Promoting local innovation in Food and Nutrition Security (Proli-FaNS)


Compiled by Beza Kifle, Prolinnova–Ethiopia coordinator

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

September 2019
1.0 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE REPORT WAS PREPARED

This report was prepared by the Prolinnova–Ethiopia (PE) coordinator Ms Beza Kifle. The sources of information used to prepare it were the annual reports and photos from the PE picture gallery and other relevant documents that were made within the project timeframe (August 2016–July 2019).

2.0 CHANGES IN THE PROJECT CONTEXT DURING THE 3-YEAR REPORTING PERIOD

In June 2019, the Amhara Regional State Minister was murdered, as were some other government people working at federal level. The resulting political instability led to restrictions in movement in Amhara State, where the Enebse Sar Mider (ESM) action-learning site of the Proli-FaNS project lies. A scheduled field visit to ESM to conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) to assess project impact therefore had to be postponed.

2.1 Changes in project staff

In Year 2, Hailu Araya resigned as coordinator of PE and of the Proli-FaNS project in Ethiopia. He also resigned as director of Best Practice Association (BPA), the organisation that hosts PE. He was replaced by the new BPA Acting Director, Yosef Garedew, and the new PE coordinator, Ms Beza Kifle, who joined BPA in the fourth quarter of Year 2 of the Proli-FaNS project to coordinate the work in Ethiopia. Hailu is still committed to assisting the initiative voluntarily.

In the third year of the project, the site coordinator at the ESM action-learning site resigned and the new manager of the civil society organisation (CSO) Alem Birhan Self-Help Community-Based Development Association (known as Alem Birhan), Tesfaye Mitiku, replaced him. Alem Berhan coordinates the Proli-FaNS work in ESM.

2.2 Internal and external stakeholders and actors

Team of PE involved in the Proli-FaNS project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Full name</th>
<th>Duties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hailu Araya</td>
<td>Previous PE coordinator and BPA director</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Tafesse Mesfin</td>
<td>Chairman of National Steering Committee (NSC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tesfahun Fenta</td>
<td>Member of NSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Elias Zerfu</td>
<td>Member of NSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sarah Assefa</td>
<td>Member of NSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tezera Getahun</td>
<td>Member of NSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Amanuel Assefa</td>
<td>Subregional coordinator (SRC) for Eastern &amp; Southern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Beza Kifle</td>
<td>PE coordinator</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Hailu Legesse</td>
<td>Action-learning site coordinator (Axum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Atalay Yigrem</td>
<td>Former action-learning site coordinator (ESM) and General Manager of Alem Birhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tesfaye Mitiku</td>
<td>Current action-learning site coordinator (ESM) and new General Manager of Alem Birhan</td>
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Other actors involved in the project came from Aksum and Bahirdar Universities, District Agriculture Offices (DAOs), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in addition to the host NGO/CSO. They took part in various
activities such as workshops, training sessions and participatory innovation development (PID) processes. This helped the farmers improve their innovations to achieve better food and nutrition security for themselves and their families. These actors also contributed to the project by giving professional advice and suggestions. Aksum University is conducting an experiment on an innovation by the farmer Gebreyesus Tesfaye to reduce the number of botanicals used for preparing his biofertiliser.

3.0 ACTIVITIES ACHIEVED AND GENERATION OF OUTPUTS

Objective 1: Rural communities develop their innovative capacities to effectively improve food security, nutrition security and nutritional diversity.

PE is carrying out various activities to increase the capacity of farmers to improve their innovations and to secure food and nutrition security for themselves and their family. A field visit involving 25 persons (including 3 women) was made in 2017 to see how a farmer innovated by planting gesho on terraced land; this was organised in Hulet Eju Enebse District upon a recommendation made by the site coordinator during the PID training conducted in Axum. The exchange visit was designed to inform farmers and other stakeholders about farmer innovation that leads to improved livelihoods in the entire community.

As a capacity-building activity to achieve this project objective, the ESM site coordinator, Atalay Yigrem, gave training on PID and food and nutrition security on 17–19 June 2018. The participants were: Farmer Field School (FFS) members from three wards (kebeles) – three members from each FFS making a total of nine (including 3 women); 30 innovative farmers from 15 rural wards (including 15 women); and five Alem Birhan staff members (including 2 women). Thus, a total of 44 participants (including 20 women) were trained.

On 8–14 December 2017, eight farmers from ESM (including 3 women) visited ten farmers at the Axum action-learning site to learn from their experiences in local innovation and farmer-led experimentation. A PID workshop were organised at both learning sites to which different relevant stakeholders were invited. At the Axum learning site of 12–16 October 2018, the participants were from the Axum Research Centre, Axum Agricultural Office, Aksum and Addis Ababa Universities, farmers and NGOs. A total of 25 people, including nine women, attended the workshop. In ESM, a PID workshop was held on 26–30 October 2018 and involved participants from the local TVET College, the Mertulemariam Agricultural Office, the Mertulemariam College of Agriculture, two NGOs (Alem Birhan and Facility for Change) and farmers. A total of 29 participants, including three women, came to the workshop in the meeting hall of Alem Birhan.

The participants agreed to develop, enhance and promote the local innovations and to spread the local knowledge of farmers within the community. All of the participants were ready to give inputs and to help the innovators in different ways, such as by giving advice, supplying materials and helping the farmers improve their local innovations. The farmer innovators expressed willingness to continue the PID until its final stage. A farmer innovation fair (FIF) was organised as a farmers’ learning event at each of the two action-learning sites.

On 3 February 2019, an FIF was organised in ESM. It involved representatives from the DAO, Government Affairs and Communication Offices, Mertulemariam TVET College, Mertulemariam Agricultural College, innovative farmers from 17 rural wards in ESM District, FFS members and Alem Birhan Board and staff members – a total of 29 people (including 7 women).
On 9 February 2019, an FIF was held in Axum at the Tahtay Maychew Agricultural Office and involved farmer innovators, other farmers, Aksum University, the DAO, the District (Woreda) Administration and the Water Resource Sector. A total of 38 people (including 4 women) took part.

Materials were supplied to farmers at both action-learning sites, and the farmers in Axum learned from those in ESM about organising FFFs. At individual level, the materials for facilitating the PID processes were protective clothing, including gloves and shoes, plastic containers and 1-litre sprinklers. The PE coordinator released funds to the site coordinators to buy these materials to help the farmers conduct their research. In addition, the farmers were also given various seedlings.

A national workshop was held in the Panorama Hotel in Addis Ababa on 28 February 2019. Two farmer innovators from each action-learning site and staff members from relevant organisations took part: Addis Ababa University, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Voice of Wilderness Development Organization (VWDO) and Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Ethiopia. A total of 21 people (including 5 women) attended the workshop.

Farmer innovators from both sites attended the ninth celebration of cultural biodiversity in Konta in southern Ethiopia. This aimed to promote the culture of different regions in the country. Other participants included high-school students from different regions, preparatory and university students, invited guests, farmers, the organisers and people from Konta. Farmers collaborating with PE presented their innovations, i.e. potato bread, beetroot juice, dried cabbage, fuel made from weeds, local soap made from botanicals, biopesticide, biofertiliser, traditional foods, and vermin compost and its products. This programme created a network with different partners, and observing other regions’ cultural practices made it very colourful. The journey to Konta was made with nine farmers (6 men, 3 women) – three from Axum, three from ESM and three from Assosa, a project site of the NGO PELUM–Ethiopia, which provided the vehicle.

**Objective 2: Women are more widely recognised as innovators and are supported in further developing their innovations, from which they control the benefits.**

At both learning sites, women innovators were supported in different ways to develop and improve their innovations. During a field trip on 29 September–2 October 2017, Amanuel Assefa and Hailu Araya visited the innovator Ms Haregu Gobeza in Rama, Tigray Region. Her innovation involves operating a commercial orchard on about 12 ha with a modern irrigation facility that runs across the farmland. She has over 6000 well-managed apple-mango trees and more than 500 orange trees. She is also carrying out a very innovative activity that she calls a “soil bank”. The place where she has her orchard is somewhat stony and she sought to harvest the alluvial soil from the river running past her farm. She identified a strategic location to build a soil-conservation structure using a gabion and managed to harvest tons of alluvial soil from the running water during the wet season. She has now started to distribute it in her orchard.

PE also supported women innovators in the Axum learning site who are interested in keeping poultry and planting hops (gesho by its local name) to prepare a local beverage and the woody species shibaka, which is very useful as a source of animal feed and for boundaries and backyards; for example, it is used to fence in the homestead. During their field trip on 29 September–2 October 2017, Amanuel and Hailu visited Ms Beriha Tadesse to see where these activities are taking place.
Female household heads were involved in training in farmer-led experimentation at the Axum learning site. The training was given by Hailu to 16 farmer participants (including 3 women), an expert from the DAO and a researcher from Aksum University.

Women innovators are actively involved at both learning sites. In Axum, six of the local innovations identified were developed by women, and women are participating energetically in seven other local innovations identified at that site. In ESM, the farmers are conducting their local experimentation and innovation within FFSs in three wards. A total of 56 farmers are FFS members; eighteen of these are women, all of whom are very active participants. Three of the local innovations identified in ESM were developed by women.

**Objective 3: Subregional Prolinnova platforms support national CPs to develop capacity for collective learning, mobilising resources and effective policy dialogue.**

The SRC Amanuel Assefa supported the CP by taking part in several meetings and also being very active in organising the meetings and giving important suggestions and also supporting the project in many other ways.

During the national workshop organised in Addis Ababa on 28 February 2019, Amanuel led the session on how the Ethiopian partner organisations could collaborate in the future in supporting farmers to improve their innovations and their livelihoods. He also identified relevant organisations that could join and extend the PE network. Two project proposals that included Ethiopia were submitted to FAO and ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute), but no positive response was received.

The changes brought about are that the farmer innovators in both learning sites are improving their lives by using their innovations to secure food and nutrition for themselves and their families. For example, the farmers are growing vegetables in their gardens, increasing the number and variety of dishes consumed, expanding the practice of organic farming and marketing of products, and expanding their home gardening.

With regard to linkages and networking with relevant organisations during the Proli-FaNS project, PE connected the farmer innovators to different organisations during project activities such as meetings, training sessions, workshops, experience-sharing visits, FFS establishment at district and ward level, and PID implementation. These activities had impacts in terms of improving the food and nutrition security of the farmer innovators, their families and their communities; helping the farmers gain additional income from selling products resulting from their innovation; and giving them the opportunity to improve their innovations by working in teams (FFSs) and in linkage with different relevant organisations. The farmers are now developing still more innovations and they are also improving their earlier innovations. The farmer innovators have been cooperating well with the site coordinators and with relevant organisations in their vicinity throughout the project period.

### 4.0 PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)

Monitoring visits were made at different times to find out about the outcomes and impacts of the project at the two action-learning sites. On 12–15 October 2018, the PE coordinator and Yohannes GebreMichael from Addis Ababa University visited the Axum site to conduct a PID meeting, and on 26–30 October 2018, the PE coordinator visited the ESM site to conduct a PID meeting; in both cases,
these visits also served for M&E purposes. The PE coordinator made another monitoring visit to the ESM site on 4–10 March 2019.

To improve the implementation capacity of the project team and the governance of PE, Amanuel Assefa, the SRC for Eastern & Southern Africa, visited Axum on 29 September–2 October 2017, together with Hailu Araya.

Hailu Araya visited the Axum site on 28 November–2 December 2017 for M&E. The new CP coordinator visited Axum on 5–7 June 2018 for mutual introductions with the farmers and the site coordinator and to visit the farmers’ innovations together with Hailu.

**5.0 OUTLOOK / SUSTAINABILITY**

Overall, the project has had great impact in the farmer innovators’ lives in encouraging them to develop new and very interesting local innovations that solve the problems of the local community and that also improve their livelihoods through earning additional income. Some positive outcomes of the project were:

1) emergence of new farmer innovators and their innovations;
2) confidence of farmer innovators built to publicise and share their experiences;
3) the project attracted the interest of local authorities in the two action-learning sites because of the project’s contribution to the agricultural extension services;
4) economic improvements in the households of the farmer innovators involved in the project.

To provide further support to the farmer innovators, PE submitted four proposals to the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, and is waiting for the response. With respect to financial sustainability, funding is required to ensure the continued impact of the project. The actors involved need incentives for their participation. Without funds, it is difficult in some cases for some of the participants or actors to help the farmers voluntarily.

**6.0 SUMMARY ASSESSMENT & CONCLUSIONS**

In each of the two action-learning sites where the Proli-FaNS project is being carried out in Ethiopia, the targeted number of local innovations was identified and documented. The farmers learned thus far to investigate their innovations more deeply and to share them with other farmers in different ways and have become even more motivated to undertake still further innovation. They are eager to conduct other experiments when they see the effectiveness of their initial innovation.

Regarding the achievements of the project objectives, a total of 40 local innovations were documented at the two learning sites but then, in ESM, the number of innovations included for the Proli-FaNS project was reduced from 20 to 12, using the criteria that the local innovation is related with food and nutrition security and is relatively new. PE studied a total of six PID cases: four in the Axum site and two in the ESM site. Giving certificates to the farmer innovators is planned for September 2019, just before the project closes.

PE would like to thank ACDEP, the SRC for Eastern & Southern Africa and the Prolinnova International Support Team for their support in helping PE achieve the project objectives.