

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)



FMC screening applications in South Africa

 Proposal for experimentation and learning, not farm investment

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

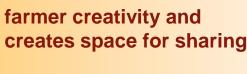


Policy implications

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









Vision



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





