

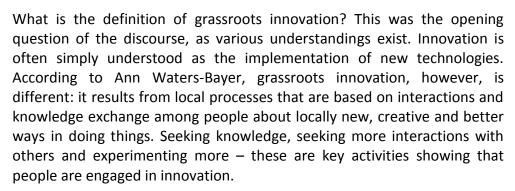


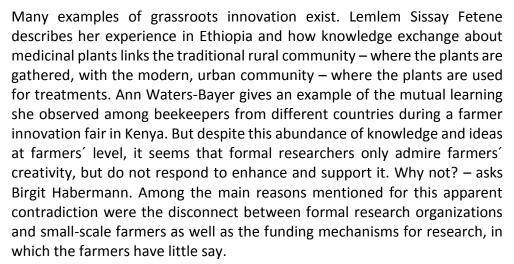
University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna Centre for Development Research

Global Discourse, 29 September 2015, 6 pm

## Event summary: Can Grassroots Innovation bring Global Solutions?

Ann Waters-Bayer, Prolinnova/KIT, Netherlands and Lemlem Sissay Fetene, International consultant, Vienna discussed on the podium. Birgit Habermann from BOKU-CDR, led through the evening and 20 interested participants followed the discourse.





Ann Waters-Bayer points out that the concept of innovation is understood differently in most research organizations, where the common belief is that innovation means that farmers are adopting the technologies that the researchers have developed. This explains why researchers do not see innovation when it happens at the farmer's level. Lemlem Sissay Fetene's concern is that the global research agenda follows different interests and



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Habermann, Waters-Bayer
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Sissay Fetene, Habermann, Waters-Bayer (© Peloschek/CDR)



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overlooks the resources at local level. She gives the example of "teff", an important staple foods in Ethiopia. It was only when teff was discovered to be a "healthy food" of global interest that some research funding was dedicated to it.

Despite all the challenges, grassroots innovation has potential. Each innovation by farmers is a small step towards improved rural livelihoods. The process of recognition and the interaction among the various actors are key. Recognition by outsiders for farmer researchers and farmers recognizing themselves as researchers can be transformative, so Ann Waters-Bayer.

What is required to put grassroots innovation on the global agenda? Decentralized research all over the world and support for farmers innovating in their specific circumstances is required instead of uniform approaches. The one-size-fits-all approach will not work, agreed Lemlem Sissay Fetene and Ann Waters-Bayer. (© CDR/ BS/BH)



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