

INSPIRE-NRM

(International Network to Stimulate Participatory Initiatives in Research
and Extension in NRM)

New mechanisms for strengthening partnerships in research and development of ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management

Concept paper

12 May 2001

1. Rationale: EA/NRM research starts from the local scale

Mainstream agricultural research has focused primarily on technical and biophysical aspects and is aimed at controlling or manipulating nature through the use of external inputs, such as agricultural chemicals, or through genetic improvement of crops and livestock. The results of this research have benefited some resource-rich farmers on well-endowed land, but less often the large proportion of small-scale farmers in resource-poor areas. Moreover, the negative environmental effects of “modern” agriculture are now becoming increasingly evident, while problems of resource degradation are being faced by the farmers confined to the marginal land. There is a need to strengthen research and development (R&D) aimed at ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management (EA/NRM), especially by the poorer farmers who did not benefit from the “Green Revolution”.

In EA/NRM, the most important ingredients for success are not external production inputs but rather labour, knowledge and local management capacities. Scientific research for development in this sphere must seek not to develop perfected technologies (which, in any case, are likely to be of limited applicability over time) but rather to develop local capacities to manage resources flexibly, to access useful information, to test new ideas, to assess the results and, thus, to adapt to changing conditions. Most “success stories” in the development of EA/NRM by smallholders on family farms are derived from local knowledge and experimentation, and are based primarily on the use of local inputs. The innovations are usually site-specific, given the complexity and diversity of agroecosystems in space and time. The ideas and principles behind them can, however, inspire farmers and development agents in other areas and can provide starting points for their own local experimentation. Spreading these innovations can accelerate learning by other people trying to improve their systems of agriculture and NRM.

Research in EA/NRM must be oriented to action in developing more sustainable forms of natural resource use. The action for improvement will ultimately be taken by the resource users themselves. These people – and the farmer organisations, NGOs and private bodies working with them – have a particularly important contribution to make in recognising, critically analysing and further developing promising innovations, together with other partners in R&D.

Individual practices and collective management of resources

The primary objective of the R&D should be to promote processes of local innovation in improving EA/NRM. This can be achieved by:

- 1) identifying and diffusing concrete innovations by individual or groups of farmers, with emphasis on the conditions that explain the success of these innovations and on the biophysical and organisational principles behind them¹.
- 2) encouraging R&D partnerships to assist farmers who are trying to develop their innovations further, and
- 3) encouraging farmer experimentation, farmer-to-farmer extension and networking.

Most local innovations in EA/NRM fall into two broad categories:

- **technical innovations at the farm-family level or below** in the areas of crop farming, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery etc.; these integrate various components in a farming system, optimise the use of internal inputs and minimise the use of external inputs within the agroecosystem²;
- **institutional measures for resource management at the landscape level**, such as collective mechanisms for managing common property resources within ecosystems. Watershed management, community forestry and common management of grazing and fishing grounds belong in this category, as does soil and water conservation beyond farm boundaries.

The work of most international agricultural research centres (IARCs), especially the commodity-based ones, is focused on the field or farm level. However, the landscape level is now being given increased attention, especially by IARCs working on agroecosystem approaches or policy issues, such as CIFOR, ICRAF or ILRI.

Innovation processes at both levels are influenced by public policies, such as legislation on land tenure and rights of access to natural resources, and very strongly so at the landscape level. Research is needed to identify the most efficient mechanisms for sustainable management of common property resources at the most appropriate decentralised level and to understand how public policies support or constrain local arrangements. It also involves stakeholder analysis, an understanding of how conflicts arise or are solved, and the identification of favourable conditions for concerted multi-stakeholder action.

The boundary between agroecological innovation at field/farm level and institutional innovation at landscape level is not always clear cut. These categories may overlap, for example, in:

- *Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Depending on the type of pest, some aspects of IPM can be practised at the farm level, whereas others need to involve some degree of collective organisation at a larger geographic and social scale;*
- *Soil fertility management and agroforestry. The innovations are generally rooted at the farm level, but their continuation often depends on institutional measures concerning grazing rules and fire control at the community level, and also depend on access and usufruct rights to land and trees;*

¹ One basic assumption is that these conditions (and constraints related to them) are of higher importance than the site-specific innovations themselves when the question comes to apply them elsewhere.

² Agroecology is an integrating science which makes it possible to master flows of energy, information and matter within agroecosystems and to optimise the outputs, while minimising the use of external inputs and the mining of the natural resource capital. An agroecological approach involves integration of various biophysical disciplines, such as agronomy, forestry, livestock husbandry and soil science, which are compartmentalised in conventional research.

- *Close integration of fields crops, livestock and trees. This can be sought, in some cases, at farm level, but often involves agreements between more specialised producers (e.g. arable farmers and transhumant pastoralists) and a mixture of new techniques and rules for managing collective goods;*
- *Generating economic value from natural produce (e.g. medicinal plants in forests, resins, wildlife). This important activity which helps to maintain biodiversity can be sought at the individual or farm-family level, but generally involves the use of common lands and forests and some form of collective action in marketing.*

In view of the variability of marginal environments and the local-action orientation of EA/NRM, R&D in this field must be much more "bottom-up" than "top-down". It needs to be based on the dynamics of innovation by local resource users, i.e. on promising local experiments, initiatives and practices. R&D efforts should aim to document, analyse and validate the locally-generated techniques as well as on techniques originating from formal R&D but being applied and adapted by farmers. Not only the biophysical context but also the sociocultural, economic and political-institutional context of an innovation need to be made clear. Particular attention must be given to questions of gender, age, wealth class and social standing. Research should also contribute to defining how widely applicable a given innovation could be ("recommendation domains"), encouraging its adaptation to different contexts, and promoting further innovation and experimentation where this is appropriate.

Land users and support organisations also need to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of a given innovation and its impact on the natural resources and on social equity. Analysis of the conditions under which a change has taken place³ and the foreseeable consequences helps to assess the extension potential of an innovation in a given micro-region, as well as in the larger agroecological zone to which this micro-region belongs and within which such an innovation could be tested and adapted. This will contribute to a process of "scaling up" in the sense of extending the application of the innovation in one form or another.

In all of these experiences, it will be important to analyse the complex interplay of actors: farmers, farmer organisations, fieldworkers, supporting development organisations, formal extension agents, formal researchers, inputs suppliers, tool manufacturers, traders etc. Even more important than the diffusion of specific innovations is the spreading of an attitude among researchers and development workers that:

- 1) acknowledges farmers as sources of innovation and as equal partners in efforts to improve productivity and resource management, and
- 2) opens the minds of researchers and development workers to learning from farmers instead of only instructing or demonstrating to them.

This will require institutional innovation within the organisations of formal research, extension and education.

2. Three concrete mechanisms for launching an international programme

In view of the urgent need for action to support and spread successful local-level initiatives in EA/NRM, some concrete mechanisms are proposed that could help to launch an international programme of cooperation between various stakeholders in R&D.

The overall aim is to stimulate **the identification, validation, strengthening and scaling up of local initiatives** which lead to innovation and concrete positive changes in the field of EA/NRM, with a view to sustainable development⁴.

Three sub-programmes are proposed to reach this objective:

- PROLINNOVA, to identify and promote local innovations and innovation processes involving farmers' experimentation with both local and introduced ideas;
- INTERDEV, to manage information on such innovations at both global and decentralised levels, and
- POLICYNET, to address the issues of policy and institutional development that are raised by such innovations and innovation processes.

2.1 PROLINNOVA: Identifying and promoting local innovation in EA/NRM

The objective of PROLINNOVA is *to strengthen research and methodology development to promote processes of local innovation in EA/NRM* through partnerships of farmers, NGOs and research organisations at various levels (local, national, regional and global).

PROLINNOVA will involve four main types of activities with various types/levels of partnerships:

j) Identifying, supporting and scaling up local innovation at local, national and regional levels

Greater cooperation between NGOs, farmer organisations, research organisations and both governmental and nongovernmental development agencies will be facilitated in order:

- 1) to encourage the recognition and validation of promising local innovations and innovation processes;
- 2) to evaluate the potential and limitations of these innovations, e.g. according to the category of farmers involved and the biophysical, socioeconomic, cultural and political-institutional environment;
- 3) to coordinate mechanisms for disseminating these innovations among a wider array of farmers, for them to test and possibly adapt; and
- 4) to launch programmes for "scaling up" local innovation. This will include the establishment of farmer-extensionist-scientist partnerships to investigate and improve local innovations by combining indigenous and external knowledge, and the incorporation of processes of Promoting Local INNOvation into regular research, extension and education programmes.

Spreading the innovations in areas with similar conditions (horizontal "scaling out") will be the aim of revised "ecoregional approaches". "Farmer-to-farmer" extension – also across national and regional boundaries – will play an important role in achieving wide diffusion. Attention will be given to questions of intellectual property rights with respect to local innovation, and agreements will have to be reached with innovative individuals and communities to give them due recognition for their achievements.

Deliberate actions will be undertaken to expose policymakers (including funding agencies) and government services to the process and results of this approach to R&D, with the

purposes of 1) creating a conducive institutional and policy environment for wider application of the innovations and for promoting processes of local innovation, and 2) gaining long-term continuity in supporting this approach.

ii) Strengthening global exchange and analysis of approaches and methods of participatory R&D in EA/NRM to promote local innovation processes

Conventional analytical, disciplinary and determinist approaches in agricultural research are not adapted to the questions raised and addressed by innovation in EA/NRM. Participatory methods and integrated approaches are needed. Scientists must learn to deal with research under complex real-life conditions, with a high level of uncertainty. Therefore, there is a need for systematic documentation of the processes and methods used in:

- 1) investigating local innovation in EA/NRM
- 2) collaborating with local resource users in adaptation and further development of innovations
- 3) participatory monitoring and evaluation of innovations and their impact
- 4) scaling up innovations and innovation processes.

Comparative analysis will be made at regional and global level, so that the scientific community can learn from experiences in applying participatory methods and integrated approaches.

iii) Training potential collaborators in these new approaches

As the vast majority of present agricultural researchers have been trained according to the conventional disciplinary and top-down paradigm, it will be extremely difficult for them to adjust themselves to recognising local innovations and initiatives and to accepting these as starting points for their research planning. They will therefore need access to continuous programmes of training and coaching in integrated approaches to EA/NRM, including participatory methods of research and communication, and exposure to recent work on common property resource management, stakeholder analysis, conflict resolution, environmental negotiation, etc.

Not only researchers but also the administrators and policymakers in research and extension organisations will need relevant training. Extension agents and development workers in both governmental and non-governmental organisations will also benefit from such programmes, as the training and coaching will involve interaction with them as well as with farmers. In this process, an important role will be played by learning groups which involve a mix of stakeholders. The formation of such groups will be encouraged mainly at subnational and national levels, but comparative analysis of methods and experiences in this learning approach will be made at regional and global levels.

It will be particularly important to incorporate training in these new approaches into the curricula of universities, colleges and vocational schools that prepare future research and extension workers in agriculture and NRM. Regional and global exchange on related curriculum development and teaching methods will speed up the process of adjustment.

iv) Promoting regional and global research networks on EA/NRM based on local innovation

This will, in part, grow out of components ii and iii. It will include electronic discussions and face-to-face workshops to exchange information and analyse experiences related to local innovation and supportive research in similar agroecological zones or on similar types of technical or institutional innovations. This will also be a means to bring potential partners

together to draw up new joint research proposals. The classification of data in INTERDEV according to zones and types of innovation will help to identify potential partners in such networks and joint research.

Challenges in identifying and classifying successful local innovations

The main problem will be the selection and analysis of genuine “success stories”. The grey literature is full of promising initiatives and projects in the field of EA/NRM with resource-poor farmers – perhaps not so many based on farmer innovation, but certainly many involving small-scale testing by farmers of introduced innovations. In most cases, the conditions under which these “successes” were achieved, particularly in terms of technical and financial assistance to the farmers, are not described. This “postcard syndrome” is quite common among NGOs and research organisations alike. It is therefore essential to verify the innovations that have been identified. An important (but not unique) criterion for the potential success of an innovation is the fact that at least some farmers are adopting or adapting it without external assistance, as a result of farmer-to-farmer contact.

It is also proposed to document and analyse the circumstances in cases where innovations, whether local or introduced, did not spread or did not have the positive effects envisioned. These would be complementary to “success stories”, as they can yield important information about the necessary conditions for and constraints to scaling up. Agricultural development is largely based on trial and error; it is healthy to recognise the errors in order to avoid excessive optimism and to counteract the “postcard syndrome”. If these non-successful cases are regarded as sources of learning, this could help to overcome the institutional censorship of such R&D experiences and to avoid the repetition of mistakes.

As a tool for scaling up, all the local innovations identified will be classified in agroecological, sociocultural and technical terms, and will be fed into a database by local and regional partners. The information will be entered according to a given format and checked for quality (see INTERDEV, below). Each innovation will be characterised according to locality, farmer group(s) involved, institutional context (support organisations, research and extension services, farmer organisations, legal framework) and sociopolitical context (infrastructure, markets, agricultural policy, land tenure and NR policy).

The classification, e.g. the descriptions of relevant agroecological zones and of relevant types of AE/NRM innovations, will remain flexible, so that it can be adapted to accommodate concrete innovations and scaling-up processes as they are documented, and not vice versa. Therefore, PROLINNOVA will start with a preliminary classification, which will be periodically revised, based on the information received on actual innovations.

This information generated through PROLINNOVA and systematised in INTERDEV will be available also to communicators using different means to disseminate the ideas more directly to farmers by way of radio, film, posters, booklets, farmer workshops, etc.

Research-related “scaling up” within agroecological zones

“Scaling up” in the sense of expanding research partnerships and exchange will take place among stakeholder groups involved in research related to EA/NRM innovation within a given agroecological zone³. Conditions of transition⁴ of the characteristic agrarian and forestry systems will be studied, and especially the combination of technologies and policies which

³ This will allow comparisons *between* various innovations *within* a specific agroecological zone. It will highlight the reasons why a specific innovation is adapted to local circumstances within that zone (i.e. type of farming system, socio-political constraints, etc.).

⁴ Changes in the systems allowing them to overcome their limitations and crises as regards NRM.

can favour these changes (see also POLICYNET, below). Concrete exchanges between similar or different stakeholders (farmers-to-farmers, policymakers-to-policymakers, farmers-to-policymakers) will be promoted between areas linked by common conditions, questions and/or solutions (for example, integration of successful silvopastoral initiatives from a specific micro-region in the Sahel into another Sahelian micro-region where advances in rangeland management are being made by the local people).

Research-related “scaling up” within thematic areas

“Scaling up” in the sense of expanding research partnerships and exchange will also take place in relationship to particular topics (e.g. IPM, soil fertility management, communal pasture management). The methods and results of innovation and of efforts to promote innovation will be compared between different agroecosystems⁵. This would involve also the fields of commodity-based technical research and methodological debate⁶.

Both of these forms of research-related “scaling up” will be sought mainly through the components ii and iv mentioned above: strengthening exchange and analysis of methods of EA/NRM participatory approach, and promoting regional and global research networks.

Sustainability of the initiative

PROLINNOVA is meant to provide an initial stimulus and create multi-layer platforms that bring various stakeholders together behind the idea of promoting local innovation and participatory research in EA/NRM. It will serve as a mechanism for identifying and linking existing relevant programmes – many of which are currently considered to be marginal to scientific agricultural research – and promoting their integration into the mainstream of research, development and teaching institutions. The extent to which the exchange about innovations and methods in participatory R&D brings benefits to the stakeholders, ranging from the farmers to the development funding agencies, will determine their willingness to devote their own resources, or self-generated sources of support, to a continuation of PROLINNOVA.

2.2 INTERDEV: Global information system linking local and scientific knowledge

The success of scaling up depends on appropriate mechanisms for describing, validating, classifying and exchanging information, and should involve networks of organisations (with critical mutual control) rather than a centralised system.

This is the proposed general objective of the INTERDEV information system, a mutual and cooperative service now being tested by a network of currently seven European organisations, all of which themselves provide expertise in R&D projects and NRM-related activities.

These organisations are developing an information system in which they themselves enter information, in order to share their experiences and knowledge, and make this accessible through the Web to any organisation working in the same domain: the sustainable management of natural resources.

⁵ This will allow comparisons *between* various agroecological zones *within* the frame of a specific type of innovation. It will highlight the agroecological criteria to which a specific innovation is adapted.

⁶ An initiative of this type is presently being developed by a set of partners including CIMMYT, CIRAD, local NGOs and NARS on the issue of “permanent cover/no-tillage cropping systems”. Similar initiatives on other topics could be organised on matters of shared interest between several organisations.

Questions to be considered include: How to define a project on NRM at the local level? Who has already tried this and how can I get in touch with him/her? What were the results and the main problems faced? Where can I find the necessary equipment? Who can provide technical support?

INTERDEV is designed so that a common database can be downloaded by any participating organisation, *enriched by its own experience and automatically updated* from time to time. Thus, the users of the information are, at the same time, the main suppliers. The service should become, at the global level, a network of decentralised databases interconnected with each other and mutually updated, rather than a single centralised database.

Rationale for the initiative

Although there are today numerous services providing access to scientific databases, and even more numerous services at field level working with practically-oriented information and comparable databases, there is hardly any cooperation between the different network levels. The scientific database services rarely provide answers for practical and operational problems that development-support organisations, not-for-profit groups or small-scale entrepreneurs meet in the field. The knowledge gathered on the operational level is rarely used as a basis for scientific research.

The Interdev information service can help overcome such *lack of communication* and *mutual ignorance* between “*global and universal*” knowledge, which is based on science and world-wide valid knowledge, and “*operational*” knowledge, which is demand-driven, action-oriented, with bottom-up information on innovations, validated by their effective use, and based on local wisdom and farmers’ own experimentation and practical experience.

Experimental phase up to mid-2001

After an initial experimental phase (up to December 2001), the service will be run by a *much larger number of participating organisations*, equally committed to filling in and using the database. Studies are now underway for the future expansion of the information service in terms of both the number of organisations participating and the themes covered.

From the time of its launching in 1999, the development of the service has required the definition of norms and procedures for managing the information on a cooperative basis, which fully meets the criteria described for the PROLINNOVA initiative. This having been done, the system is now being tested while concentrating on three specific themes particularly relevant to NRM:

- ecological farming systems,
- agro-food processing and quality control,
- urban and peri-urban agriculture.

These issues have been selected after consultation with a large number of organisations throughout the world. They are among the 12 topics listed as priority fields of interest by the Natural Resource Management Workshop held during the European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development held in April 1999 in Wageningen, The Netherlands.

2.3 POLICYNET: Network for policy research related to EA/NRM

An important factor for the success of the scaling up of AE/NRM innovations and the process of local innovation is the design of appropriate policies which will encourage and support

these local initiatives. These policies may address, for example, the legal framework (e.g. legislation on common property resources); the provision of credit, inputs and marketing infrastructure; the organisation of research, extension and education; or opportunities for farmer-level training and exchange. Policy research should also look into the role of small farmers and farmer/community organisation in equitable socioeconomic development and sustainable management of natural resources.

The underlying principle of POLICYNET is that agriculture is “multifunctional”, in the sense that its benefits cannot be summarised in a single financial or economic equation. In addition to the economic dimensions, small producers will, for instance, benefit more (or less) from the management of agricultural resources according to whether their access to resources is made more (or less) secure, and according to whether they are able to reduce the risks associated with agriculture (or face increasing risks). There are also strong cultural values associated with many aspects of agriculture.

POLICYNET has three broad objectives :

1. To conduct research in order to develop options for policy improvement at local, national and international levels. It will make these findings available in appropriate form both to those responsible for policy at these various levels and to other partners or organisations with an interest in policy reform;
2. To conduct such research in collaboration with partners in ways that reinforce the skills of all partners involved. The identification of research topics and methods will be strongly influenced by priorities perceived by South-based partners.
3. Where appropriate, to put South-based interest groups in contact with policy research organisations not collaborating directly within POLICYNET, but capable of responding to their request in a manner consistent with the objectives of the network.

Initially, POLICYNET will focus on the *institutional and political conditions of emergence and dissemination of innovations and innovation processes related to NRM.*

It will adopt an iterative approach to designing policy options, starting from field-based information on the innovations and their context and limitations in terms of policies, towards debate with policymakers, and back to local actors. Its research would therefore be built progressively to address demand-driven issues. It should contribute, ultimately, to creating the necessary space for successful local initiatives. It will indicate ways in which organisations for research, extension and education in agriculture and NRM can be restructured and re-oriented, and will document “success stories” of such institutional transformation.

3. Linkages between the three initiatives

INTERDEV is seen as pivotal in the links between the three initiatives. It is here that practice-proven information on local initiatives and innovations in EA/NRM, including the application and adaptation of technologies introduced from formal science, will flow together and be made accessible worldwide to all interested stakeholders. INTERDEV will mobilise resources to keep the entire system fed with relevant information and will classify, select and organise this information with a view to the needs of both PROLINNOVA and POLICYNET. The information will be made available in a form relevant primarily for development practitioners, but can be processed for the purpose of research on EA/NRM, training of researchers and other stakeholders, and research on policies affecting EA/NRM.

PROLINNOVA includes mechanisms to identify and document innovations which can be fed to INTERDEV, and to promote use of the information in scaling up the innovations and innovation processes through participatory research and extension approaches. It will thus be both a

provider (through its first component at the local level) and a user (through its three other components on research methodologies, training and research networks at various levels) of INTERDEV information. INTERDEV will provide POLICYNET with data for comparative analyses and cases for studying the conditions that influence innovation and scaling-up processes. The results of PROLINNOVA-inspired innovation and scaling up and the results of the policy research will be fed back into INTERDEV for dissemination to end-users.

While PROLINNOVA and INTERDEV are closely linked, they are not exclusive: PROLINNOVA will encourage use of its documentation not only in the INTERDEV database but also through other media than databases; at the same time, INTERDEV will aim at using all reliable sources of documentation, and not only the PROLINNOVA outputs.

These three combined initiatives – INTERDEV, PROLINNOVA and POLICYNET – are designed to facilitate mutual learning by stakeholders in R&D of sustainable systems of natural resource management, and seek linkages with relevant existing initiatives.

4. Strategy for implementation

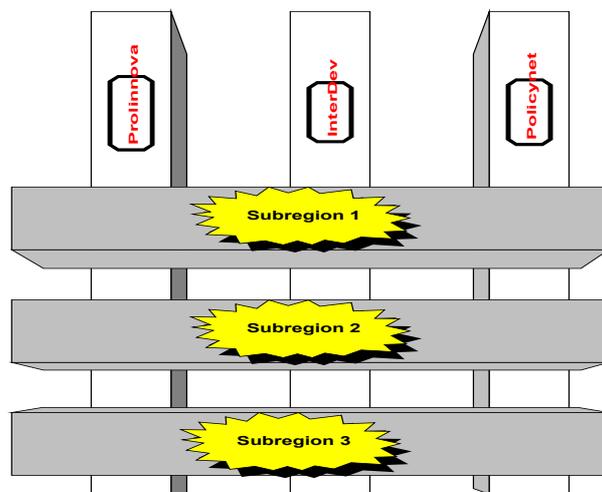
During the Dresden conference of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) held in May 2000, *PROLINNOVA*, *INTERDEV* and *POLICYNET* were presented and discussed. Following this meeting, these initiatives have been developed by a limited number of stakeholders, at least on a conceptual (*PROLINNOVA*) or experimental (*INTERDEV*) basis.

On 22-24 April 2001, a meeting was then convened by the GFAR Secretariat in Rome to assess progress made to date, ensure better coordination and consider expansion to additional stakeholders and partnerships. The present strategy for implementing and extending these three initiatives is a result of this consultation meeting.

Two preliminary remarks should be highlighted before going into more detail about each initiative.

Firstly, during the Rome meeting, it was suggested that an “umbrella” programme on NRM/AE be developed in coordination with the GFAR Secretariat. This “**umbrella**” **programme on NRM** can be conceived to include not only those initiated through the GFAR process but also those developed “outside” of GFAR. This “umbrella” programme will include the closely interrelated and “like-minded” initiatives like Prolinnova, InterDev and PolicyNet, as well as similar initiatives such as DMC, CGIAR-PNRM, IPM and others that may develop over time. This will promote local innovation, strengthening partnerships between farmers and other stakeholders in agricultural development, and participatory research/extension.

Secondly, the organisational design for the implementation and extension should respect a matrix organisation, with both horizontal (regions/subregions) and vertical (three initiatives) components. The role of each vertical pillar is to achieve coherence at the global level (general methodological choices, tools for documentation, exchange of information between regions etc) whereas each of the horizontal lines ensures adequate integration of activities at the regional or subregional level, in relation with the priorities of the related GFAR forum.



4.1 Vertical PROLINNOVA and INTERDEV pillars⁷

4.1.1 PROLINNOVA

Research and development partnerships can be strong only if principal stakeholders have been involved in their formulation and setting of the rules. The starting-up or *inception phase* (9 months) of the PROLINNOVA programme should allow to start establishing strong R&D partnerships at local (subnational, national, subregional) level as the principal owners of PROLINNOVA and to formulate detailed plans for implementation of PROLINNOVA programmes at both local and global levels.

During the inception phase, the following activities are planned:

- Preparing, conducting and following up five local workshops (subnational, national or subregional) in different areas. This will be a collaborative effort between coordinating NGOs in each of the areas and the PROLINNOVA, INTERDEV AND POLICYNET initiatives. The workshops will aim to reach a joint understanding and vision of promoting local innovation and of activities to support this process (e.g. database management, policy research), building partnerships among stakeholders, and developing joint action plans. Preparation will include a local inventory of relevant activities and organisations.

⁷ As the POLICYNET initiative is still in an early conceptual phase, this pillar is not yet described in more detail.

- Carrying out a consultation process with stakeholders to review existing experiences in identifying and encouraging local innovation in AE/NRM, analyse these jointly and identify gaps where supportive mechanisms can be introduced or strengthened. This will be done by long-distance communication, as well as during the local workshops, and will be fed into the global workshop (see below).
- Preparing, conducting and following up a 3-day workshop involving the coordinating NGOs at local level plus resource persons, e.g. from regional research networks and international agricultural research centres. This workshop will be aimed at exploring common issues involved in establishing local partnerships for PROLINNOVA, INTERDEV and POLICYNET, identifying appropriate networking and support mechanisms and finalising proposals for potential donors.
- Exploring and arousing the interest of potential funding agencies in PROLINNOVA and linking them with local partners. This will include correspondence, telephone and face-to-face contacts and arranging, together with local partners, that donor representatives be exposed to successful experiences in promoting local innovation and experimentation in AE/NRM.
- Mobilising scientific backstopping to the regional PROLINNOVA activities from institutes of agricultural research and higher education.
- Setting up a PROLINNOVA homepage as electronic platform for the consultation and planning process, integrated into existing websites, such as EGFAR and INTERDEV.

The inception phase will allow the joint development of activities with INTERDEV (see § 4.1.3) and POLICYNET, to the extent that this latter initiative is further developed.

4.1.2 INTERDEV

The inception phase of Interdev is now terminating. The database and the website will be opened mid 2001. The extension of the INTERDEV service beyond the present set of participating organisations requires a two-fold effort:

1 - Strengthen the common database facility

- > Improve the general quality of the service and administer the common database facility: upgrade the technologies used and develop new ones, e.g. Spanish and Portuguese versions, indexing, multilingual interface, mapping, XML⁸, text mining; develop relationships with existing portals and information services in agriculture and NRM;
- > Exchange data with existing databases and organise the consolidation of the decentralised databases;
- > Identify and involve key NRM local knowledge actors in the regions and build a network to provide support in information management and content management;
- > Negotiate with new organisations to join and to develop new themes;
- > Experiment with several ways of managing data (such as decentralised management but centralised storage versus fully decentralised network of databases);
- > Organise a specific governance system involving the regions.

2 - Facilitate expansion at the regional level

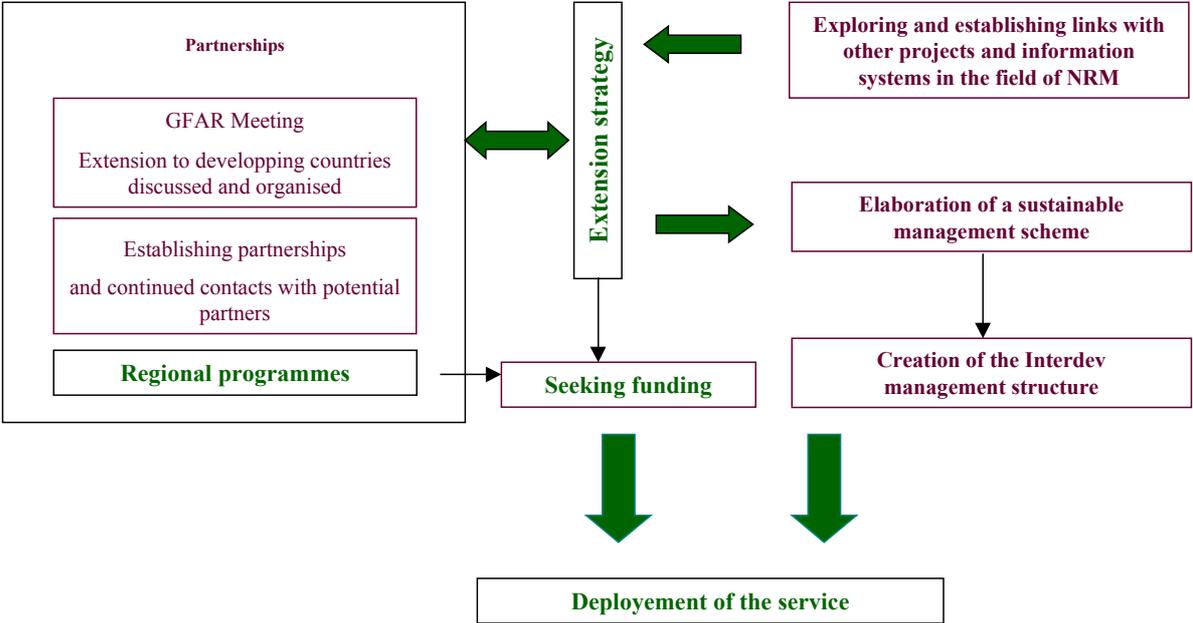
⁸ XML facilitates exchanges with other existing databases. It also enlarges the technical capacity to format data from the databases on other supports.

The quantitative extension of the INTERDEV co-operative service requires, in the short term, a special effort to organise training sessions to facilitate participation of additional stakeholders. The technologies and principles are relatively young and require hands-on training.

Support will be needed to organise at least three workshops per continent, each of them allowing at least three organisations to participate. The total number of organisations that this process will allow will then be 36, out of which it is expected that at least 24 (6 per continent) will go on participating effectively in the network. Jointly with the seven organisations that launched the initiative, the total number of participants would then be 31 by the end of 2002.

Once the training workshops are held, support to -and exchanges between- participating organisations will be needed, firstly at the regional level, and secondly at the global level. Such exchanges shall not only concern the information management and technical issues; they should also aim at (i) building a common understanding on data collection on innovations (ii) integrate documentation on innovations and information management into the regular activities of the participating organisations and (iii) enlarge the number of stakeholders involved at each regional level, specially towards research and academic organisations.

INTERDEV
Developing partnerships - Sustainable management scheme - Implementation strategy and funding



4.1.3 PROLINNOVA and INTERDEV jointly

- > Making an inventory of existing R&D programmes and databases on local innovation in EA/NRM, with a view to establishing/strengthening links and collaborating in the future, depending on their willingness, issues of intellectual property rights, etc.
- > Providing support to partners in the regions in drafting PROLINNOVA and/or INTERDEV proposals for their regions to submit to donors for funding.

4.2 HORIZONTAL REGIONAL PROGRAMS

For each subregion one or two organisations have been selected to act as a regional node for extending both PROLINNOVA and INTERDEV initiatives. Proposals for activities in each subregion will be drafted and discussed with the various stakeholders. In some cases, this will be possible on the very short term when contacts and discussions are already well advanced. In other cases, this might be possible only once the PROLINNOVA inception phase has allowed further discussions with local organisations.

For each subregion, an initially small number of organisations have been invited to develop subnational, national or subregional programmes involving various local stakeholders in PROLINNOVA and INTERDEV initiative. Proposals for activities in each area will be drafted and discussed with the various stakeholders. In some cases, this will be possible in the very short term when contacts and discussions are already well advanced. In other cases, this might be possible only after the PROLINNOVA inception activities have allowed further discussions with local organisations.

When possible, such local programs will be presented for discussion to the regional and subregional fora (at least, the most advanced ones, such as FORAGRO, CORAF, SACCAR and ASARECA) of the GFAR. Such a presentation should allow to strengthen the NGO constituency as a full component of national agricultural research system (NARS) at the regional and subregional levels, and also to give content to their NRM activities. Finally, this should lead to the establishment of wider partnerships.

Key node organisations identified to date:

Africa:

- > East: Pelum
- > West: FRAO (WARF) and ENDA-GRAF

Asia:

- > AME (+ ITDG Sri Lanka)
- > Cedac

Latin America:

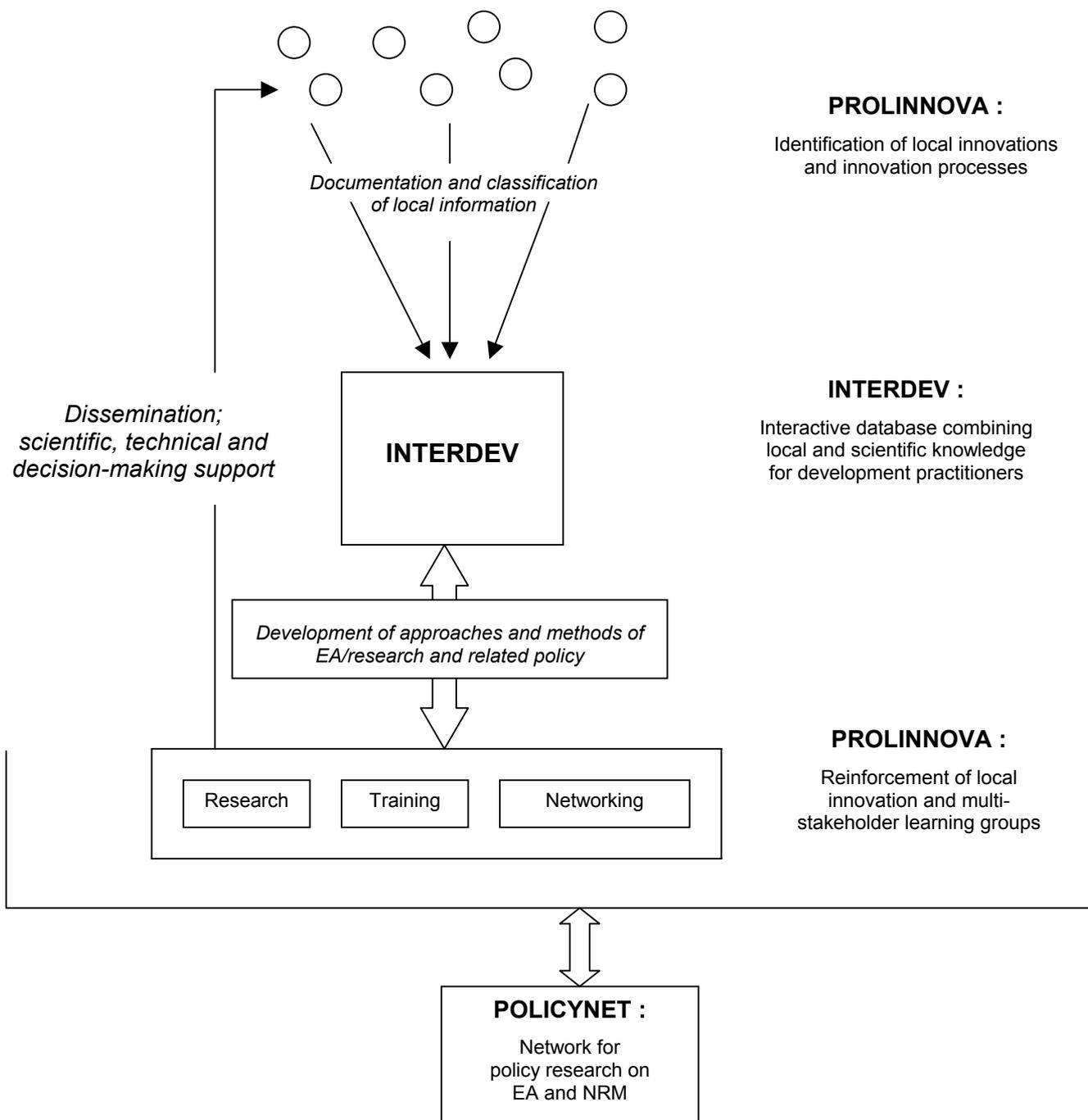
- > ASPTA
- > CIED/RIMISP/PGU-LAC

4.3 General coordination and management - role of GFAR

To facilitate the development of the umbrella programme on NRM/AE, a **Working Group on NRM/AE** was proposed to be created consisting of, initially, three (3) to five (5) practitioners representing various initiatives on the topic with a balanced North-South representation (e.g., Prolinnova-InterDev-PolicyNet, Global Programme on DMC, CGIAR-PNRM, FAO LinKS Project, WAICENT), a GFAR Secretariat representative and possibly a representative from the Regional/Subregional Fora. This membership may be expanded gradually depending on the discussion/interaction among the interim group. The members of the Interim WG will discuss among themselves their Terms of Reference (TOR).

This WG is envisioned to have two main functions: (a) *Platform function*, i.e., working out a strategy to link all (if possible) decentralised initiatives (including those not initiated with the support of the GFAR); and (b) *Facilitator function*, i.e., make possible the communication and interaction among these initiatives, including the sharing of information and experiences and coordinating these initiatives and upscaling linkage strategies

Mechanisms for strengthening partnerships in research and development for ecologically-oriented agriculture (EA) and natural resource management (NRM)



Acronyms

AME	Agriculture Man Ecology
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
ASPTA	Assessoria e Servicies a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa
CEDAC	Centre d'Etudes du Développement Agricole du Cambodge
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIED	Centro de Investigacion, Educacion y Desarrollo
CORAF	Conférence des responsables de la recherche agronomique africains
EA/NRM	Ecologically-oriented agriculture and Natural Resource Management
EGFAR	Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research
ENDA-GRAF	ENDA - Groupe de Recherche-Action-Formation
FORAGRO	Foro Regional de Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico Agropecuario
FRAO/WARF	Fondation pour la Recherche en Afrique de l'Ouest (West Africa Research Foundation)
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
GOAN	Ghana Organic Agriculture Network
GRET	Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques
IAC	International Agricultural Centre
ICRAF	International Center for Research in Agroforestry
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IIRR	International Institute for Rural Reconstruction
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
ITDG	International Technology Development Group
LinKS	Local Indigenous Knowledge Systems Project
NARS	National Agricultural Research Systems
NRM/AE	natural resource management and agroecology
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
R&D	Research and Development
RIMISP	Red Internacional de Metodología de Investigación de Sistemas de Producción (International Network on Methodology of Farming Systems Research)
RODI	Resources-Oriented Development Initiatives
PELUM	Participatory Ecological Land Use Management
SACCAR	Southern African Centre for Co-operation in Agricultural & Natural Resources Research and Training
WAICENT	World Agricultural Information Center

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