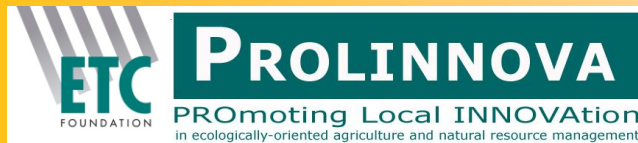


Multi-level joint learning about locally managed innovation funds



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

Ann Waters-Bayer, Laurens van Veldhuizen & Chesha Wettasinha, ETC Foundation, The Netherlands



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Introduction

Collaborative knowledge generation for rural development through:

- 1) Farmer-led experimentation combining local and external knowledge
- 2) Action research to explore new way to fund this knowledge generation

Joint learning

- *by multiple stakeholders:* farmers, development practitioners, scientists, government authorities etc
- *at multiple levels:* community, district, national, international

Initiative of PROLINNOVA network: multi-stakeholder learning platforms on agricultural research and development (ARD) in 21 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America

Vision: A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in ARD for sustainable livelihoods

Why locally managed funds for agricultural research & development (ARD)?

- Research and extension still mainly technology transfer: promoting innovations, not site-specific innovation processes
- Most “participatory” research to answer scientists’ rather than farmers’ questions
- Funding controlled by researchers who involve farmers
- Can power balance in ARD funding be changed? → *farmers “call the tune”*
- **Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs):** communities drive experimentation & innovation, deciding what to be explored, how and by whom



How an LISF works

- Multi-stakeholder national team coordinates & facilitates implementation
- It sets up & builds capacities of local Fund Management Committees (FMCs)
- FMCs make open calls for proposals
- Farmers submit simple proposals
- FMCs select grantees (individuals or groups) & provide resources
- Farmers lead research & share results
- Participatory impact assessment



Kenyan farmer experiments with locally made feed supplements

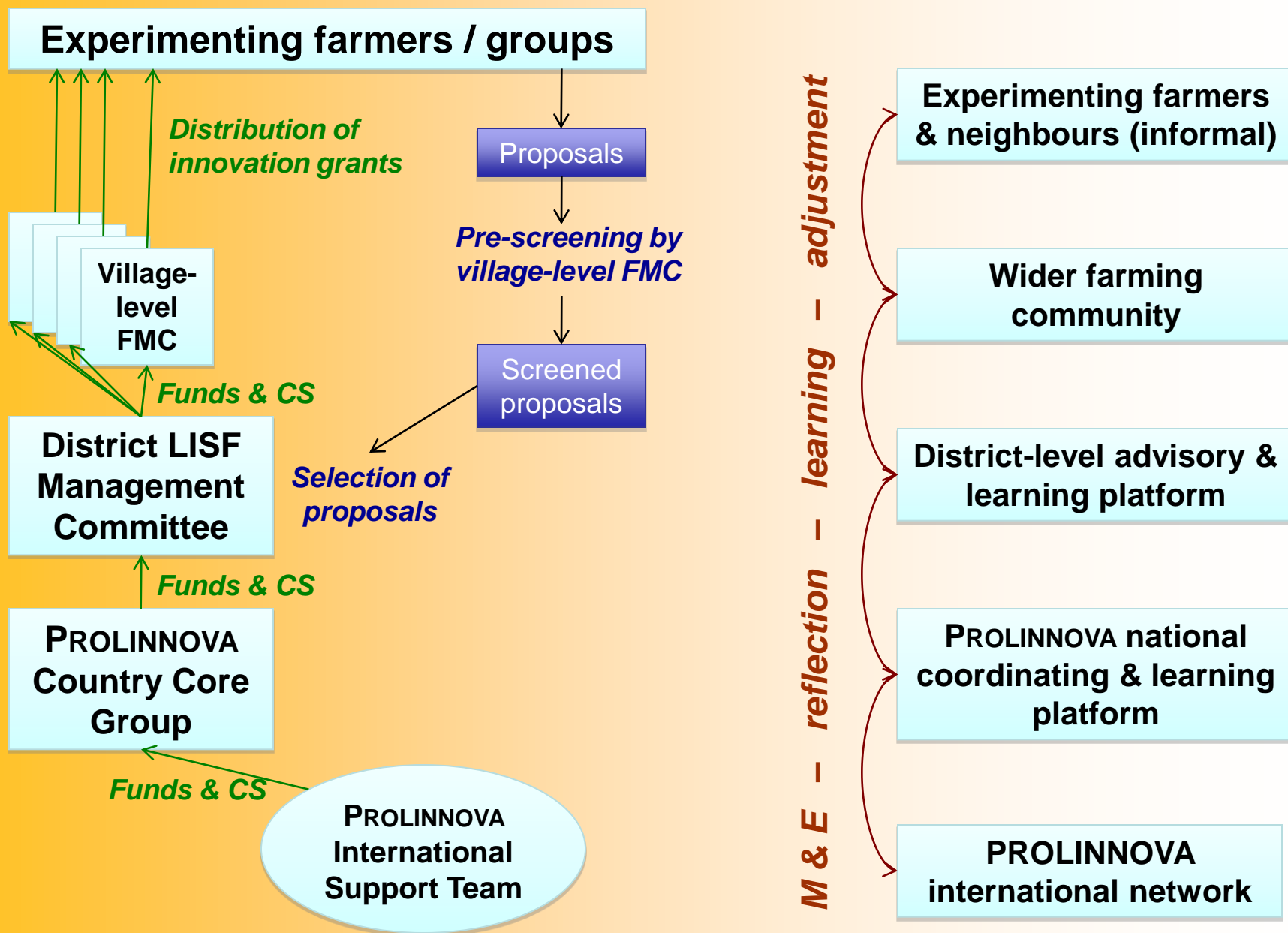
Main screening criteria defined by FMCs similar across all 8 countries

- Idea driven by applicant(s)
- Innovation sound in economic, environmental & social terms
- Applicable by resource-poor
- Applicants willing to share (*public funds for public goods*)
- Proposal for *experimentation and learning*, not farm investment



Members of FMC screening LISF applications in Uganda

Decision-making & learning in piloting LISFs



Multiple levels of learning

- **Community:** Farmers/groups learned by doing local research and M&E – informal discussions plus reflections with district FMC or advisory group
- **District:** ARD staff, local government, & NGOs trained by country core team, learned by mentoring & M&E of farmer experiments, organising innovation fairs
- **National:** Multi-stakeholder platform learned through reflection meetings, wider workshops, M&E, participatory impact assessment
➡ strategising how to mainstream LISF approach
- **International:** Tele / e-conferences, facilitated reflection, process documentation, annual International Partners Workshops
➡ draw lessons for policy influence and wider application



Kenyan farmers & researcher jointly monitor farmer's experiment

Social learning impact 1) Enhanced capacity of farming communities to innovate

- **More sharing on local innovation within and beyond community**
- **Greater motivation to experiment**
- **Improved experimentation skills reduced risk of trying out new things**
- **Stronger social organisation around managing local ARD and funds for it**
- **Smallholder men & women better able to formulate own research and extension needs and to access relevant information**
- **Increased smallholders' confidence to interact with “outsiders” in joint innovation**



Farmer-led joint joint experimentation in fish farming in Tanzania



Ethiopian farmer comparing modern beehive & her local improvement on it

Social learning impact 2) Enhanced capacity of formal ARD to support farmer-led innovation



Ethiopian farmer explains his experiment to MoA staff

- Better communication & stronger links between farmers, extensionists & scientists
- Wider awareness in formal ARD sector of farmer innovation
- Greater interest of formal ARD sector to identify & support farmer-led research
- Greater demand by government staff and new projects/programmes for farmer experimenters to discuss ARD priorities
- Positive response from some higher-level policymakers exposed to LISF

But also challenges:

- Reaching common understanding of LISF concept
- Involving more scientists
- Scaling out findings from LISF-supported activities
- Scaling out / up LISF approach in ARD institutions:



*Kenya Perm. Sec. for Higher Education
visiting farmer innovators at NCST exhibition*

- Difficult to generate funds in-country
- High initial costs to set up new LISFs
- Need for more policy dialogue and exposing more policymakers to this approach
- Need for constant vigilance to prevent scientists from “taking over”:
 - Retaining smallholder focus & farmer-led character
 - Continued reflection, learning & flexible adaptation within the institutions

Lessons learnt from piloting LISFs in 8 countries in Africa and Asia

- **Smallholders can & should be in the driving seat for locally relevant innovation development**
- They can more easily govern decentralised funding mechanisms
- **Developing LISF takes time and resources: needs to be tailor-made to suit local capacities, degree of organisation, available support services, and legal & policy framework**
- **Transformative learning processes in ARD at all levels begin with experience in real world of farmers**



Conclusions

- ***LISF is promising complementary funding mechanism that gives farmers access to resources for innovation fitting their priorities***
- **It opens way to more balanced collaboration and mutual learning by farmers and scientists in innovation processes**
- **Experience with LISF strengthens farmers' role in governing publicly funded ARD – making it more accountable to & relevant for them**
- **LISF should be integrated into regular research & advisory work to support **decentralised experimentation by farmer-led local learning groups****
- **LISF enhances sustainability of farming by spreading local-level capacities to *continue learning, innovating & adapting to change***



Vision



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



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With many thanks to ...

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- **Ethiopia**
- **Ghana**
- **Kenya**
- **Nepal**
- **South Africa**
- **Tanzania**
- **Uganda**

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- **DURAS (Promoting Sustainable Development in Southern Agricultural Research Systems, France)**
- **GFAR (Global Forum on Agricultural Research)**
- **Misereor, Germany**
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