

Strengthening local adaptive capacity: the key to resilience in the face of climate change

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Introduction of farming and land-use technologies for climate-change adaptation (CCA) often overlook or even weaken local adaptive capacity. PROLINNOVA partners in Ethiopia and Niger studied how crop farmers and pastoralists respond creatively to change, to discover local innovations that could offer starting points for community-led climate-change adaptation.



Ethiopian pastoralists perceive change, e.g.:

- longer and more frequent drought
- less access to grazing and water because of irrigation schemes and national parks

Endogenous responses of the pastoralists:

- cutting & carrying fodder from national parks
- making below-ground cisterns to store water
- diversifying herds with more goats and camels

(Photo: Yohannes GebreMichael)

Responses of rural communities in Niger:

- making more use of donkeys than in the past to haul water
- women have started to give donkeys to daughters upon marriage
- collecting hay from communal land for dry-season fodder

(Photo: Wolfgang Bayer)



Grassroots innovations are positive entry points for farmer-led joint research with scientists to further develop the ideas, integrating local and scientific knowledge, e.g. improving haymaking

This approach strengthens local resilience because it:

- builds mutual respect among all partners in joint research
- stimulates farmers to value their own knowledge and skills
- increases farmers' confidence
- provides low-cost and site-appropriate solutions
- enhances local adaptive capacities to deal with change

Local people involved in this process are better able to:

- analyse their situation and options
- pool their energies and knowledge
- link with scientists to continue adapting to address emerging problems, including climate change

Recommendation: CCA programmes should include recognition and documentation of local innovation in adapting to change, as a source of learning and an entry point to community-led CCA



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