

Reflections on Prolinnova's FAIR Project: Local Innovation Support Fund Prospects and Challenges in Promoting Innovation

Farmer Access to Innovation Resources
A Prolinnova Project
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Prepared by Anton Krone, Amanuel Assefa, Ann Waters-Bayer,
Laurens van Veldhuizen, Mariana Wongtschowski

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Overview

- What is FAIR?
- Country situations: Ethiopia, South Africa & Uganda
 - Economic
 - Cultural & social conditions
 - Innovation experience
- Institutional enablers
- Form of LISFs in each country

What is FAIR?

- It is about establishing Local Innovation Support Facilities/ Funds (LISFs)
- It makes experimentation & learning grants accessible to small farmers
- It is managed by local people to support local innovation processes that emanate from the creative thinking & practices of farmers
- FAIR involves country partnerships in:
 - Cambodia
 - Ethiopia
 - Nepal
 - South Africa
 - Uganda

Problem Statement: macro

- There are small farmers with capabilities, knowledge and creativity, & yet they struggle
- Farmers need to be supported to innovate in ways that empower them socially, economically & technically

Problem Statement: Micro

- R&D is seldom farmer-led
- R&D is undertaken by observers trying to design supply driven interventions
- R&D is not sufficiently rooted in local knowledge and action

Overall Goal

- To create conditions for farmers to manage natural resources in ways that contribute to improved food security and livelihoods
- To this end, it focuses particularly on the acceleration of local innovation in sustainable farming and land management practices in terms of innovation processes, outcome and spread (*project purpose*)

Specific Objectives

1. The identification, design & piloting of LISFs in five countries as enablers of local innovation
2. The documentation & dissemination of lessons learnt re: appropriate ways, mechanisms and conditions for LISFs to become effective promoters of local innovation
3. The establishment of sustainable long-term LISFs actively supporting community managed funds

Country conditions in Project Areas

	Ethiopia	South Africa	Uganda
Economic	Very agrarian, very poor, diverse, land pressure	Semi-agrarian, highly unequal, multiple livelihoods	Agrarian, cash crops, moderate growth
Social	Some well organised farmer orgs/ networks, FFS	Exclusion, gender & HIV/AIDS, weaker org.	High illiteracy, gender unequal, associations
Cultural	Self-reliance for survival evident	Dependency (safety nets/ grants)	Self-reliance & priority focus

Operational questions

- Understanding of local context & social dynamics is key
- Is the context conducive to an LISF?
- If social relations are unequal, take up will be unequal, resulting in ‘elite capture’
- What can be done to empower poorer & more vulnerable groups?
 - Partly access criteria; *but* if R&D processes are to be ‘demand driven’, social mobilisation that empowers poor & vulnerable groups is important

Options towards empowerment

- Community options
 - Associations, uneven results, may be susceptible to community politics/ power struggles
- Group options
 - Farmer Field Schools & variants, Savings & Credit Groups & hybrids of these suggest promising results
 - Good for learning forums & PID
- Individual options
 - Good in agrarian-based society, but not easy to support, except through visible, responsive mechanisms

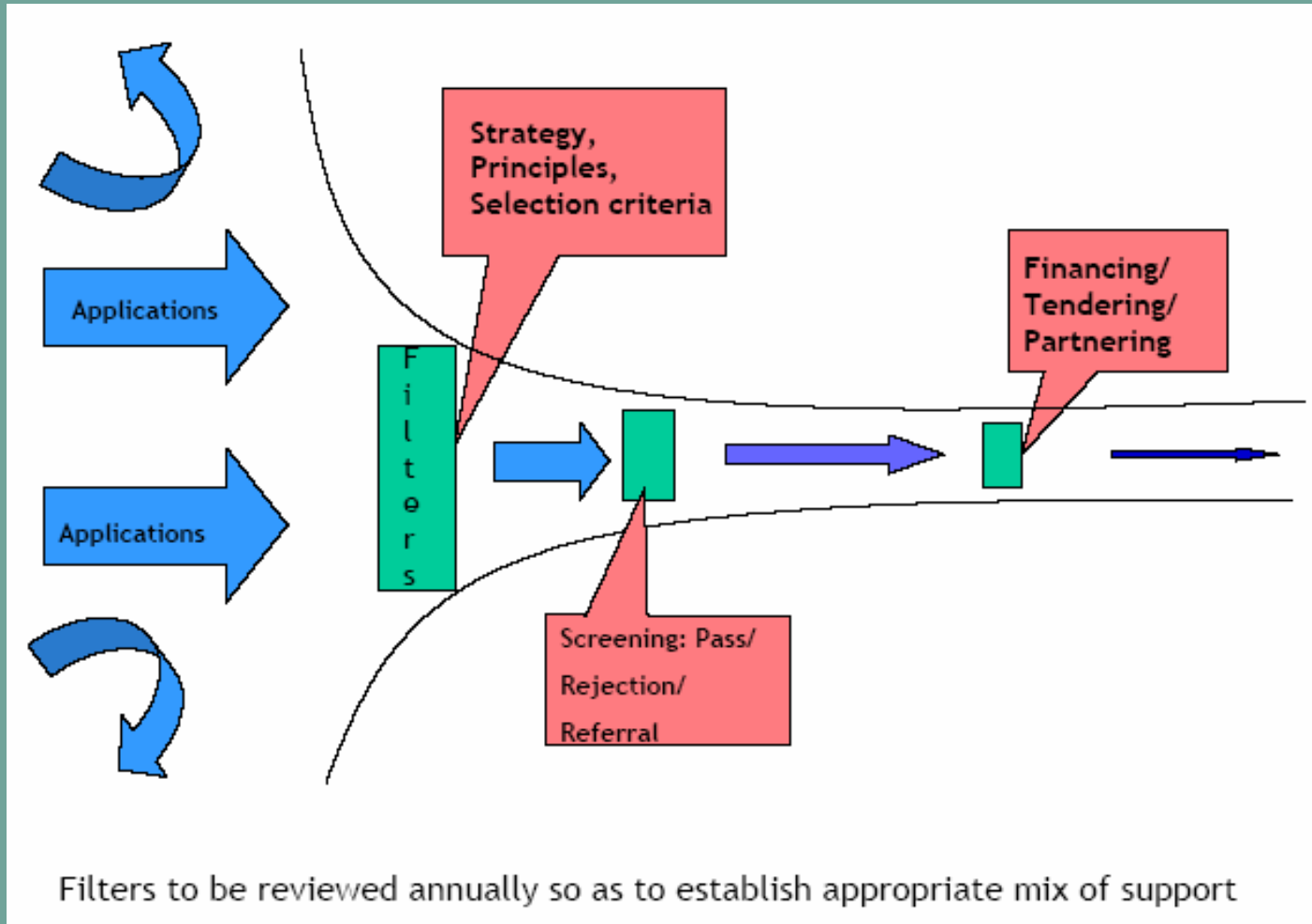
Institutional base in project sites

Ethiopia - Amaro	Community Based Institutions (CBIs) developed over some years
Ethiopia - Tigray	PID driven networks & Farmer Organisations
Uganda	Farmer Associations, 50 – 100 members, supported by savings
South Africa	Farmer Associations, Farmer Learning Groups, Savings & Credit Groups

Area coverage & LISF form

Ethiopia: Amaro area	Peasant Association (most local unit)	CBIs to manage funds
Ethiopia: Tigray area	Two nearby villages (+- 15 000)	Steering committee elected from stakeholders
South Africa	Three adjoining villages (+- 8 000)	Interim stakeholder-based committee, moving to Trust
Uganda	Four central region districts	Joint stakeholder representation in committee

Funnel of selection



Working Funding Criteria

1. Prior record of food/agriculture/natural resource usage activity (broadened in the case of consensus and additional funds)
2. Technical feasibility
3. Idea owned/driven by applicant (s)
4. Preferably some demonstration of prior innovation
5. Idea is replicable amongst poor and vulnerable groups
6. Value addition achievable through LISF support
7. Agreement to adhere to plan and report results
8. Willingness for results to be shared
9. Own contribution to input costs

Long-term options & results

Options:

- LISF could scale up to be a regional facility
- LISF could scale down to become a more local ISF, with new LISFs being replicated elsewhere
- FFS & Savings Clubs promoted as complementary interventions & as Group-based ISFs

Results:

- Leading to more sustained local action & livelihood security
- Self reliance & innovation encouraged
- Dominant mode of extension challenged
- Farmer-controlled research funding

Thank you!