Proli-FaNS Year 3 Quarter 4 progress report
May–July 2019

Farmer innovators celebrating cultural biodiversity in Konta and conducting meeting in ESM action-learning site (Photos by Beza Kifle and Aschalew Abye)

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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Introduction

In the fourth quarter of the Proli-FaNS project covering the period May–July 2019, the project activities were not implemented based on the timeframe because of the late release of funds from Misereor. The last month, July, started without transfer of funds. This had a great effect on the implementation of the project.

Basic activities carried out in the fourth quarter of Year 3

The Prolinnova–Ethiopia (PE) coordinator attended the annual Proli-FaNS partners meeting, which was organised by Agricolo–Afrique in the Sahel Vert Training Centre for four days (13–17 May) together with the International Partners Workshop.

Planning for focus group discussions (FGDs) in both action-learning sites was done during the review meeting of the National Steering Committee (NSC) on 15 June. Beza Kifle (PE coordinator) and Taffese Mesfin were assigned to conduct the FGDs in the Enebe Sar Mider (ESM) site, and Yohannes GebreMichael and Hailu Araya were assigned to conduct the FGDs in the Axum site, in each case together with the project partners at the site. FGD guidelines developed by the Prolinnova Subregional Coordinator (SRC) were to be followed.

Farmer innovators from both learning sites attended the 9th celebration of cultural biodiversity in Konta in southern Ethiopia from July 14-20, 2019. The aim of the programme is to promote the culture of different regions in the country. The participants were mostly high school students from different regions, preparatory and university students and invited guests, farmers, the organisers and the people from Konta.

The celebration includes an exhibition. In this case, the students exhibited their different cultural foods, clothes, drinks, materials and cultural dances. Our farmers presented their innovations, i.e. potato bread, beetroot juice, dried cabbage, fuel made from weeds, local soap made from botanicals, biopesticide, biofertiliser, traditional foods, vermicompost and its products.
**Farmer-led research**

FGDs were conducted in both learning sites. In Axum, the FGDs were conducted by Yohannes together with the site coordinator Hailu Debalke and the innovator farmers (3 men, 2 women) on 25–27 June. Four participatory innovation development (PID) cases were discussed with respect to their added values and the status of the innovations. The findings are summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PID type</th>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Added values</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food preservation</td>
<td>Tomato preservation in powder form and consumed as marmalade</td>
<td>-Farmer innovators -Agriculture office -Agriculture research office -Axum University -Best Practice Association (BPA)</td>
<td>-Connecting to the market chain as group -Adjust production with demand -Preparation of tomato juice</td>
<td>-Widespread among the women as preservation and nutrition support -Tomato group established (60 female+2 men) -Sell tomatoes in group -In process of establishing regular market centre in the urban (Wukro Maray)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition/income</td>
<td>Chicken feed -Range of feed options for high-quality egg and meat</td>
<td>-Farmer innovators -Agriculture office -Agriculture research office -Axum University -BPA</td>
<td>-Free range benefits -Combination of feeds -Frequency of feeding</td>
<td>-Feeding packages varies from household to household, however, red maize is found to be crosscutting and nutritious for food -Egg demand and price is increasing over time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crop protection</td>
<td>Control fall armyworm with botanical pesticide made of more than 45 different plants</td>
<td>-Farmer innovators -Agriculture office -Agriculture research office -Axum University -BPA</td>
<td>-Farmer innovators are doing it with different combinations at household level Researchers are testing it in laboratories to minimise the number of plants used</td>
<td>-The farmer innovator is changing it to a business -Farmers are using a wider range of IPM with livestock urine and neem as crosscutting ingredients in the combination against different pests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy saving</td>
<td>Flexibility of cooking pot, with 2, 3 and 4 partitions in a single pot</td>
<td>-Farmer innovators -Agriculture office -Agriculture research office -Axum University -BPA</td>
<td>-Market linkages -Demonstrations -Adjustments to the overall thickness</td>
<td>-Almost all innovators are shifting from iron to clay pots; increasing demand from urban and peri-urban households making special orders for the clay pots -Yet as business not profitable and many are quitting because of constraints regarding material, labour and fuelwood</td>
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In the discussion, the participants assessed the Proli-FaNS project as very successful in improving land productivity and production, enhancing resilience to shock and improving food, nutrition and livelihood security among the poor and landless. Moreover, it empowers farmers to experiment and innovate to solve their problems. The farmer innovators have complex and diverse salient features that demand some common denominators by the partners to develop solid and sustainable joint experimentation. In other words, the research and learning institutions need to understand the context of the farmer innovator as a package of
competence prior to focusing on the specific technology. One of the fundamental bottlenecks to the institutionalisation of PID in the agricultural research institution and university is the conceptual gap on innovators, innovation, PID and appropriate technology in the framework of sustainability. Moreover, strategic linkages with the relevant departments and developing partnership on the process of joint project proposal writing are considered as entry points to ownership, team spirit and institutionalisation. Despite the promising rising success with local innovation and joint experimentation with different stakeholders, the strategic involvement of Development Agents as ambassadors of the rural community in the process of documentation and integration to the Farmers Training Centre (FTC) was minimal.

In the ESM learning site, the FGDs were conducted in the period 8–11 July by inviting two representatives from each Farmer Field School at kebele (ward) level. The participants were six male farmers and Ms Beza Kifle (PE coordinator), Aschalew Abye (Rural Development and Health Extension Officer) and Ms Lidet Solomon (Project Officer). Each group had two farmers and one facilitator and used the FGD guide to discuss on each point. After the FGDs, a general discussion was held about the points raised during the FGD and farmers pointed to the way forward. According to the information collected from the FGDs, Proli-FaNS project implementation had a great impact in ESM: the farmers are improving their diet and their food and nutrition security. After the start of this project, especially women are highly motivated to grow vegetables in their gardens and to feed their families by cooking more than dish per meal, especially in the summertime. The women also practise different postharvest handling technologies to increase the shelf life of the vegetables. The focus of the project on local innovation and PID helped the farmers improve their lives by practising their innovation and, during the PID meetings, the farmers could communicate with different relevant organisations and get technical support. This helped them improve their innovations and exercise more innovation. The project helps the women feed their families nutritious food by planting different vegetables in their gardens. Being involved in this project helps the farmers cope better during the time of the year when access to food is normally low in the area.

**Documentation**

In the fourth quarter of the project, PE had planned to publish and disseminate the selected local innovations and PID cases. The selected local innovations were 20 from each learning site, so a total of 40 local innovation, but these innovation were studied again to check whether they are directly related to food and nutrition security and to check also the newness of the local innovations. Based on these criteria, the local innovations from the ESM learning site were reduced to 12.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Based on the action plan developed in the Proli-FaNS annual meeting in Senegal in May, one of the activities for monitoring and evaluation was conducting the FGDs. This has been described above.
Project coordination and management

On 15 June, a 4-hour review meeting was held in the Panorama Hotel in Addis Ababa. It included members of the NSC and Technical Advisory Group as well as the site coordinators and representative farmers from each of the two learning sites.

Persons present:
Taffese Mesfin  Hailu Legesse
Tesfahun Fenta  Abadi Redahegn
Elias Zerfu  Melese Yeshambel
Yohannes GebreMichael  Wondale Shiferaw
Hailu Araya  Ms Beza Kifle
Ms Lidet Solomon

Persons excused:
Tezera Getahun
Ms Sara Assefa
Amanuel Assefa

Agenda points
- Introduction and opening of the meeting
- Status of the project in the learning sites
- General presentation on the project

Discussion on:
- Evaluation of the project
- Challenges
- Future directions to support farmers
- Way forward

Introduction and opening of the meeting

The meeting started with an opening speech by Taffese Mesfin, the chairperson of the NSC. This was followed by the introduction of participants.

Status of the project in the learning sites

The site coordinators presented status of the project in each learning site (Axum and ESM). In Axum, the farmers are working on different innovations, for example, biopesticide, biofertiliser and postharvest technology. These farmers are practising their innovations on a small scale and are selling their products to their community. Especially the innovation of the
farmer Gebreyesus is very important at this time. He is now preparing 30 litres of biopesticide because this is the sowing time and the farmers need this product.

In ESM, the farmers are working on their innovations in three Farmer Field Schools (FFSs) at kebele level, and there are a total of 56 members, including 17 women. Each FFS has a formal meeting day twice in a month. During their meeting, they list all the problems that appeared in the period and they try to investigate in an experiment. Most of their experiments are on crop protection, making diesel from mete arem, making a local beverage from beetroot and beekeeping for honey production.

**General presentation on the project**

The general status of the project was presented by the PE coordinator, Beza Kifle. Her presentation covered basic activities implemented during the project timeframe, challenges and the expected activities in the fourth quarter.

The basic activities conducted in the project cycle period in general are:

- Capacity building trainings on food and nutrition security
- Workshop on PID for both learning sites
- Experience sharing and learning events
- Material supply
- Documentation of local innovation
- PID
- Establishment of FFSs.

Among the challenges faced so far, especially the involvement of formal researchers is a very difficult issue: most of them expect to receive an incentive after the meeting. This is difficult with the project’s fixed budget. The other big challenge is the exclusion of Ethiopia from the next phase of the Proli-FaNS project.

**Discussion points**

After the tea break, the following points were discussed: evaluation of the project, challenges and the future direction to support the farmers. The PE coordinator reported on the status of the project in terms of achieving the project objectives. The number of local innovations in terms of quantity is achieving the project objectives, but the direct relationship of the local innovations to food and nutrition security and the newness of the local innovations were reviewed. Then, from the 20 local innovations documented at the ESM learning site, the number of relevant innovations was reduced to 12. The documentation of local innovations in Axum will also be reviewed.

The participants agreed to hold FGDs at the sites, and the dates were decided as shown in the table below. In the field visit, two activities would be done together: the NSC visit to the learning site and the FGDs for assessing impact.
The preparation of the innovation catalogue was to be finalised by 30 June and then it was to given for editing and distributed by the end of July. In communication with the Ministry of Technology and Innovation, we submitted four proposals and these are in process, but the participants suggested to seek a closer linkage with the Ministry by having a meeting to present Prolinnova, as this will help us to have more chance to work with them.

When discussing how to find funds from other sources, the role of the SRC was raised. Amanuel, before resigning his job, had submitted two proposals – one to ILRI and one to FAO – but they have not been accepted. During the annual meeting, the Prolinnova Oversight Group (POG) stated that PE would not be part of the next phase, but the POG appreciates our contact with the Ministry of Technology and Innovation. We are not going to be donor dependent in the future. The farmers themselves need to have some saving system in their locality to support their work and need to ask for additional money to facilitate the work. The farmers have to run the activities on their own.

The meeting was successful in that the planned agenda points were discussed, the site coordinators presented the situation in the learning sites and the farmers also gave their opinions and suggestions, which were very interesting. The participants also discussed division of tasks to accomplish the activities. To support the farmers in the future, four proposals were submitted to the Ministry of Technology and Innovation, and the participants agreed to offer a presentation for the Ministry about the general Prolinnova principles to make our work clear to them.

**Challenges faced and lessons learned**

In the fourth quarter of the project, the main challenge was the late release of funds, which were disbursed on 19 July for the two months (May and June). Therefore, the project activities were not implemented based on the planned timeframe. The exclusion of PE from the next phase of the project was another big challenge. We submitted four proposals to the Ministry of Technology and Innovation and we are awaiting their response.

**Conclusion**

In the last quarter of Year 3, PE had planned to implement some project activities but, because of the late release of funds, the activities are put on pause. The same thing happened in the first quarter of Year 3: the funds for August–October 2018 were transferred to the project’s account on 6 October 2018, which meant that, during two months in that quarter (August and September), we had no funds for activities. Therefore, in Year 3, for a total of

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tafesse and Beza</td>
<td>ESM</td>
<td>25–27 June 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yohannes and Hailu</td>
<td>Axum</td>
<td>21–23 June 2019</td>
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</table>
four months, PE could not be active because of a lack of funds. This affected the overall implementation of project activities based on the timeframe.

From the information collected during the FGDs in the two action-learning sites, the project’s activities related to local innovation and PID helped the farmers improve their lives by practising their innovation and, during PID meetings, the farmers are communicating with different relevant organisations and getting technical support, which makes the farmers improve their innovations and develop more innovations. The project helps the women to feed their families nutritious food by planting different vegetables in their gardens. Being involved in this project helps the farmers to cope better during the time of the year when access to food is normally low in the area.