

Summary of the Prolinnova 2026 – 30 Strategy

The Prolinnova 2026 - 2030 strategy outlines a reinvigorated vision for strengthening farmer-led innovation as a catalyst for agroecological transformation, climate resilience, and equitable rural development. Developed through an inclusive foresight and consultation process across Africa and Asia, the strategy responds to major shifts in global food systems, funding landscapes, and governance norms. It repositions Participatory Innovation Development (PID) within a broader agroecological framework, emphasising systemic change, evidence generation, policy influence, and the sustainability of the network as a decentralised community of practice.

1. Rationale and Strategic Context.

Prolinnova's core conviction remains unchanged: the innovative capacity of small-scale farmers is the primary driver of sustainable agri-food systems. Small-scale farmers—crop producers, livestock owners, pastoralists, fisherfolk, forest users and local processors—are central to food security, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation. Small-scale farmers play a central role in producing most of the food consumed in the Global South. They also possess knowledge that formal science cannot replicate. Yet dominant agricultural research systems still prioritise external technologies over farmer-led experimentation.

Various changing landscapes influenced the development of this strategy.

- Agroecology has transitioned into a systems-oriented, transformational agenda that requires PID to be positioned as one component of this wider framework.
- Innovations must be rooted in broader efforts to address issues of climate change, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and inequality.
- Donors are prioritising support for climate resilience, system change, and public goods, even as available resources become scarce.
- Digital innovation is increasingly eroding farmers' autonomy. Some digital tools are externalising farmers' decision-making authority and increasing their dependence on external technologies, such as chemical use, at the expense of local solutions.
- Good governance emphasises decentralisation, accountability, and equity, requiring Prolinnova to demonstrate their embodiment in its partnerships and structures.

These conditions require a reframing of Prolinnova's approach, stronger evidence of impact, and more adaptive governance.

2. Achievements and Lessons from 2021–25

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Prolinnova partners adapted quickly, hosting a global virtual Farmer Innovation Fair (FIF) in 2021, followed by subsequent national and international FIFs. CPs identified and supported numerous farmer innovators—many of them women—whose innovations progressed through PID to improved practices and, in some cases, rural enterprises. Indeed, market development and commercialisation have elevated local innovations to the level of rural enterprises, creating opportunities for youth engagement.

The network has achieved major results in capacity building. Up to 150 practitioners from research institutes, universities, NGOs, and government agencies were trained in LI/PID.

Nevertheless, the network faces constraints: limited digital communication capacity, insufficient audio-visual materials, and a shrinking pool of senior PID trainers. Regionalisation advanced in Africa but remains weak in Asia due to limited resources.

The need for more compelling evidence of systemic impact, more robust governance and learning systems, and diverse funding streams was highlighted during this period.

3. Concepts, Values and Thematic Areas

The strategy reinforces Prolinnova's core concepts:

- Local innovation is the process by which communities develop new ways of doing things in response to changing conditions. *Local innovation frequently arises in response to new challenges or opportunities and often involves informal experimentation.*
- PID is farmer-led joint research involving farmers, development agents, scientists and private actors, as required. It includes both technological and socio-institutional innovations.
- Multistakeholder partnerships (MSPs) enable shared planning, resource mobilisation, and decision-making among farmers, researchers, advisors, policymakers, and entrepreneurs.

Prolinnova's core values—equity, commitment, transparency, sustainability and partnership—guide its work. Thematic priorities include agroecology, sustainable natural resources management, climate resilience, nutrition, urban agriculture, gender equity, youth innovation, and farmer participation in value chains and in social entrepreneurship.

4. Strategy's 2026 – 30 strategic directions:

The strategy is organised around six strategic directions:

4.1. *Promote LI/PID for agroecological transformation*

Strengthen LI/PID processes, deepen participation by women and youth, extend PID across value chains, and emphasise climate adaptation. Build capacity for PID facilitation, institutionalise LI/PID within partner organisations, and develop mechanisms to protect farmers' intellectual property.

4.2. *Promote and sustain Local Innovation Support Facilities (LISFs).*

Strengthen existing LISFs, establish new LISFs and revolving funds, establish linkages to Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), and explore community loan systems. Position LISFs as both drivers of innovation and long-term financial mechanisms to support community autonomy.

4.3. *Build and strengthen farmer innovator networks.*

Support networking, exchanges, FIFs, innovation hubs, mentorship, ICT use and collective action. Strengthen innovators' ability to influence research, extension and policy processes.

4.4. *Systematically track and document PID outcomes and impacts.*

This will involve developing proof-of-concept sites, strengthening M&E systems, applying participatory documentation methods, and packaging the results as evidence for policymakers, donors, and farmers—a repository of innovations and outcomes will be established.

4.5. *Upscale Prolinnova's influence in ARD practice and policy*

The LI/PID approach will be integrated into ARD practices and policy, solidarity among farmer innovators will be built, community leaders will be engaged, and bottom-up approaches will be advocated. Partnerships with agroecology networks and policy actors will be strengthened.

4.6. Ensure the growth and sustainability of Prolinnova as a CoP.

This involves strengthening partnerships, enhancing South-South exchange, improving governance, and attracting new members, especially youth. Sustainability will be supported by decentralised coordination, mentoring and transparent decision-making, and strengthened resource mobilisation.

5. Organisational structure and roles.

This is based on Prolinnova's decentralised model:

- Country Platforms (CPs) – these remain the core units, governed by National Steering Committees.
- Subregional platforms in East and Southern Africa (ESA) and West and Central Africa (WCA) will be strengthened; Asia will work toward formalisation of its platform.
- The International Support Team (IST) provides backstopping, fundraising support, capacity strengthening and knowledge management.
- The Northern Focal Point (Agrecol Association) maintains donor relationships and supports European partnerships.
- The Prolinnova Oversight Group (POG) ensures strategic integrity, approves guidelines and supports fundraising.
- Friends of Prolinnova provide mentoring, proposal review and strategic advice.

Roles and responsibilities are shared across levels, with increasing emphasis on Southern leadership.

6. Resource Mobilisation Strategy

The strategy recognises a structural vulnerability: Prolinnova is a community of practice without core funding. It depends on project grants, voluntary contributions and host organisations. To address this, the strategy sets out four pillars:

1. Maintain relationships with donors familiar with the LI/PID long-term view.
2. Engage philanthropic organisations and mission-aligned private-sector actors through a coordinated consortium approach.
3. Build financial capacity from within, especially through LISFs, VSLAs, social enterprises and local government co-financing.
4. Endeavour to access national-level budget allocation and finance by aligning our work with national priorities in agroecology and food systems.

The institution's legitimacy, generation of strong evidence, and strong financial management capacity defines success.

7. Conclusion

The strategy reinforces Prolinnova's guiding principle that farmers and their innovations are key to a sustainable food system. It recognises achievements from 2021–25 while addressing persistent challenges: limited evidence, a weak digital presence, constrained training capacity and fragile funding. The six strategic directions constitute an integrated agenda to strengthen farmer-led innovation, scale agroecological transitions, influence policy and ensure the network's sustainability. The strategy is a genuinely co-created roadmap, shaped by CPs, farmer innovators, Friends of Prolinnova and donors.