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## Local innovation support facility (LISF) as a catalyst for farmer creativity in developing innovative solutions for food and nutrition security in northern Benin

NICOLE SARAH<sup>1</sup>, GEORGES DJOHY<sup>2</sup>, LÉONARD ADJE<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Better Life NGO & Prolinnova-Benin, Borgou, Benin*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Parakou, National School of Statistics, Planning and Demography (ENSPD), Benin*

<sup>3</sup>*Espérance-Vie NGO & Prolinnova-Benin, Benin*

### Abstract

Local Innovation Support Facility (LISF) is an alternative assistance mechanism based on small funds providing access to finance for low-resource innovative farmers to promote and improve their local innovations. With a view to expanding the promotion of local innovation for food security and healthy nutrition to build resilience, Prolinnova-Benin – a multi-stakeholder country platform for promoting local innovation in agroecology and natural resource management in Benin – set up LISFs in two districts in northern Benin, namely Bembéréké and Tchaourou. This article analyses the extent to which the LISF has been taken up by grassroots actors and its impact on food and nutrition security. A qualitative approach was used to trace the process of setting up the LISF from the launch of the call for applications to the granting of funds. A total of 17 applications were received from farmers/groups, presenting in video form in local languages the difficulties encountered in their activities, the local innovations developed as solutions, the research ideas pursued, the material needs and the actual use of the funds. Participant observations were made during the review of applications by local multi-stakeholder committees based on criteria locally set. Open-ended interviews were conducted as part of follow-up visits with seven (07) innovators, including five (05) women selected as LISF beneficiaries, in order to ascertain how they used the funds allocated and what the initial effects were on their livelihoods. Preliminary results showed that the local multi-stakeholder partnership created around the LISF made it possible to target local innovations of great importance for food and nutrition security: soya yoghurt, flavoured shea butter, improved cashew apple juice, bone-based pesticide, spicy groundnut fritters and basil leaf-based chicks adoption. The fair assessment of requests and the transparent communication on funds allocation strengthened the confidence of innovative farmers and boosted their self-confidence through recognition of their creativity. In addition, improving farmers' investment capacity through LISF had a positive effect on their activities, by increasing productivity and income. These results are relevant to actions and policies aimed at mainstreaming local innovation and participatory innovation development approaches into agricultural research and development.

**Keywords:** Benin, farmer creativity, food and nutrition security, local innovation, local innovation support facility