



INNOVATIONS IN EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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**NAIROBI
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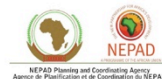


Farmer-managed innovation funds drive multi-stakeholder learning processes

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ORGANISED BY:



Why is a farmer-governed approach to agricultural research & development (ARD) needed?

- Research and extension still mainly technology transfer, although gradual increase in participatory approaches
- **Farmers: prime source of local knowledge and innovation in development**
- New funding mechanisms emerging for participatory ARD (competitive grants)
- BUT funding in researchers' control to involve farmers (1-way “participation”)
- Need to challenge how ARD funding is channelled → *change the power balance*



PROLINNOVA partners doing action research

to explore complementary ARD funding mechanisms:

- **so farmers can invest in their own research and decide on the support they need for it: farmer-led participatory ARD**
- **to make ARD more accountable to & relevant for smallholder farmers**
- **developing, testing and adapting models for farmer-governed ARD to be scaled up**



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

PROLINNOVA: PROMoting Local INNOVation in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM

**Network of diverse partners (state and non-state)
in 18 countries united in the conviction that:**



**Nepalese researchers learn
from farmer innovator**

- **Farmers are creative and generate relevant local innovations = locally new and better ways of doing things**
- **Advisory & research organisations should support farmer-led innovation processes in partnership with farmer organisations, NGOs, universities and private sector**

Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)

- **FAIR (Farmer Access to Innovation Resources)** with support from Netherlands & French Governments and Rockefeller Foundation
- Turns conventional ARD funding mechanisms upside-down: farmers control the funds and define what will be studied, how and by whom
- Piloted by PROLINNOVA partners in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda
- Main questions in the action research:
 - *Can funds for experimentation & learning be channeled through smallholders?*
 - *Can this approach improve their livelihoods and their influence on mainstream ARD?*

How does an LISF work?

- Multistakeholder team coordinates implementation of pilot
- Develops guidelines for grant management process
- Sets up & builds capacities of local Fund Management Committees (FMCs)
- Open call for proposals circulated
- Farmers submit simple proposals
- FMCs use their criteria to select grantees and provide resources
- Farmers lead (joint) research
- Farmer researchers share results
- Participatory M&E and impact assessment



Main screening criteria similar across piloting countries

- Idea driven by applicant(s)
- Innovation appears sound in economic, environmental & social terms
- Applicable by resource-poor
- LISF support can add value to proposed innovation
- Applicants willing to share results (public goods from public funds)
- Proposal is for *experimentation and learning*, not farm investment

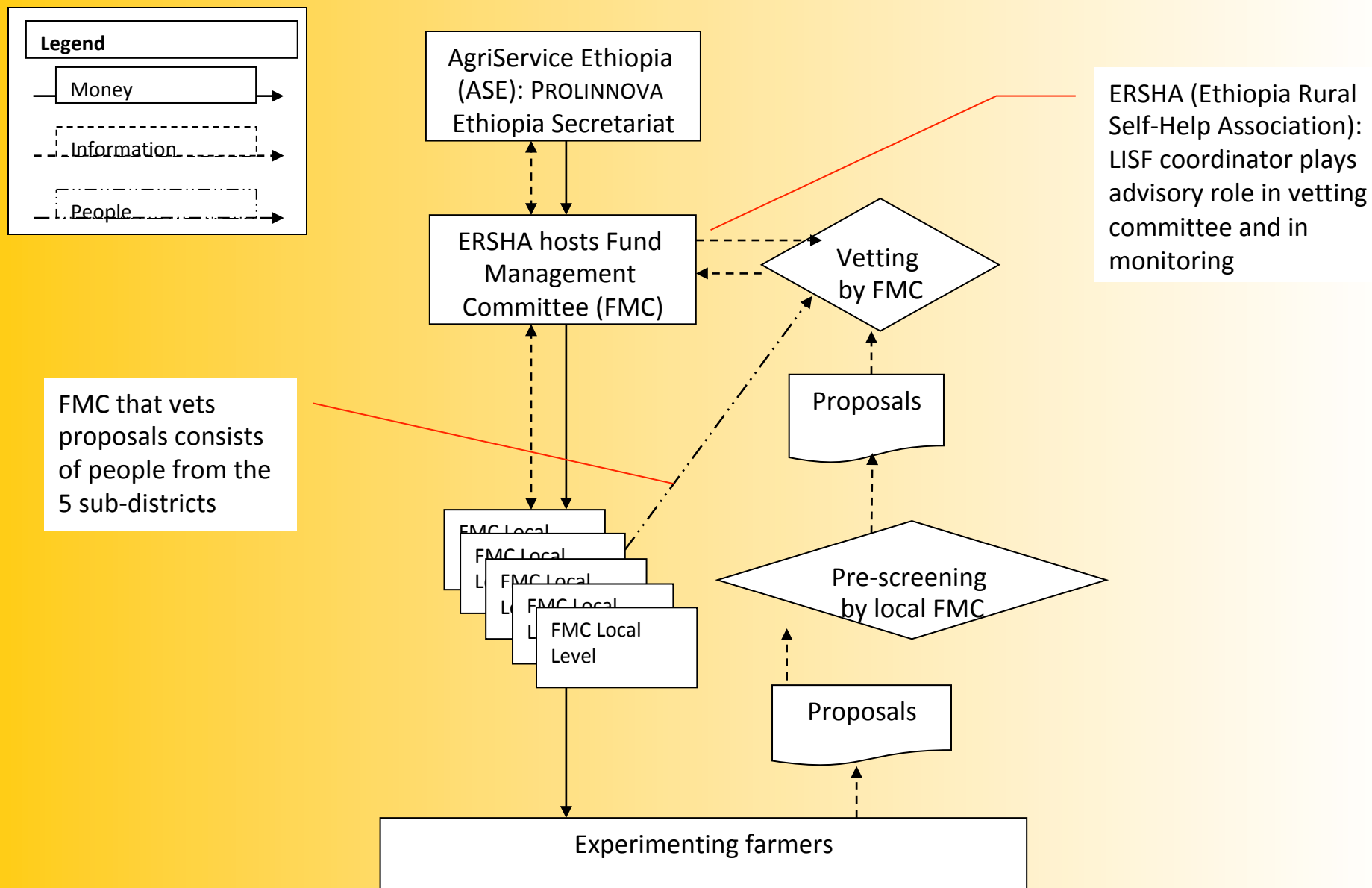


LISF committee screening applications in South Africa

Focus on M&E: multiple levels of learning

- **Community:** thru learning by doing / experimenting and local M&E by farmer groups and FMC
- **District:** thru training, supporting pilots, organising innovation fairs by advisory services, NGOs, local administration and nearby colleges / research centres
- **Province or country:** thru reflection workshops and joint impact assessment by members of multi-stakeholder PROLINNOVA platforms, strategising how to mainstream the approach
- **International:** thru international workshops and e-conferences with PROLINNOVA partners in piloting and nonpiloting countries, to draw lessons for policy influence and wider application

Example: Current mechanism in Ambo, Ethiopia



LISF grants made in 8 pilot countries 2005–10

Country	Applications received	Percentage approved	% female grantees	Grant size (USD)
Cambodia	193	69%	39%	10 – 100
Ethiopia	118	43%	14%	100 – 300
Ghana	265	64%	27%	30 – 300
Kenya	103	22%	>50%	50 – 250
Nepal	63	38%	30%	50 – 750
South Africa	72	35%	53%	700 – 2300
Tanzania	49	78%	Mixed groups	500 – 1000
Uganda	124	68%	Mixed groups	25 – 120

Use of funds as decided by FMCs

- Farmer-to-farmer visits to learn about local innovation
- Joint experimentation based on initiatives of individual or groups of farmers:
 - Costs related to experimentation: notebooks, measuring equipment
 - Protective clothing (dealing with biopesticides)
 - Documentation equipment and materials

Some topics of innovation/experimentation:

Soil fertility

Pest control

Marketing

Beehives

Tree regeneration

Social insurance

Water harvesting

Food processing

Livestock feeding

Medicinal plants

Bacterial wilt

Savings & credit



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

Results of impact assessment

Involvement of different actors in LISF pilots helped to:

- **Strengthen farmer self-organisation** around locally relevant research and development & increase capacities to handle own innovation and learning 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 recognise and support farmer-led innovation
- **Enhance community capacities** to decide whether to participate in external interventions



Farmer explains his experiment to MoA staff

Two main models to manage LISF

- 1) **More centralised multistakeholder committees (key partner organisations & farmer representatives):**
 - more mutual learning by farmers and support agencies
 - stricter screening according to agreed criteria
 - approval of larger grants
 - relatively high operational costs

- 2) **Decentralised farmer-managed committees:**
 - less involvement of other actors in farmers' research
 - funds not necessarily used for experimentation & learning while farmers still learning principles of LISFs
 - smaller grants (little for bringing in external experts)
 - lower operational costs

Challenges:



Ethiopian farmer used LISF grant to improve his water-lifting innovation

- New concept: takes time to understand
- Still relatively high support costs
- Difficult to involve scientists:
 - farmers initially want to experiment on own, using local advice
 - research institutes have own agenda & little room to support farmer initiatives
- but encouraging response from rural advisors exposed to LISFs
- Difficulty in generating in-country funding for LISFs:
 - trying partial repayment (loan)
 - but should be public funds for local learning

Lessons learnt

- Stakeholders need time to appreciate purpose of LISFs
- Farmers' experimentation can have positive impact without external expertise
- Well-facilitated joint innovation can have greater and wider positive impact
- Grant size should differ depending on context and purpose: location-specific vs wider applicability
- Farmers can more easily govern decentralised funding mechanisms
- LISF initiatives should be carefully targeted where experienced organisations can provide sufficient support



Outlook

- *Promising steps toward complementary funding mechanism that gives farmers direct access to funds for innovation according to their priorities*
- LISFs are enhancing the role of smallholders in governance of publicly funded research and development
- M&E by PROLINNOVA multistakeholder platforms in each country is generating evidence for institutional and policy change
- LISFs still being tested: need to learn more from pilots, adapt LISF concept to and embed it in local structures & procedures
- Need to work with FOs, advisory services & research to scale up LISF – *retaining its smallholder focus & farmer-led character*



Vision

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

