Linking technical and social innovation in PROLINNOVA

(PROmoting Local INNOVAtion in ecologically oriented agriculture & NRM)

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What I am going to talk about

1) Introduction to PROLINNOVA
   • What it tries to achieve
   • Underlying convictions

2) Technical and social innovation
   • Our understanding of these concepts
   • Examples of how they are linked in PROLINNOVA

3) Case example: Community-managed innovation fund

4) Insights into linking technical & social innovation
**PROLINNOVA: PROmoting Local INNOVAtion in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM**

“Global Partnership Programme” under Global Forum on Agricultural Research – initiated by NGOs

- Community of practice (CoP) focused on **smallholder farming communities**
- Seeks to foster a **culture of mutual learning** in local innovation processes

**Vision:** World where women and men farmers play decisive roles in agricultural research and development (ARD) for sustainable livelihoods

**International CoP of diverse actors united in conviction that:**

- Farmers are creative and generate relevant local innovations = **locally new & better ways of doing things**
- Linking local creativity with other sources of new ideas builds more resilient innovation systems to deal with change
- Recognising local capacities lays basis for true partnership with other knowledge-holders in ARD
Country Platforms (CPs) = national CoPs

- In 20 countries
- Diverse actors: farmers, rural advisors, scientists, academia
- Promoting farmer-led participatory innovation development (PID)
- Each CP designs country-specific approach to do this

Africa: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda

Asia: Cambodia, India, Nepal

Latin America: Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru

Main ideas behind PROLINNOVA

- Recognising local innovation is positive entry point to working with communities
- Analysing local innovation gives community focus to examine opportunities and its own (research) questions
- Engaging in PID strengthens:
  - community organisation for development
  - capacities of rural services to support endogenous development
  - farmer voice in decision-making about ARD also at higher levels

Farmers and researcher monitor joint aquaculture experiment in Tanzania
Common to all country-driven activities

- Creating evidence: identifying and documenting local innovation and PID
- Strengthening national & subnational multistakeholder platforms to work, share and learn together
- Building capacity of all actors
- Engaging in policy dialogue to mainstream PID

Recognising local innovation

- Hundreds of inspiring local innovations identified & documented
- Through participatory assessment, most of them selected for sharing through:
  - Farmer-to-farmer visits
  - Innovation fairs
  - Catalogues
  - Posters
  - Farmer magazine
  - Pamphlets
  - Community radio
  - Video (also participatory)
  - Mass media: newspapers, TV
Both technical and social innovations

Technical user-innovations often developed by individuals

Socio-organisational innovations developed by groups/communities (but individual may have initial idea)

Farmer innovator in water technologies in Ethiopia

Farmers assessing local innovations in South Africa

Joint assessment of technical innovation can inspire social innovation

Social innovation inspired by technical innovation: examples

• Forming new relationship between large- and small-scale farmers to market an introduced crop (South Africa)

• Innovative woman farmer trains other women in ox-ploughing – challenging social norms (Ethiopia)

• Integrating experimentation with millet nursery innovation into adult education (Kenya)

South African farmers preparing to market cherry peppers
Local innovation as starting point for farmer-led joint experimentation

- Salt lick for cattle using local minerals (Ghana)
- Improving traditional ovens to dry fish (Niger)
- Combatting bacterial wilt in enset (southern Ethiopia)
- Comparing local “modern” and introduced beehives (northern Ethiopia)

Making innovation processes more intensive and equitable

Not just developing and scaling out technical and social innovations

Also scaling up more intensive innovation processes

Not just trying to change attitudes and behaviour of actors towards each other

Also trying to change power relations within innovation systems
Still tendency for scientists or rural advisors to dominate in PID process

Generally, most “participatory ARD” involves testing scientists’ ideas

Some competitive funds exist for participatory ARD but mainly controlled by scientists

Can power balance in ARD funding be changed?

→ farmers “call the tune”

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Exploring complementary ARD funding mechanism

so farmers can decide what will be researched, how and by whom

to make ARD more accountable to and relevant for smallholders

to develop and test models of farmer-governed ARD that can be scaled up

Extension workers visit farmer innovators at technology fair in Ethiopia
Local Innovation Support Funds (LISFs)

- Piloted by PROLINNOVA partners in:
  - Asia: Cambodia, Nepal
  - Africa: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania & Uganda

- Main question in the action learning:
  Can funds for experimentation and learning be efficiently channelled through smallholders?

How does an LISF work?

- Local Fund Management Committee (FMC) makes call for proposals
- Farmers submit simple proposals
- FMC selects grantees and provides 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 sound in economic, environmental & social terms
- Applicable by resource-poor
- Applicants willing to share (public funds for public goods)
- Proposal for experimentation and learning, not farm investment

Multiple levels of mutual learning

- **Community**: local research and M&E by farmer groups and FMC
- **District**: as rural advisors, NGOs, researchers, college staff support farmer-led experiments, organise innovation fairs, facilitate M&E
- **Country**: thru reflection workshops and joint impact assessment by national multistakeholder platform
### Grants made in 8 pilot countries over 4 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of applications received</th>
<th>Percentage approved</th>
<th>Average grant size (Euro)</th>
<th>Range in grant size (Euro)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1224</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>5 – 1670</td>
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**Use of funds as decided by FMCs:**

1. Farmers’ own experimentation
2. Improving farmer innovations
3. Farmer-led experimentation with research and/or extension staff
4. Learning visits by farmers

### Participatory impact assessment

Involvement of different actors in LISF:

- Strengthened social organisation around managing local ARD and funds for it
- Built smallholders’ capacities to formulate own needs and access relevant information
- Increased smallholders’ confidence to interact with “outsiders” in joint innovation
- Stimulated interest of rural advisors and scientists to support farmer-led PID
Insights from LISFs

• Smallholders can manage funds for locally relevant innovation development, with appropriate initial support.

• LISFs stimulate social innovation: giving farmers more say in technical and social innovation processes.

Vision

A world where women and men farmers play decisive roles in research and development for sustainable livelihoods.