1. INTRODUCTION

This report covering the period April 2018–March 2019 highlights the main accomplishments of the subregional network ESAPP (Eastern & Southern Africa Prolinnova Platform). It gives details on the contribution of the ESAPP coordinator in terms of fundraising, improving governance, backstopping, organising workshops etc. A summary of this report will be included in the subregional report on Prolinnova activities in Eastern & Southern Africa, which focuses mainly on the work of the Country Platforms (CPs). This ESAPP coordination report can, however, be posted on the Prolinnova website as a stand-alone report.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS, KEY CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Preparing and implementing international workshop in Nairobi, Kenya

In close collaboration with the International Support Team (IST), the ESAPP coordinator took the lead in drafting a short proposal to raise funds from Misereor for the three-day Proli-FaNS (Promoting local innovation in Food and Nutrition Security) workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya, in May 2018 so that participants from African CPs not directly involved in the Proli-FaNS project could attend. This workshop was the first face-to-face regional meeting of the African CPs, although the main purpose was to review progress of the Proli-FaNS project.

The third day of the workshop was dedicated to discussing subregional issues. The ESAPP coordinator contributed to a specific concept note (CN) to justify why this special event was needed. The CN, including the workshop programme, was approved by the Prolinnova Oversight Group (POG). The ESAPP coordinator was involved in selecting participants from the African CPs to be invited to the workshop on the funds from Misereor. Six CPs were chosen from the two subregions; from Eastern & Southern Africa (ESA), people from South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda were given the chance to attend. The ESAPP coordinator also prepared two PowerPoint (PPT) presentations to share the annual ESAPP report and the draft charter of the subregional network, which he had drawn up.

In Nairobi, the ESAPP coordinator also attended the POG meeting as an observer. He gave some explanations on critical management issues that concern the subregional network, and reviewed decisions from the past year together with the POG.
2.2 Drafting a subregional charter

A major activity in the reporting year was the preparation of a draft charter for ESAPP. The charter includes rationale, name, membership, governance, fundraising and conflict management. During the Nairobi workshop in May, the ESAPP members reviewed the draft charter in detail. The ESAPP coordinator improved it after the workshop. A major comment had been the need to standardise the charter by taking into account the draft prepared by the subregional coordinator (SRC) of the West & Central Africa Prolinnova Platform (WeCAPP). During a visit to Ethiopia, the WeCAPP coordinator met with the ESAPP coordinator for a full day in order to standardise the two charters. The ESAPP charter is now ready for implementation.

In this reporting year, the ESAPP coordinator submitted his resignation to ACDEP and the POG as of 31 March 2019 because of his engagement in various other projects and his inability to give enough time to support the Prolinnova CPs. He is now finalising some of the pending activities, even after the resignation date. Producing the annual report on ESAPP activities in 2018 is on the list of these activities. He informed the CPs about his intention to resign and requested that they send their annual reports based on the agreed format. The CP reports were collected and the annual ESAPP report is now being prepared in collaboration with the new ESAPP coordinator, Brigid Letty.

2.3 Coordination of reporting

The two SRCs jointly developed a short reporting format to help the CPs prepare short and informative annual reports. Only some CPs sent their 2017 reports on time. Because of the delay in receiving the CP reports, writing the annual ESAPP report for 2017 was also delayed. Finally, the subregional report could be compiled and shared with the CPs for comments and further inputs. The report was then edited with the support of Ann Waters-Bayer of the IST and the final version was uploaded on the Prolinnova website. The ESAPP coordinator also prepared and shared a report on his activities as SRC during the year. In addition, he submitted quarterly financial and technical reports to ACDEP as the organisation coordinating Proli-FaNS.

2.4 Addressing governance issues

The ESAPP coordinator commented on two guidelines for the network, one on preparing proposals and concept notes and one on publication of articles. He circulated the two guidelines to all the CPs in ESAPP and received comments from some of them. He submitted the comments to the IST, which facilitated the process of preparing the guidelines. The approved guidelines were shared with all.

Major efforts were made to help improve the governance of Prolinnova–Ethiopia (PE). The Proli-FaNS coordinator and IST members had reported that PE was repeatedly seriously delayed in sending narrative and financial reports to ACDEP. The quality of the reports and the work of PE in general, particularly in terms of achieving the planned targets on time, were of great concern. The delay in reporting from PE was affecting the other CPs in the Proli-FaNS project, because the next tranche of funding could not be transferred until all CPs had submitted their reports on the previous period. In order to address this issue, the ESAPP coordinator held several meetings with the PE coordinator and with members of the PE Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and the National Steering Committee (NSC). Agreement was reached that the PE coordinator would resign and a new coordinator with sufficient time and capacity to deliver results in the remaining period of the project would be recruited. The ESAPP coordinator assisted the NSC members to find appropriate candidates through headhunting. However, none of the candidates approached could agree to take the position, because the salary and benefits that Prolinnova could offer were below their expectations. Finally, the NSC members decided to find a junior staff member with good potential to learn and grow quickly. Accordingly, Ms Beza Kifle was recruited as PE coordinator in May 2017.

In October 2018, the ESAPP coordinator met with Chris Macoloo, African co-chair of the POG, to discuss the future of PE, when Chris was in Addis Ababa on another mission. He mentioned that the POG was concerned about the seeming lack of engagement of the NSC of PE and needed more
information to be able to decide whether PE should be included in a proposal for a follow-on project to Prolin-FaNS. The ESAPP coordinator reported to Chris that the NSC is not as active as it should be for several reasons. Many members are representing individual interests. It is important to have institutional representation so as to help PE influence policies and practices but also so that someone else from the institution could replace the main representative in case s/he cannot make it to a meeting. This is likely to strengthen the NSC. The ESAPP coordinator explained that, in collaboration with some of the members of the TAG, he is working to invite more institutions to join the PE NSC. Except for this major limitation with respect to the NSC, the work of PE is improving and the PE coordinator is now gaining momentum. Finally, the ESAPP coordinator suggested that any attempt to leave PE out of the follow-on project might have a risk of losing PE from the entire Prolinova network. This is because it would be difficult to get resources in the short run for PE so as to keep the CP functional.

The major governance issue faced during the first quarter of 2019 was the removal of PE from the proposal for the follow-on project. This is a serious matter for ESAPP. The POG took this decision based on ACDEP’s reports on the repeated delays in financial and activity reporting from PE. This had a negative effect on the continuity of financial flow from the donor’s side. A Skype meeting was held in late January to discuss this issue, and the ESAPP coordinator took part in this. It was obvious that the management problem of PE, especially the unresponsiveness of the former PE coordinator, who still had tremendous power even after resigning as a coordinator, was a major issue. It was discovered that the reason why he continued to manage the network as a director of the host organisation was because the government agency that manages NGOs in Ethiopia was not giving service for some time because it was changing its procedures and regulations. It was therefore not possible to get the name of the new director for Best Practice Association (BPA, the host organisation of PE) registered by the agency, and the former director had to continue managing the organisation until his replacement could be made official. The problem has continued to this date, although the NSC members and the ESAPP coordinator tried their best to improve the situation.

The NSC members and the ESAPP coordinator agreed that the problem created by the former coordinator was harmful to the network, but also felt it that the POG overreacted to “solve” this problem. The important question here is: could this decision of the POG really solve the problem? During the Skype meeting, the ESAPP coordinator expressed his views that the problems created by the former PE coordinator in delaying financial and activity reports and in the bad quality of the reports he was delivering were obviously not acceptable at all, and this situation needed to be corrected with care and diligent. Removing PE from the follow-on project to Prolin-FaNS would have rather a serious consequence on the CP. This could even lead to the disintegration of PE, because keeping the network alive without an externally financed project is not easy.

Atalay Yigram, the manager of the Alem Berhan community-based institution and the coordinator of the action-learning site in Enebse Sar Mider, sent a written complaint to the POG and to the ESAPP coordinator. The central issue of the complaint revolved around the management of finances in PE, whereby he accused the former PE coordinator of acting against the norm. The ESAPP coordinator and the NSC members took some time to figure out what the problem was. The complaint from the side of BPA was that Alem Berhan did not submit complete financial documents for the money transferred previously and was therefore not willing to send new money to Alem Berhan. Both sides had some elements of truth and it was necessary to find a win–win situation in order to ensure the continuity of the project. Therefore, BPA was advised to release the funds to Alem Berhan, which had been held for some time because of the misunderstandings between the two parties.

The ESAPP coordinator also involved in the election of the ESAPP taskforce leader, which was facilitated by Chris Macoloo as representative from ESA in the POG. Brigid Letty from South Africa was selected to lead the taskforce.
2.5 Visit of WeCAPP coordinator

The WeCAPP coordinator, Georges Djophy, visited Ethiopia in November 2018 in the framework of his postdoctoral work and grasped the opportunity to meet with the ESAPP coordinator in order to discuss partnership between ESAPP and WeCAPP as well as to develop a roadmap toward setting up a regional Prolinnova platform (Prolinnova–Africa). After extensive discussion, the two SRCs agreed that thinking about setting up Prolinnova–Africa is a bit premature at this stage, mainly because the subregional platforms are not sufficiently able to stand on their own feet to promote subregional interests. The SRCs decided that it would be necessary to put more efforts into raising funds for realising Prolinnova activities in the CPs, and success in this regard would lead eventually to the formation of a regional network.

The two SRCs made a joint field visit to Axum, one of the action-learning sites in Ethiopia for the Prol-FaNS project. The main aim to follow up on the Participatory Innovation Development (PID) cases expected to take place in Axum, but experience sharing between the two SRCs was also an important objective. Originally, it had been planned to visit the second action-learning site (Enebse Sar Mider), to which the CP had not been giving as much attention. However, because of security threats, the travel plans were changed to Axum. The farmers in Axum are doing interesting work in terms of sharing their innovations with the wider community and commercialising their innovations. Farmers reported that botanical pesticides for crop protection, using local botanicals to make organic fertiliser and selling earthworms for preparing vermicompost have been receiving a good market among community members. The expected PID cases were moving only slowly, mainly because the experts from the research centre and university were not supporting the farmers, despite having expressed interest in doing so on several occasions. Currently, the PID work is going on only with staff of the Bureau of Agriculture and with the recommendations given by the TAG. All are hoping that the situation will improve.

2.6 Fundraising

The ESAPP coordinator completed the project proposal on livestock-related PID for submission to the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) through the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). He finalised the proposal according to the GIZ format and asked ILRI to submit it by the deadline. He hoped this would be the first opportunity for ESAPP to win funds after the start of the Prolinnova regionalisation process. Unfortunately, the ILRI management team in Addis Ababa and Nairobi did not communicate well on this matter. It was realised that two different project proposals had been submitted to GIZ, but GIZ does not allow an international research centre to submit more than one proposal in response to its call. ILRI therefore had to withdraw one of the proposals. ILRI Headquarters decided to drop the one submitted by ILRI–Ethiopia. ESAPP and ILRI–Ethiopia are now planning to repackage this proposal and submit to other donors who would have particular interest in livestock and participatory research.

In collaboration with and under the leadership of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), a concept note on local innovation and PID was submitted to the European Commission (EC) in response to the DeSIRA (Development-Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture) call. Unfortunately, because ILRI was delayed in sending confirmation of its partnership in the proposed project, the EC coordinator for Ethiopia responded that the project would be considered in the next round (but no one knows when the next round will be).

Follow-up was made on a project idea about agribusiness innovation submitted earlier to FAO and the World Bank, but it was not possible to get a “yes” or “no” response. The FAO does not seem to have funds available but wants to use the concept for making applications to other donors, as they have similar proposals in the pipeline. The World Bank Group seems to be indecisive, although they have great interest in the concept of agribusiness innovation. This requires further follow-up by the ESAPP coordinator.
Another important activity of the ESAPP coordinator consisted of searching for funding opportunities and communicating with CPs to collaborate in preparing concept notes. The IST members and other people in Prolinnova circulated information about funding opportunities but, in most cases, the calls did not coincide with the experiences of Prolinnova. For example, a call for concept notes on nutrition attracted interest of ESAPP, but the donors were seeking technological or methodological approaches in nutrition that could be scaled up. There were not enough relevant cases in Prolinnova to help frame the concept note; therefore, after thorough investigation of the details of the call, it was decided not to prepare a concept note.

Prolinnova–Tanzania also submitted several proposals to donors, but thus far with no success.

Finally, the ESAPP coordinator contributed in preparing a short funding proposal for submission to Misereor to help some additional members of the subregional network to participate in the International Partners Workshop (IPW) in May 2019 in Senegal.

2.7 Backstopping support

The ESAPP coordinator assisted PE by working closely with the new PE coordinator, who needed additional support so that she could develop full control of the project. Accordingly, some improvements have been noted in terms of documentation of local innovations in the two action-learning sites and starting up PID activities. Backstopping support was also provided to the action-learning site in Enebse Sar Mider through telephone and email because the project activities at this site were somewhat behind schedule. The support helped them improve their documentation of local innovations and initiate some PID activities, although these are at risk because university and research people have not been able to join the farmers and the community-based organisation Alem Berhan, although they had originally expressed interest in doing so.

The hiring of the new PE coordinator overlapped with the organisation of the Proli-FaNS and African regional meetings in Nairobi, where the new coordinator was expected to make a presentation. Therefore, the ESAPP coordinator provided orientation to her on the vision, history and strategy of Prolinnova in general but also a particular briefing on the Proli-FaNS project, tasks accomplished so far, remaining actions, and especially the most urgent actions to pay attention to.

Furthermore, the following backstopping support was provided to PE when it was organising a policy-dialogue workshop in Addis Ababa in February 2019:

- Assistance in preparing a concept note for the policy-dialogue workshop and in identifying key participants. Extra effort was made to visit the Ministry of Technology and Innovation to discuss Prolinnova and the planned workshop with the relevant people there. The PE coordinator was advised to invite farmers from the two learning sites to attend the policy-dialogue workshop.

- Facilitation of the workshop, especially the sessions on improving governance and way forward. A key issue discussed was the inclusion of major government institutions as part of the NSC. Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Technology and Innovation have shown interest. It was agreed that their participation should be institutional rather than individual. Therefore, PE agreed to send official letters to the Ministries to bring them on board.

- Responding to a call immediately after the workshop from high officials in the Ministry of Technology and Innovation, who expressed interest to work together, especially in the area of farmer innovation awards and introducing the idea of farmer innovation to institutions of higher learning. It was agreed that the Ministry would hold a meeting to operationalise these areas of cooperation. Subsequently, the PE coordinator reported that the Ministry is interested to invest some funds to help develop some of the farmer innovations.

- Lobbying the new director of the Institute of Sustainable Development (ISD) to serve as host of PE. The former director, who recently passed away, had been an active member of the PE NSC. As a result, ISD has incorporated much of the philosophy and practices of Prolinnova. The ESAPP coordinator had a brief meeting with the new ISD director during the policy-dialogue workshop.
The director is interested to continue serving as an NSC member but said he would have to consult his colleagues about hosting PE. Follow-up is therefore important to find out the decision of ISD in terms of hosting PE.

### 2.8 Documentation

After long efforts, the draft of the ESAPP brochure has been completed. The main reason for the delay was that the CPs were not able to send good-quality photos and descriptions. It was also for this reason that the original plan of preparing an innovation catalogue was changed to preparing a brochure. The draft has been shared with the CPs in the subregion for comments and the final version is expected to be released soon.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Some good work has been done on developing the subregional charter for ESAPP, supporting PE, trying to raise funds from new donors and assisting the IST to raise some funds to allow the participation of non-Proli-FaNS CPs in important Prolinnova meetings. However, it did not prove possible to raise funds for the CPs and ESAPP, and to improve the engagement of the CPs as had been expected. The SRCs of ESAPP and WeCAPP have made a good decision that the formation of Prolinnova–Africa is not timely; instead, more attention needs to be paid to strengthening the subregional platforms. Attempts have been made to address important governance issue during the reporting period, with the issue in Ethiopia being the major one.

On a personal note: This is my final report before I leave office on 31 March 2019. There are several pending issues to which the next ESAPP coordinator should pay attention. Although I am leaving the position of SRC in the Proli-FaNS project, I am still interested to remain part of the Prolinnova family. I will therefore provide a helping hand whenever needed. The tasks that deserve attention during the coming four months until the end of the Proli-FaNS project are detailed in the planning document I provided to ACDEP. However, the most urgent task for the POG is to reconsider the unjust decision it has made concerning PE. At the moment, many of the NSC members are disappointed by the POG’s decision (as am I) and this may also pose a serious risk to the continued existence of the network in Ethiopia. We all did not see the value of partnership, fraternity and solidarity in the issue of PE; rather, the decision sounds like a “regular court decision” which does not want to pay attention to other factors except focusing on the wrong deeds.