

# Towards a farmer-governed approach to ARD: lessons from piloting Local Innovation Support Funds

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# From local innovation to farmer governance in agricultural research & development

- Agricultural research and development (ARD) still largely within the transfer-of-technology paradigm, although participatory approaches have gained momentum in recent decades
- Control over funds for ARD still in the hands of researchers or NGOs, that define the ARD agenda
- PROLINNOVA partners not only recognising local innovation and facilitating joint experimentation but also challenging the way funding is channelled → ***changing the power balance***



# What brings PROLINNOVA partners together?

## *Conviction that:*

- Farmers are **creative** and generate relevant local innovations = new ways of doing things in that locality (technological & socio-institutional)
- Farmer-led participatory innovation for sustainable development should become **part of the repertoire** of formal agricultural research, development and educational institutions
- Effective research and advisory services support and stimulate local innovation processes in close partnership with farmers/ farmer organisations, universities, NGOs and other actors in innovation systems, including the private sector

# What do PROLINNOVA partners do?

Diverse set of activities depending on local context; with common elements:

- ***Creating the evidence***: studies of local innovation, participatory innovation development (PID) on the ground, and ***documenting this***
- ***Sharing the evidence***: publications, various media
- Facilitating ***multistakeholder platforms*** for planning, reflection and learning: steering and working group meetings, workshops etc
- ***Capacity building***, training and working with universities, colleges and training centres to include PID in their curricula
- ***Policy dialogue and institutionalising*** PID at local, district, national and international level

# Piloting Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)

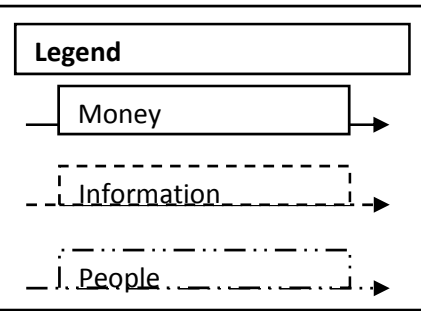
- *Turns conventional ARD funding mechanisms upside-down*
- *Provides alternative funding resources* for farmer-led innovation processes
- *Control over funds in the hands of farmers*, who define what will be studied and with which partners
- Seeking to *integrate LISF* in ARD and *increase accountability of public ARD* to resource-poor farmers
- Being piloted in *Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, South Africa, Tanzania* and *Uganda* with support from Netherlands and French governments and Rockefeller Foundation
- Main question: *“To what extent is this funding mechanism feasible, effective and efficient?”*

# How is LISF implemented?

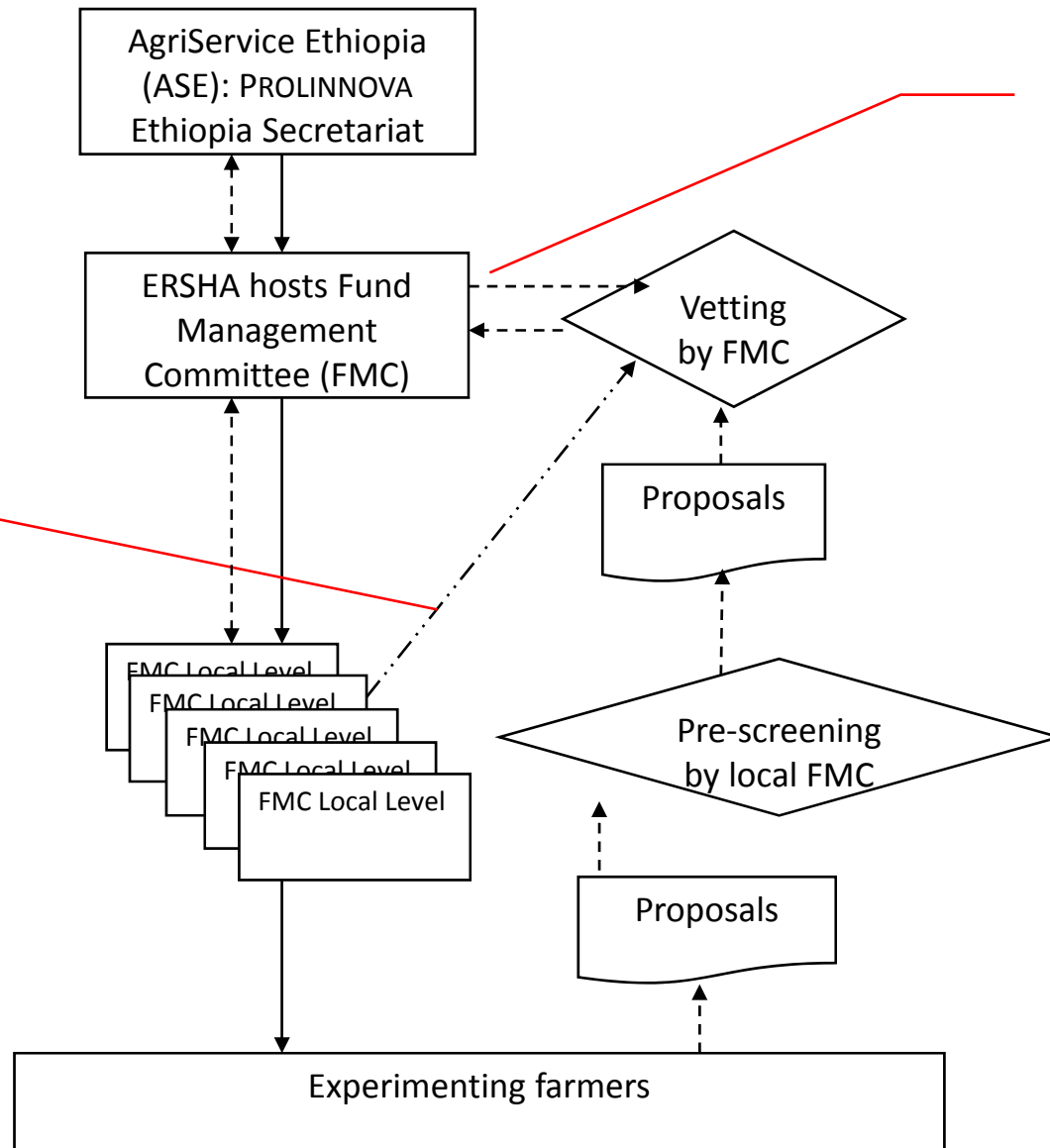
- Multistakeholder group coordinates implementation
- Developing guidelines and criteria for grant approval
- Setting up local Fund Management Committees
- Circulating open call for proposals by various means
- Farmers submit applications, with plan & budget for activity (e.g. experiment) related to local innovation
- Local screening committee selects grantees and provides resources in cash or kind
- LISF finances **experimentation and learning**, not farm investments
- Sharing outcome / results (reports, local meetings, farmer fairs etc)
- Participatory impact assessment with methodological support from CIRAD



# Example: Current mechanism in Ambo, Ethiopia



FMC that vets proposals consists of people from the 5 sub-districts



ERSHA (Ethiopia Rural Self-Help Association) LISF coordinator plays advisory role in vetting committee and in monitoring

# Number, size and types of LISF grants

Country	Period	Applications	% of applications approved	Range of size of award (US\$)
<i>Cambodia</i>	2005–09	193	69%	<10–105
<i>Ethiopia</i>	2005–09	109	43%	75–310
<i>Ghana</i>	2008–09	80	43%	n.a.
<i>Kenya</i>	2008–09	103	22%	n.a.
<i>Nepal</i>	2004–09	63	38%	50–730
<i>South Africa</i>	2005–09	65	23%	700–2300
<i>Tanzania</i>	2008–09	25	64%	n.a.
<i>Uganda</i>	2005–08	98	68%	25–120
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>736</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>10–2300</b>



# Diversity of LISF proposals: Ethiopia

- Small turbines for local power generation
- Improved water-lifting pumps
- Control of stalk borers, shoot flies and termites using blends of botanicals
- Control of bacterial wilt of *enset*
- Biological control of rats / rat traps
- Production & distribution of seedlings for threatened local tree species (*Podocarpus* sp.)
- Reproduction & management of bees (e.g. improved beehives using clay and manure; honey sieving, queen separation)
- Participatory barley breeding (inviting scientists to participate)



# Discussion: Why concepts matter

- *Understanding the **concept of LISF** takes time*
- Tendency to regard LISFs as “projects” rather than as an element of integrated approach
- Funds for buying inputs versus experimentation
- Farmer experimentation versus joint experimentation



## ***Initial results indicate:***

- strengthened farmer organisation focused on locally relevant research
- enhanced local innovation dynamics
- change in attitudes of innovation system actors directly involved

# Sustainability and scaling-up

- Structures and governance vary between countries – from largely controlled by PROLINNOVA national partners to full control by CBOs – move toward more farmer-led governance at local level
- Different approaches trying to find their own ways to develop longer-term sustainable system for farmers to access resources for innovation
- Challenges to mobilise funds from government and/or other in-country stakeholders
  - ***without losing the farmer-led character of the LISF mechanism***
- LISFs still being piloted; further time & effort needed to learn from pilots, to assess impact, to improve the LISF concept, to adapt it to local institutional settings and to scale it up



## Vision



**A world in which farmers  
play decisive roles in research and development for  
sustainable livelihoods**



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