



Farmer-managed funds for local innovation

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Why farmer-managed innovation funds?

- **Research & extension still mainly technology transfer**
- **Farmers are prime source of local knowledge & innovation in development**
- **Funding mechanisms for R&D are still largely in researchers' control**
- **We challenge how funding is channelled**
→ *to change the power balance*



PROLINNOVA exploring complementary R&D funding mechanisms

- so farmers can decide what will be researched, how and by whom
- to make R&D more accountable to & relevant for smallholders
- to develop, test and adapt models for farmer-governed R&D that can be scaled up



**Farmer innovators & extension workers
at technology fair in Ethiopia**

Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)

- **Piloted by PROLINNOVA partners in:**
Asia: Cambodia, Nepal
Africa: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania & Uganda
- **Main questions in the action learning:**



- *Can funds for experimentation & learning be efficiently channelled through smallholder farmers?*
- *Can this approach improve their livelihoods and their influence on mainstream R&D?*

Nepalese researchers learn
from farmer innovator

How does an LISF work?

- **Local Fund Management Committee (FMC) makes open call for proposals**
- **Farmers submit simple proposals**
- **FMC uses its criteria to select grantees and provide resources**
- **Farmers lead (joint) research**
- **Farmer researchers share results**
- **Participatory M&E and impact assessment**



Cambodian farmer explains her experiment

Main screening criteria similar across piloting countries

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



FMC screening applications
in South Africa

Grants made in 8 pilot countries over 4 years

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

Use of funds as decided by FMCs:

1. Farmers' own experimentation
2. Improving farmer innovations
3. Farmer-led experimentation with research & extension staff
4. Learning visits by farmers



Ethiopian woman compares her local “modern” beehive with introduced one

Participatory impact assessment

Involvement of different actors in LISF piloting helped to:

- **Strengthen farmer self-organisation around managing local R&D and own innovation funds**
- **Build smallholders' capacities to formulate own needs and access relevant information**
- **Increase smallholders' confidence to interact with “outsiders” in joint innovation**
- **Stimulate interest of development agents and scientists to support farmer-led experimentation**



Farmer explains his experiment to MoA staff

Findings and lessons learnt

- **Funds for locally relevant R&D can be handled locally**
- **LISF needs to be custom-designed depending on local capacities, degree of organisation & support services**
- **LISF works best when integrated into existing participatory programme that can give needed support**
- **Involvement in LISF can enhance role of smallholders in governance of publicly funded R&D**



Policy implications

Scaling up LISF requires an **enabling policy environment** to:

- **Allocate part of regular R&D funding** to supporting local innovation and channelling it through LISFs, where they exist
- **Develop locally specific forms of LISFs**, where they don't exist
- **Encourage research and extension staff to support farmer-led experimentation** by creating space for it in R&D programmes

Innovation fair celebrates farmer creativity and creates space for sharing



Vision



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

