

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation System: Lessons Learned From Fisheries Research Agency (FRA) in Japan

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Introduction

Referring to the Report of its 32nd Meeting, the SEAFDEC Program Committee pointed out the need to establish a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system within SEAFDEC to assess the outcomes and outputs of its programs and their contributions to fisheries development of the region. Moreover, during the 45th Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council, concern on the lack of overall strategy for activities conducted by SEAFDEC was raised while linkages among the SEAFDEC programs should be clarified in order that the programs could be implemented in a more coherent and strategic manner.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is critical in carrying out a project effectively and efficiently, boosting accountability to beneficiaries, donors and other stakeholders. In particular, an M&E system helps to determine if the project is on track, on-time, and on-target; ensure that funds are used as intended, the project/program implemented as planned; and unveil whether the program/intervention has made a difference. Carrying out an M&E of any project could be crucial to assess that a project is achieving its set targets. For instance, monitoring the development of a project would make it easier to understand whether strategic changes have to be made and actions could be undertaken accordingly. Results of the M&E would help donors in assessing whether in the organization implementing the project could be a reliable partner because by reviewing milestones and final outcomes of projects, other sources/organizations would decide on the accountability of the organization, upon which further collaborations could be established. As such, developing a strong M&E plan is of vital importance. In addition, evaluation would help to clearly envision the milestones of a project and the final outputs that strengthen the overall consistency of the project proposal. Moreover, evaluation also ensures that other sources/organizations have concrete ways of assessing the partial and final results of the project, thus contributing to guarantee a successful communication.

In the past, the proposed projects of SEAFDEC do not indicate at the proposal stage the need to address the requirements of other sources/organizations. As a result, in most SEAFDEC project proposals, the objectives, outputs, outcomes, and achievements could not be assessed, it would be difficult to monitor and evaluate the project as a whole. However, some SEAFDEC projects have undergone yearly evaluation by external evaluators, who are usually experts from Thailand, Philippines and Japan. In was through such process that the evaluators pointed out the need for continued monitoring of the projects' implementation and for evaluation to be conducted to be able to assess the targets of the projects such as the objectives, outputs, outcomes, achievements, etc. Thus, improvement of the overall planning, monitoring and evaluation of SEAFDEC programs/projects had been recommended especially linking these to the overall goal of SEAFDEC.

In this connection, SEAFDEC under the JTF arranged a special training course for some SEAFDEC staff to visit the Fisheries Research Agency in Japan and other concerned institutions for them to learn how the FRA manages their fisheries activities effectively through proper planning, monitoring and evaluation system. In this paper, the author intends to share the lessons learnt from FRA and examines the ways and means of applying these to the evaluation system of SEAFDEC.

Methodology

In order to understand the evaluation system of FRA, It is necessary to understand its general structures. FRA has 10 research institutes and 45 small stations in strategic areas around Japan (Figure i). FRA conducts a wide range of research and development activities from basic and applied science to practical technologies concerning fisheries to secure a stable supply of fisheries products and for the sound development of fishery industry, as stipulated by its Basic Plan for Fisheries Policy. The Operating Plan of the FRA is reviewed every five years, and is set based on the medium-term goals outlined by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, of which the Third Five-year Plans has been established in April 2011.

Results

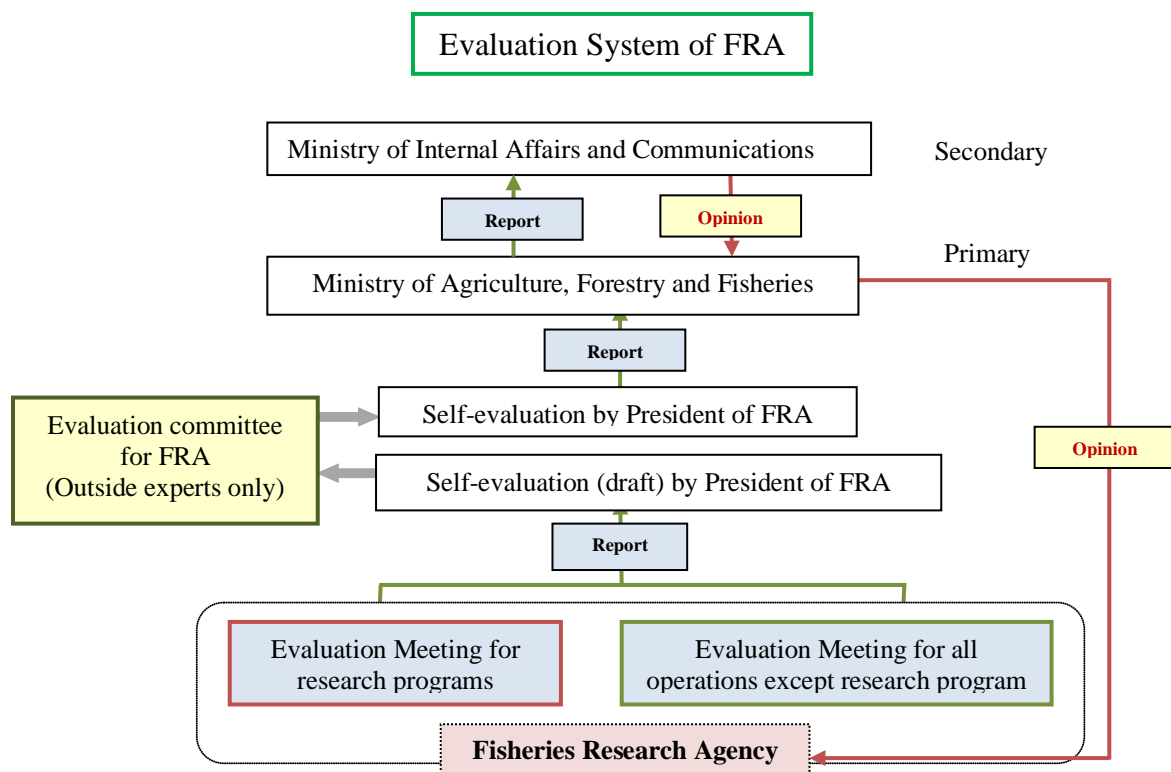
The 3rd Five-year Plan includes five research components, namely: i) Developing Conservation Technologies for the Sustainable Use of Fishery Resources Both Domestically around Japan and Internationally, ii) Developing Stock Enhancement, and Rational Use of Fishery Resources, and Environment Conservation Technologies for the Promotion of Coastal Fisheries, iii) Establishment of Productivity Improvement and Environmental Friendly Technologies for Sustainable Development of Aquaculture, iv) Research and Development for the Development of Fishery Industry, Safety of Fishery Product and to Maintain Consumer Confidence, and v) Monitoring, and Basic and Pioneering Research. The main research component is Component ii) on Developing Stock Enhancement, and Rational Use of Fishery Resources, and Environment Conservation Technologies for the Promotion of Coastal Fisheries.

In 2013, FRA categorized its funds into 2 types: for operations which was 32 Million USD and commissioned projects 36 Million USD. FRA has 4 committees undertaking the evaluations: i) Prior Evaluation, ii) Annual Evaluation, iii) Interim Evaluation, and iv) Post-project Evaluation (Follow-up Evaluation). For Research, evaluation includes Outcome Point of Views in terms of Roadmap, Management, and Output. Roadmap focuses on constitution, outcomes, and social needs, Management on progress and allocation of a budget, and Output focuses on scientific articles, social needs, and secondary results among others.

For research program, project leaders send report to the President of FRA for draft self-evaluation by rank and score, and the draft self-evaluation is then sent to evaluation committee for FRA (outside expert only). The score rank used is SABCD system (S=4, A=3, B=2, C=1, D=0) and then send report and the result of evaluation to the President of FRA who decides whether the score of the program based on the results is accurate. After that, the final report will be sent to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and then send to the Ministry of International Affairs and Communication for comments. If the Ministry of International Affairs and Communication have any comments, these will be sent to FRA through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for improving the efficiency of the research program.

Most of research programs come from the research institutes of FRA. While the Evaluation Meeting for all operations except research program which most of the program under headquarters of FRA would use the same system with the research program. (Figure ii)





ii) Evaluation System of FRA

The evaluation system of FRA includes 6 parts, namely: i) Report of the result of the study, ii) Evaluation sheet, iii) Report of the Result and the evaluation, iv) Self-evaluation, v) Evaluation of Large category, and vi) Comprehensive Evaluation. After completing the evaluation system, the results would be uploaded to FRA website for compilation and development of database.

The lessons learnt from FRA provided the new visual and improved the knowledge on the evaluation system for the implementation of programs. In addition, the lessons learnt increased the knowledge and more understanding on the program planning and evaluation system. Finally, it is expected that such important knowledge could be applied in monitoring and evaluating the programs and projects of SEAFDEC and can be used for developing the database of SEAFDEC programs based on the results of the evaluation.