SOME GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISING A

Farmer Innovation Fair

Photo: PROLINNOVA Bolivia

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PROmoting Local INNOVAtion
in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management

SOME GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISING A FARMER INNOVATION FAIR

Photo: Hassane Ouedraogo

West African Farmer Innovation Fair (FIPAO)

In order to stimulate policymakers and practitioners to recognise farmer innovation in agricultural research and development (ARD), partners in the PROLINNOVA network have been developing and using various methods and tools for advocacy and lobbying. One of these is the Farmer Innovation Fair. These guidelines reflect the network's experiences in organising and hosting such fairs, with a focus on the experiences gained from the West African Farmer Innovation Fair held in Ouagadougou in May 2015, hosted by Inades Formation Burkina and the PROFEIS (Promoting Farmer Experimentation and Innovation in the Sahel) multistakeholder platform in Burkina Faso.

What is a Farmer Innovation Fair and why organise one?

A Farmer Innovation Fair (FIF) is an event and methodology that recognises and celebrates the creativity, ingenuity and innovativeness of men and women practising small-scale farming, a term that includes herding, fishing and harvesting forest products. FIFs bring together farmer innovators, both men and women, young and old, in one place for one or several days, to showcase their innovations.

FIFs are rare opportunities for farmer innovators get to know each other, to share experiences and to learn from each other in an open setting, and also to strengthen their presentation and communication skills. FIFs also allow farmers to interact with and receive feedback and suggestions from other stakeholders in ARD and members of the public who visit their market stalls. Farmer innovators who take part in FIFs are given public recognition as important actors in ARD; this boosts their self-confidence.

FIFs provide an important platform to increase awareness and acceptance of the relevance of farmer innovation among ARD professionals and the wider public. The high profile of the event in terms of visibility and publicity helps attract policymakers, whose visits to the FIF can be leveraged to lobby for more attention to and funding for farmer-led innovation.

Holding an FIF requires the involvement and cooperation of multiple stakeholders such as farmers, researchers, development workers and others. An FIF can be held at regional level, such as the FIPAO[1] held in Burkina Faso in 2015 and the Eastern African Farmer Innovation Fair (EAFIF) held in Kenya in 2013; at national level (e.g. Nepali Farmer Innovation Fair in Kathmandu in 2009) and at sub-national or local level (e.g. in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2015 and several county-level FIFs in numerous countries in Africa and Asia in recent years). It is also not uncommon for PROLINNOVA Country Platforms (CPs) to help smaller or larger groups of small-scale farmer innovators to showcase their innovations at larger events organised by other stakeholders, such as at agricultural technology exhibitions, conferences and development marketplaces.

Photo: PROLINNOVA Bolivia

Bolivian Farmer Innovation Fair

[1] French acronym for: Foire de l'innovation paysanne de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (West African Farmer Innovation Fair).

Raising and managing funds for an FIF

If the FIF is at national or local level, it can be organised with very modest funding, also from within the country. If it is a regional fair (i.e. involving participation from two or more countries in a region), funding requirements will be higher, e.g. for travel, and several donors may need to be approached. For example, FIPAO had six main donors. Another reason for seeking support from several donors is to awaken their interest in an approach of promoting local innovation: if they are partial "owners" of the FIF, they will be more likely to continue to support such approaches. The disadvantages of working with several donors (e.g. multiple reports) are balanced by the advantage of gaining this wider "buy-in".

To raise funds, not only international or bilateral development support organisations elsewhere but also national and international organisations active within the host country can be approached (e.g. PROLINNOVA–Kenya gained support from the USAID Feed the Future Kenya Innovation Engine for the EAFIF).

In managing the budget, it is important that all partners involved are aware of the budget available and plan accordingly to stay within the budget. A good estimation of the amount of funding that can be expected should be clear at least two months before the event. Memoranda of understanding should be drawn up between the organisations involved in using the funds. A very good accountant is needed to keep track of incoming and outgoing funds and to make financial statements to different donors. Some of them may want to support only specific costs, e.g. those for farmer innovators' travel and accommodations, whereas others may want to make a general contribution to the event and would expect an overall financial statement on what was spent and what was contributed by which donors.

Consider also charging an entrance fee (which could be waived for school classes) as an additional source of revenue to cover costs of the fair.

Organisational issues

Based on experience in Nepal, Kenya[2] and Burkina Faso, the following tips can help in organising an FIF:

- Involve several different types of organisations in preparing for and implementing the fair, so that many are exposed to the concept of farmer innovation and are already thinking it through (not just attending the event). Include someone from the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Council on Science and Technology and/or National Research Council in the organising committee.
- The key organisations involved need to have a good capacity in using participatory methods in facilitating meetings, as well as good skills in fundraising, communication, organisation and management.
- Through South–South mentoring, CPs with experience in organising FIFs can provide support to groups in other countries wanting to organise FIFs.
- Make it clear who within the organising committee is responsible for each activity (i.e. for a workshop and/or side events, for the general coordination of the fair).
- Decision-making and approval processes within the organising committees at different levels should be clear and quick. Regular progress reviews throughout the preparatory period permit close follow-up so that decisions can be taken or amended quickly.
- Select an event organiser for the fair: someone with relevant experience and talent from one of the organisations in the local organising committee, or selected/hired from outside. Note that conventional event organisers are usually not suitable; it must be someone who can understand the unique focus and process of an FIF.
- Select from within the local organising committee or hire a Master of Ceremonies (MC) for the opening and closing of the fair and to announce, during the fair, any panel discussions and other events or happenings.
- Immediately before and during the fair, a secretariat should be set up and empowered to make administrative decisions efficiently, following rules and procedures agreed beforehand, rather than having to consult the organising committee for every small matter. The secretariat can include seconded staff from several of the partner organisations, hired consultants and volunteers playing specific roles.
- Good experience has been made in working with volunteers (e.g. university or college students) who help with various aspects in the preparations and above all during the fair. It is important to make their roles clear and to supervise and support them well. Students can assist in various activities such as welcoming and guiding groups visiting the fair and serving as interpreters between farmer innovators and visitors to the fair. This gives the students an excellent opportunity to have direct contact with innovative farmers and to learn from them. It is advisable to bring the students and innovators together before the fair opens, so that the students have a good understanding of the innovations and a good rapport with the innovators. Then the students will be in a better position to translate the farmers' explanations of the innovation and to respond to farmers' responses to the questions from visitors. It should be stressed that the farmers, not the students, should be giving the explanations and answering the questions.

[2] Based on reports by Suman Manandhar, the then PROLINNOVA–Nepal coordinator, on the Nepal FIF (2009) and by Teresiah Ng'ang'a, the then PROLINNOVA–Kenya coordinator, summarising evaluation meetings after the EAFIF (2013).

Photo: Li-BIRD

Farmer Innovation Fair in Kathmandu, Nepal

Box 1: FIPAO organisational structure and division of roles

International Organising Committee (donors, members of PROLINNOVA International Support Team, host organisation of FIF)	Regional Organising Committee (host of FIF, representatives of PROLINNOVA CP in host country, local partner organisations of donors)	National Organising Committee (PROLINNOVA CP member organisations, local partner organisations of donors)
Overall supervision	Overall coordination	Naming a focal person
Support to Regional Organising Committee	Stimulating the setting up of National Organising Committees	Disseminating the call for farmer innovators
Co-organisation of side events	Management of funding for operation of National Committees	Pre-selection of innovations (10)
Management of funding	Setting up a selection committee to select 7 innovations from each country	Helping innovators prepare their displays
	Logistics of the fair	Supporting the documentation of innovations
	Communications / publicity	

Process of selecting innovators

In the case of PROLINNOVA-initiated FIFs, CPs (which consist of several stakeholder organisations) take the lead in the process of identifying farmer innovators to take part in the FIF. In the case of FIPAO, in each of the eight countries involved in the FIF, there was a focal point to facilitate communication with the Regional Organising Committee in the host country (Burkina Faso).

As a way to identify and mobilise farmer innovators, farmer innovation contests at district level can be organised, for which the first selection of farmer innovators is made. A call to identify innovative farmers is made through the organisations involved and a simple form is used to collect applications, including details about the farmer innovator, the innovation itself (including the material used) and what challenges (i.e. societal, environmental) it may address as well as the acceptance of the innovation in the farmer innovator's locality.

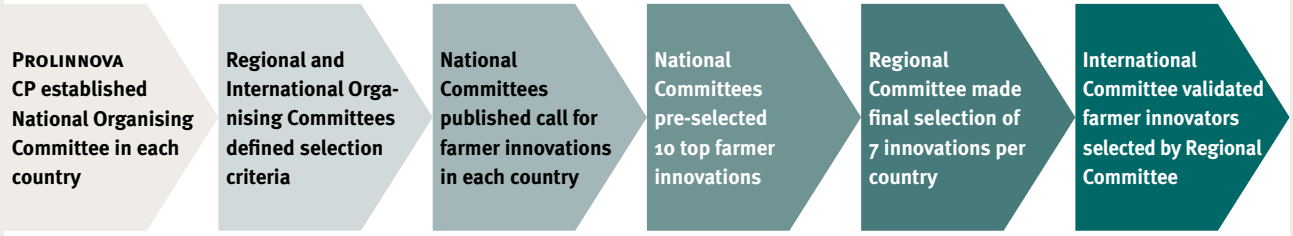
It is advisable to ensure that the call is distributed as widely as possible through posters (i.e. at colleges, local government offices, local radio, TV stations, social media etc.). This gives a chance to discover many more farmer innovators beyond those with whom the CP may have been working for years. The application form for farmer innovators should be short and simple so that most farmers can fill it in themselves; in the case of illiterate farmers (which is more likely to be the case with women innovators), a support agency may need to fill it in on their behalf. From the various farmer applicants, a multistakeholder committee – which can include farmers and people from community-based organisations (CBOs) and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), universities, extension and private-sector players – makes the final selection of those who will take part in the FIF, using selection criteria drawn up by the Regional Organising Committee. Examples of such criteria are shown in Box 2.

Box 2: Criteria for selecting farmer innovators to take part in PROLINNOVA-initiated innovation fairs (drawn from criteria used for EAFIF 2013 and FIPAO 2015)

- The innovations are original for the area.
- Farmers have developed innovations on their own initiative (not imposed and externally driven).
- Their innovations are ecologically, socially, technically and economically sound, bringing returns in the long run in terms of e.g. increased income, reduced drudgery and saved labour.
- Farmers have interacted with other actors (researchers, extension staff, university staff, among others) in joint experimentation.
- Farmers have experience in managing or have benefited from Local Innovation Support Funds/Facilities (LISFs)[3].
- The innovations have substantially changed (or have the potential to change) local agricultural and natural resource management (NRM) practices and the lives of the farmers' families and neighbours and/or can be applied more widely in the country/region, i.e. are "best bets" for dissemination.
- The farmers have encouraged others to innovate.
- The innovations can impress others through physical exhibits or visual documentation.
- The farmers are ready and willing to take part in the fair and share their innovations.
- Some farmers may have officially acknowledged innovations, e.g. through patenting with the Ministry of Science and Technology, although this would not be obligatory or – in the case of many agricultural and NRM innovations – even possible.
- Priority is given to female and young farmer innovators.

All delegations (i.e. country-based groups of innovative farmers and their supporting agents) to FIPAO followed a long process to select the best innovators to present their innovations, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Process of selecting farmers to present their innovations at FIPAO 2015



Building the programme of the fair: workshops and other side events

The FIF has to be planned well in advance, at least six months by the host organising group if the fair is to be local or national; and at least 10 months if a regional FIF is being organised. Efforts should be made to avoid making the event too biased to farmers from the host country, even if – as was the case with the EAFIF in Kenya – substantial in-country funding has been acquired,[4] and to think strategically about follow-up processes in the country or region. Depending on the scale of the fair (i.e. national, regional), a fair may last from one day to three days. The larger the population of the city/area where the FIF is held, the longer the fair should be. FIFs at village or district level may last only half a day.

[3] More about LISFs can be found at http://www.prolinnova.net/lisf.

[4] Because USAID supported documentation of only the Kenyan farmers' innovations at the EAFIF, these innovations were given more attention than those of the Ethiopian, Tanzanian and Ugandan farmers in the panel discussions during the fair and in the printed and video documentation disseminated after the fair.

General programme of a one-day fair	
Time	**Activities**
Morning	Formal ceremony with policymakers
Throughout the day	Exhibition of innovations Side events (i.e. video screenings, workshops by external partners, book presentations, panel discussions)
Late afternoon	Award ceremony for best innovation in different categories (i.e. technical, social/ institutional, environmental, possibly separate awards for women and youth)

Photo: Hassane Ouedraogo

FIPAO screening of videos on farmer innovations to adapt to climate change

An FIF usually opens with a formal ceremony, which is used to draw in a selected group of influential people from the public and private sector and civil society who have a stake in ARD. It often involves a government minister or senior government official who gives a public address that stresses the importance of farmer innovation and participatory ARD. The fair consists of stalls allocated to farmer innovators who present their work and innovations. The stalls are visited by a diverse group of ARD stakeholders including policymakers, researchers, extension agents and other service providers, students and the general public. For educational purposes, inviting children and youth from schools and technical colleges is a promising approach. Many young people regard small-scale farming as "backward" and traditional. Their interaction with farmer innovators can help them see the farmers' work in a more positive light. Side events related to the theme of farmer innovation in ARD can be organised throughout the fair; these may include panel discussions, mini-workshops, video screenings, book presentations and workshops.

Box 3: Award ceremony at FIPAO in 2015

The Regional Committee that organised the FIPAO in Burkina Faso set up a jury during the fair to choose the best innovations based on various criteria. The jury was composed of six persons from government bodies, donor organisations, farmer innovators, farmer organisations (FOs), the hosting organisation and research institutes. They made a tour of the fair, examined each innovation and talked to all farmer innovators. The main criteria the jury used were originality; technical, environmental and economic viability; and relevance for small-scale farming families. These criteria were based on those used to select the innovations to be presented at the fair.

At the closing ceremony on the final day of FIPAO, five innovations were awarded prizes according to themes such as crop production, animal production, NRM, processing of agrosylvopastoral products and others (including agricultural mechanisation, institutional innovation and communication).

Photo: Hassane Ouedraogo

Award given to Joseph Barké Arzouma, farmer innovator from Ghana at FIPAO

Regional FIFs can be organised alongside international conferences or workshops of networks or organisations. As a specific back-to-back event, an FIF can be preceded or followed by a 2- or 3-day workshop with a selected group of participants from NGOs, donor organisations, government representatives, CBOs and FOs to discuss in more detail some ways to strengthen farmer-led innovation development. If the workshop is before the fair, the outcome of the workshop can be presented at the fair in order to share the information with a wider public as well as to provide evidence to policymakers and government representatives[5]. If the workshop is after the fair, the experiences made by workshop participants during the fair or even a declaration made by farmer innovators and other can be fed into the discussions during the workshop.

Photo: FIPAO regional committee

Workshop before FIPAO

[5] An example of such a workshop was the one on farmer-led research preceding the FIPAO, see more at http://www.prolinnova.net/content/introduction-1

Some tips for logistics

- Plan the reservation and purchase of travel tickets well in advance.
- Especially in the case of regional fairs, visa application procedures can be difficult. These considerations may inform the selection of countries to be covered by the fair. In any case, urge the invited participants to give early attention to visa issues.
- Prepare a logistical note for the participants describing: the mode or conditions of transport, the location and conditions of accommodation and other meetings (e.g. conference, workshop) and contact details of the organisers.
- Put stalls of farmers with similar types of innovation close to each other, rather than in national groups; this encourages more interaction between the farmers from different countries and organisations.
- Give special attention to organising travel, meals and accommodations of the farmer innovators on the way to and from and during the fair so that they feel welcome and comfortable during the entire trip.
- It is good if 2–3 persons from support organisations in the countries where the farmers come from accompany the farmers and make sure that things run smoothly, both while travelling and during the workshop (e.g. to facilitate translations when needed).
- When identifying the location for the fair, make sure that it is easily accessible with public transport. Booking of the venue as well as accommodation for the farmer innovators and support organisations needs to be done well in advance, if possible not far from the location of the fair.
- The support organisations should assist the farmers in thinking through and working out how they will present their innovations: e.g. with posters, brochures, short video films (especially in the case of institutional innovations), booklets, photo series, models. Additional funding support may be needed for this.
- At the fair, consider the possibility of inviting local entrepreneurs (e.g. women's groups) to sell food and drink to fair visitors.
- Make sure that informative material and facilities are ready and available well in advance (e.g. badges, printed programmes, projectors, tables, computer, printer, photocopier). During the fair, a well-equipped secretariat at the venue needs to deal with all major or minor matters that may arise.

Photo: CCAFS

Eastern Africa Farmer Innovation Fair in Nairobi, Kenya

Enabling policy dialogue

The organising committee should make concerted efforts to encourage policymakers to attend the FIF. They should be informed of the date well in advance so that they can plan it into their agendas. Attracting the Minister of Agriculture or of another related Ministry to come to the event requires considerable effort and needs to be planned well in advance. The organisers may need to help prepare the speech for the Minister. The FIF may offer an opportunity to make declarations directed to policymakers (see Box 4).

Box 4: Ouagadougou Declaration

As a major result of the workshop on farmer-led approaches in ARD held before the FIPAO in 2015, the participants agreed on key recommendations published in the form of the "Ouagadougou Declaration" addressed to governments and policymakers as well as to researchers, FOs and donors. Building on the need for a general acknowledgement of farmers' central role in ARD, this declaration urged the governments to institutionalise and fund farmer-led research approaches.

The declaration can be found in English at http://prolinnova.net/sites/default/files/documents/news/2015/ouagadougou-declaration-fipao-english_final.pdf and in French at http://fipao.faso-dev.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/D%C3%A9claration-de-Ouagadougou-FIPAO-final.pdf.

Photo: Hassane Ouedraogo

On the left, François Lompo, Minister of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources, Sanitation, and Food Security at FIPAO

Media coverage

With the combined coverage by media outlets such as TV, national newspapers, radio, online blogs and social media, news on FIFs and farmer-led innovation reaches a far larger audience than those who visit the fair. Some recommendations on how to make the best use of diverse media channels include:

- Hold a pre-event press conference with media coverage, about two months before the fair.
- Ensure good publicity beforehand through radio, TV, mobile phone (SMS), newspapers and other printed media and good media coverage during the event by inviting the press and hiring a photographer and video filmmaker to document the fair. To do this, a collaboration with a communication agency can be useful because it makes it possible to reach all the press organs (written and audio) via a single channel. It can also ensure timely distribution.
- Use the opening ceremony as a policy-influencing event and invite as many policymakers as possible; consider a guided tour of the fair only for groups of policy-/decision-makers, with TV coverage.
- Consider creating a website, a Facebook page and a Twitter account for uploading information and enable participants to interact about the FIF but keep in mind that websites require resources and the sustainability of the website should be considered.
- Think of joining forces with agricultural journalists (i.e. through the International Federation for Agricultural Journalists –IFAJ).
- For each dissemination product, make sure that you include the logos of all organisers and sponsors.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

An important part of M&E is keeping track of visitors, at least counting the number at the entrance but preferably also keeping a simple register of name, profession, institutional affiliation, sex and age. Recording the extent of coverage of the event in the various media is another way to measure the success of an FIF. Given the diversity of visitors to an FIF, it is not easy to assess what they learnt and how they used the lessons afterwards. But this can be done at least in the case of the farmer innovators who exhibited their work. In Kenya, a short survey of the exhibitors a few months after the EAFIF revealed what they were doing in terms of follow-up. An attractive way of presenting the data collected about the FIF can be in the form of an infographic *(see page 10)*.

Outputs of an FIF

Some concrete outputs of an FIF could be the documentation of the fair in the form of a report and possible also a small video documentary as well as media coverage distributed during and after the fair. Reporting on the FIF provides the opportunity not only to document what happened, but also to reflect on some lessons learnt and to make recommendations to others organising similar events. If possible, the reporting plan should be discussed with the main stakeholders in order to agree on producing a document interesting enough to be shared also with a wider public. If the FIF has many donors and each of them would like its own reporting format to be followed, this may be stressful and inefficient for those responsible for the reporting. Regarding the financial reporting in cases when many

Photos: Hassane Ouedraogo

Student interviewing farmer innovators

Cameraman at FIPAO

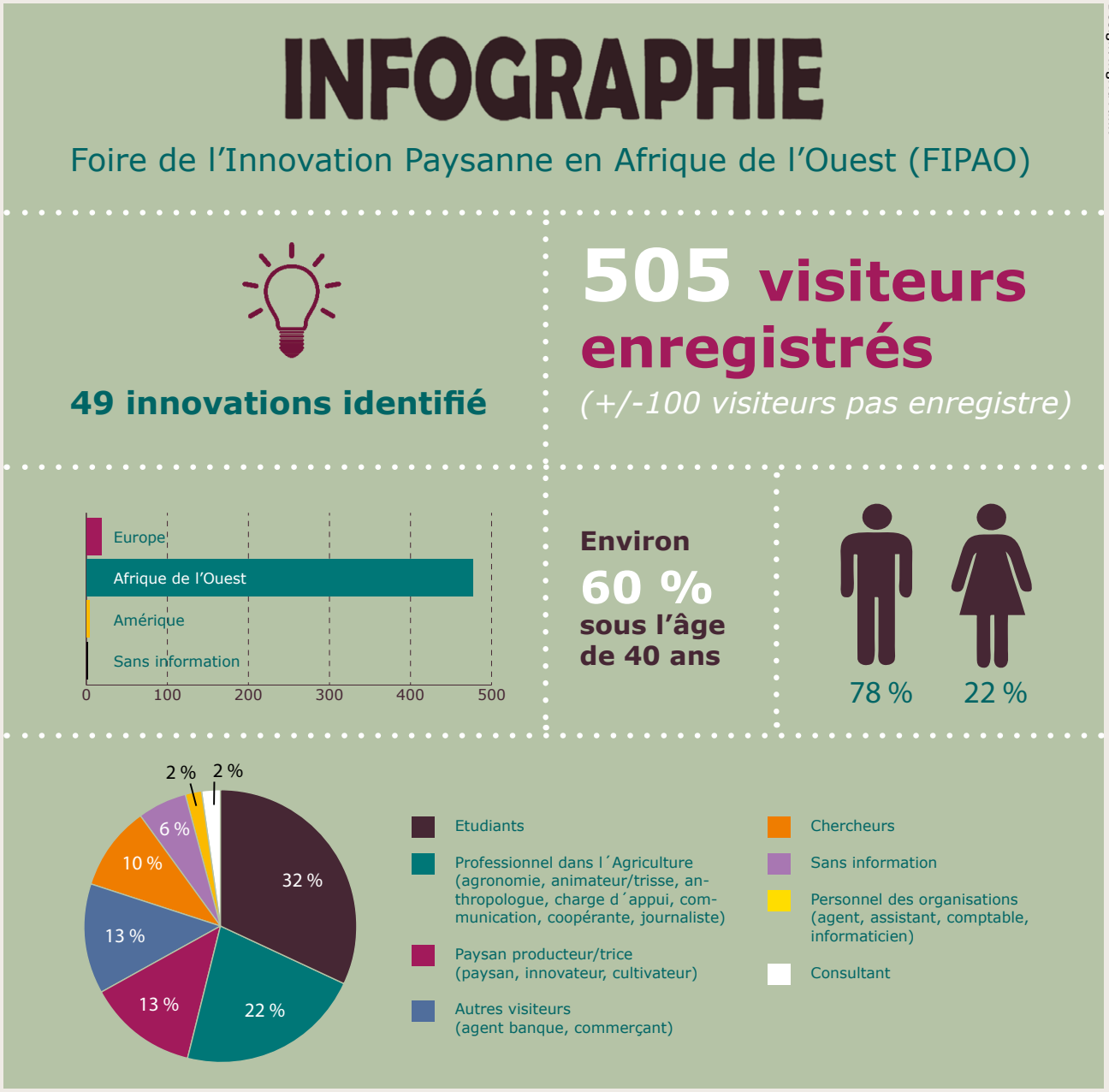
donors committed to make the FIF possible, there should be an agreement as early as the design stage of the FIF about not producing a diversity of financial reports but rather only one report for all, in order avoid confusion and misunderstandings and a great burden of bureaucratic post-FIF work.

An important result may be that farmer innovators who were offered an opportunity to showcase their innovations and to engage with a large group of people continue to cultivate the relationships that they established at the FIF. For example, during the EAFIF in 2013, the Kenyan farmer innovators decided to form the *Farmer-led Innovators Network of Kenya* and continue communicating with each other.

The lessons learnt from such fairs are also important results. PROLINNOVA partners who were involved in the EAFIF evaluated the event and drew lessons that could be used by others within the network (these lessons are also informing this publication).

In terms of policy influencing, the organisers of the different FIFs noted that inviting very important persons to the opening ceremony and giving them a guided tour with TV coverage had been very effective. In most cases, involving some of these policymakers and other influential ARD stakeholders in the panel discussions and other side events were excellent ways of drawing their attention to farmer innovation.

For people from CPs who attend an FIF, the experience is often a stimulus to organise an FIF in their own area. That was the case for the PROLINNOVA partners from West Africa who experienced the EAFIF in Kenya in 2013. They were



Design: Ingrid Flink

Photo: Hassane Ouedraogo

Nmaa Nso, farmer innovator from Ghana, explaining her innovation at FIPAO

impressed with the event and the recognition it brought to farmer innovators. They were convinced that such an event in West Africa would help them advocate for promoting farmer innovation among ARD stakeholders in their region. This idea was further discussed and supported by partners within their CPs and members of the International Support Team and by donors. Two years later, the FIPAO was held, having drawn heavily on the experiences and lessons from the FIFs in Nepal and Kenya.

Checklist of questions for planning an international FIF

Before deciding to embark on organising an international (e.g. regional) FIF, which is a major undertaking, especially for small NGOs, it is important to take several factors into consideration. This checklist is intended to support you in deciding whether to hold an FIF and, if the decision is positive, in planning and preparing for it.

Elements of the FIF	Questions to be answered in the planning/design stage
General questions	• Is there enough commitment of a sufficient number of capable organisations to be able to organise such an event? • Is there a good likelihood that sufficient funding can be raised? To decide this, you need to have some idea of how much it will cost and how much time it will take. • What is the main aim of organising an FIF? • Is there a person in the organizing structure capable and available that can coordinate all activities?
Fair	• Where is the best place (country, city, town) for the FIF to be held? • Who in that place will be responsible for coordinating the event? • Who at international level will be responsible for coordinating it? • Who will contribute financially to what extent and to which element(s) of the whole event? • Which countries and partners in those countries should be involved? • How to deal with different languages (if this is the case)? • What could be an appropriate venue for the FIF and its side activities? • What topics and who should be in the centre of the FIF? • How and according to which criteria should the innovations be selected? • How many farmer innovators should be invited? (i.e. Eastern Africa: 50) • What types of farmers (small-scale, medium-scale, large-scale, commercially oriented, specialised, crop farmers, livestock farmers) should be included? Should also other rural actors (e.g. fishers, blacksmiths, food processors) be invited to take part, so as to go beyond innovation in only production and storage? • How many farmers should be invited from each country, including gender balance and age balance? • How should the innovations be shown (to make them more interesting for the public)? • Who should open the FIF officially?
Side events	The FIF offers the opportunity to integrate various side events (presentations, podium discussions between government officials and some key persons, documentaries, etc.) • Who is going to have the main responsibility for organising each of these events?
Other workshops and conferences	• What other events do the core-group partners want to plan before or after the FIFs? • Who is going to have the main responsibility for organising each of these events?
Roadmap from today towards the realisation of the FIF	- Timing of the fair - Timeplan for all preparatory activities - Main milestones in the roadmap - Overall coordinating body - Website and/or other “window” for the public - What finances are to be provided by whom?

PROmoting Local INNOVAtion in ecologically oriented agriculture and NRM is a community of practice involving partners in several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Initiated by civil-society organisations, this Global Partnership Programme under the umbrella of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) embraces both state and non-state organisations. It promotes recognition of local innovation by women and men farmers as an entry point to farmer-led participatory research and development. The ultimate aim is to integrate this approach into institutions of agricultural research, extension and education.

PROLINNOVA International Secretariat c/o Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Mauritskade 63, 1092 AD Amsterdam, The Netherlands | Email: prolinnova@gmail.com | Web: www.prolinnova.net

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