



JOLISAA international newsletter

What is “JOLISAA”?

JOLISAA (JOint Learning in Innovation Systems in African Agriculture) is a three-year research project funded by the EU under FP7 and started in February 2010. It aims to learn from recent experiences in multi-stakeholder agricultural innovation in three African countries (Benin, Kenya and South Africa), with a specific interest in understanding the role of local knowledge in innovation processes. JOLISAA partners will synthesise the findings and lessons across a series of case studies and bring these into international and national policy dialogue on agricultural research and development (ARD). In this way, JOLISAA seeks to help identify research and policy priorities that address the needs and demands of small-scale farmers and other rural actors in developing countries.

After having made an inventory of relevant cases of multi-stakeholder innovation processes, partners in each country will assess carefully selected case studies together with scientists and practitioners involved in each case. The cases will include diverse types and scales of innovation: from natural resource management to production and agribusiness, from local initiatives to projects implemented at national or regional level. The heart of JOLISAA is the joint and iterative process of capacity-building and learning by partners and stakeholders in the assessment of the innovation cases – engaging practitioners, researchers and policymakers at both local and national level in studying the case.

A consortium of African and European partners is collaborating in JOLISAA, mobilising individuals from diverse discipline and backgrounds:

- KARI (Kenya Agricultural Research Institute), Kenya
- UAC–FSA (University of Abomey-Calavi, Faculty of Agronomic Science), Benin
- UP (University of Pretoria), South Africa.
- CIRAD (Agricultural Research Centre for International Development), France
- WUR–LEI (Wageningen University and Research, Agricultural Economics Research Centre), Netherlands
- ETC Foundation, Netherlands
- ICRA (International Centre for development-oriented Research in Agriculture), Netherlands / France.

Inventory of innovation cases

Thus far, the three country teams in Benin, Kenya and South Africa have identified about 70

innovation cases by means of literature review, interviews with resource persons and interactions with multi-stakeholder networks engaged in agricultural innovation. Under the leadership of CIRAD and WUR-LEI, the JOLISAA partners jointly developed guidelines and an analytical framework to ensure that the inventories in the three countries follow a similar approach and the information is analysed in a consistent way.



Discussion with a women group producing solar salt in South Benin

The inventory revealed a wide diversity of cases, covering different types, domains, scales and timelines of innovation, with different degrees of success or impact in terms of improving smallholder-farming systems. The partners are in the process of analysing these cases and, according to the agreed criteria, selecting cases for deeper study in a co-learning mode. In the process, the similarities and differences between the cases will be highlighted, to derive lessons and insights for policymakers in ARD.

During a recent meeting of partners in The Hague (Netherlands), our initial analysis of the cases revealed some interesting features: the common occurrence of “innovation bundles” (a combination of technological, social and/or institutional innovation); the non-linear dynamics in innovation processes; the importance of market linkages in triggering or driving many of the innovations; and the differences in the frequency and intensity of links between innovation and development projects. It is proving to be a challenge to find sufficient cases that illustrate well the role of

smallholder farmers and/or the role of local knowledge in innovation.

Defining key concepts

Under the leadership of CIRAD and WUR, the JOLISAA consortium members have developed an internal paper in which key concepts related to innovation are defined. This paper was important to reach a common understanding of these concepts among JOLISAA partners. The key concepts are used in the inventory and analysis of innovation cases, and are based on a literature review and current debates on innovation. The key concepts defined include innovation systems, types of innovation, triggers of innovation, scales and phases of innovation, the role of innovation brokers and facilitators, local knowledge and power relations.

This paper is also available upon request to all those interested in agricultural and rural innovation issues in Africa and other developing countries.

The paper forms the basis for further development of a full-fledged yet practically oriented literature review, which will synthesise the innovation system concepts, with particular attention to the role of local knowledge.

Country approaches and cases

In Kenya, Geoffrey Kamau (KARI) assisted by Teresiah Nganga, coordinates JOLISAA activities

Box 1: Examples of innovation cases being documented by the JOLISAA project

Taking-off of soybean production and transformation (Benin)

Introduced in Benin 40 years ago as a way to improve infant nutrition, soybean production exploded recently as a key ingredient for artisanal cheese production and for industrial oil production following the decline of cotton production.

From a weed to a resource: Prosopis management in Baringo (Kenya)

The Prosopis tree was introduced for re-vegetation 20 years ago, and had since become invasive. A community and various public agencies worked together to establish a sustainable Prosopis management and marketing system.

Mainstreaming local knowledge through manufacturing mosquito repellent (South Africa)

Local traditional healers partnered with researchers to experiment with and manufacture a mosquito repellent from *Lippia javanica*, an indigenous plant with properties similar to citronella.

in close interaction with the national PROLINNOVA¹–Kenya network and involvement of KARI regional research centres and their development partners. Cases identified so far cover a wide diversity, from collective natural resource management to seed production, lime application, contract farming and other cases.

¹ PROLINNOVA: **P**ROMoting **L**ocal **I**NNOVation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management

In South Africa, Joe Stevens assisted by Hlami Ngwenya (both from University of Pretoria) share the coordination in close collaboration with Brigid Letty, the PROLINNOVA–South Africa network coordinator. Cases are diverse and include a mixture of local innovation led by NGOs and farmer groups and institutional innovation triggered by official research and extension programmes and projects including the development of bio-pesticides, in-field rainwater-harvesting techniques, egg layer production cooperatives and maize seed production.

In Benin, Davo Vodouhe (University of Abomey-Calavi) assisted by Anne Floquet coordinate the



Trying to understand how women developed a novel way of feeding chicken (South Africa)

JOLISAA activities. There is no national PROLINNOVA network, but a recently launched national innovation platform (PNISA²) is emerging. Cases also come from a diversity of sources and include a wide array of innovation experiences, including the emergence of soya production and local processing, the production of organic cotton, pineapple and shrimps for the export market, and the conservation of mangroves by raising oysters instead of harvesting wild ones.

Joint learning

The JOLISAA project is designed as an iterative process revolving around joint learning by consortium members and their partners within the three countries. International project meetings in June 2010 in southern France and in June 2011 in the Netherlands as well as national meetings in each of the three countries in autumn 2010 provided opportunities for joint reflection and exchange of experiences. Insights gained so far include a reflection on the inventory process and its preliminary results (such as the difficulty to focus on the innovation process itself rather than the outcome of the process), on the strengths and

² PNISA: Plateforme Nationale d'Innovation dans le Secteur Agricole

weaknesses of national networking (and the difficulty to establish two-way exchange), on the post-JOLISAA perspectives (and the need to find institutions with a long-term interest to take JOLISAA insights on board) and on the functioning of the JOLISAA consortium.

Joint learning will intensify in the coming months, with the identification and monitoring of explicit joint learning indicators and through the collaborative case assessment process, which should allow for a more systematic learning between JOLISAA national teams and local stakeholders, as well as more effective cross-country exchanges (see below).



Discussing innovation cases during the first national meeting in South Africa

Networking

Networking related to JOLISAA takes place at two main levels: at **international level**, ETC led the process of identifying numerous networks, organisations and people working on agricultural innovation issues. Eighteen key resource persons (8 women and 10 men) from Africa and Europe accepted to form the JOLISAA International Learning and Advisory Circle (JILAC). The JILAC members come from national and international research institutes, universities, nongovernmental organisations, the World Bank and international fora. The JILAC was set up to exchange information, experiences and theories around issues of rural innovation and local knowledge, and to give feedback and suggestions on the project's approach, methods, concepts and outputs.

In an e-discussion facilitated by ETC in late 2010, the JILAC members discussed issues around the diversity of innovation processes, how these processes unfold and the role of local knowledge. They suggested key questions that JOLISAA partners need to explore to be better able to understand the role of local knowledge in innovation systems. They also referred the JOLISAA team to relevant literature, people and innovation cases (see the summary report of the e-discussion on the JOLISAA website).

The insights and feedback from the JILAC fed into JOLISAA's working paper on key concepts related to innovation and into the framework and guidelines for identifying and documenting cases of innovation in smallholder agriculture in Africa.

At **country level**, the three national teams have developed their own ways of interacting with existing formal or informal innovation networks. The PROLINNOVA (**P**romoting **L**ocal **I**nnovation in ecologically oriented agriculture and natural resource management (www.prolinnova.net) networks in Kenya and South Africa have been useful entry points. The first national workshops in autumn 2010 built on the existing networks and linkages and served as important moments to introduce and link the JOLISAA project to these other initiatives.

A project website (www.jolisaa.net) has been set up for networking both within and beyond the JOLISAA and JILAC groups. Here, updated information on JOLISAA can be found. In addition, an extranet is reserved for JOLISAA members to support communication and coordination.

Influencing policy formulation

JOLISAA aims to inform policies related to agricultural innovation about the need to strengthen the innovative capacity of African smallholders and the importance of linking this force for change with public and private actors in ARD at national and international level. To this end, partners agreed that project activities need to be closely linked to the messages that JOLISAA would like to bring to policymakers. Examples of policy messages under consideration include:

- "To achieve success in innovation processes, the multiple complementary dimensions of innovation – technological, organisational and institutional – must be taken into account"; and
- "The local knowledge, experience and creativity of smallholder farmers make a vital contribution to innovation processes for improving the livelihoods of rural and urban households in a sustainable way.

These and other tentative policy messages will be further refined based on the findings and lessons from the assessments of innovation cases across the three countries.

JOLISAA will also identify which policymakers it aims to influence at international and national level and the best approach for getting the message across.

Next steps

About 10–12 out of the numerous agricultural innovation cases identified during the inventory will be assessed in detail, in close collaboration with local stakeholders using a participatory approach. The local stakeholders will be encouraged to play an active role not only in reflecting on their own

experiences but also in moving the innovation process forward. The assessment will explore common overarching questions such as:

- What factors and conditions allow stakeholders to or hinder them from taking an active role in the innovation process? and
- To what extent are innovation processes determined by externally supported projects or interventions?

Capacity-building will be at the heart of JOLISAA activities. Over the coming months, a series of national meetings will be held to strengthen partners' conceptual and practical capacities to conduct the collaborative case assessments, at the same time as launching the assessments.

In early 2012, a second e-discussion with the JILAC will focus on the case-study findings, drawing out key lessons and suggesting priorities for agricultural research, policy and practice. The partners will identify specific policymakers with whom they need to interact and will explore their visions, needs and agendas. On this basis, JOLISAA's strategy for policy influence in favour of agricultural innovation building on smallholders' knowledge and creativity will be refined.

In late 2012, JOLISAA aims to link its insights and experiences more closely with other networks and programmes working in agricultural innovation and development. JOLISAA will invite them to take part in wider reflection and sharing, possibly also through an international symposium.

Contact us!

Interested in knowing more about JOLISAA? Keep in touch by visiting the JOLISAA website: www.jolisaa.net

Would you like to contribute and be a partner in some of our international or country-based events and activities? Please contact us to explore possibilities for collaboration.

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