



CABI Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy – Summary

February 2018

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1. Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation in CABI aims to measure and optimise the results of interventions, ensure relevance and efficiency in the implementation and to learn what works, what doesn't and why in a particular context. Ultimately it aims to improve programme quality, performance, and learning across CABI. The Strategy sets out CABI's approach to M&E based on the strong foundations already in place within the organisation. Its implementation will contribute to assessing programme outcomes and impact against the CABI Medium Term Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), generating understanding of change, and informing learning within the organisation. Good M&E allow us to address the following questions:

1. Are we doing what we said we would do? [Internal validity]
2. Are we making any difference? [Outcome/impact evaluation]
3. Are these the right things to do? [Strategic relevance, testing the model]

Monitoring is a continuous, methodical process of data collection and information gathering throughout the life of a project. **Evaluation** represents a learning and management process: assessing what has taken place in order to improve future work. **Impact Evaluation** is the systematic analysis of lasting or significant changes, positive or negative, intended or unintended, in people's lives generated by a given action or series of actions. M&E is done for two main reasons that support sound decision making: accountability and learning

The Strategy represents a shift from reporting on outputs to reporting against the outcomes and impacts of a project or programme. We focus on four areas of evaluation:

- assess *outcomes and impact* of the programme within the project/country context
- test *underlying assumptions* of the project model or theory of change
- establish *causality* and programme *contribution/ attribution*
- assess the *efficiency and effectiveness* of the programme

2. Framework and principles for M&E

M&E is based on two key approaches:

- the project logical framework (logframe) approach
- theories of change

The LFA specifies the linear representations of inputs and activities that lead to outcomes, while the ToC describes the interactions between project components that are expected to lead to impact and the underlying assumptions of the change process. Pathways describe the links between outputs, outcomes and impact and how these changes will be measured. CABI works falls under three main impact pathways:

- **Technology development and adoption:** including interventions that support trialling and adoption of technologies and practices rather than the technologies and practices themselves.
- **Systems change:** including capacity development
- **Policy influence:** generating evidence that contributes to development debates

Change can be achieved through actions within a single pathway, or through the interactions of all the pathways, and the feedback loops between them. These interactions reflect the complexities of the systems in which we work, and the realities of how changes in one pathway may have intended or unintended consequences in other pathways.

CABI's M&E system has six key aspects: Progress tracking, Process evaluation, Evidence collection, Learning, Context analysis and Capacity building. Progress tracking links to standard monitoring activities in every project. The other pillars contribute to process, outcome and impact evaluation. The pillars are not consecutive or disconnected activities: rather, they feed into a complete learning and programme management cycle. .

3. Progress tracking: monitoring and reporting in CABI

Monitoring processes are structured around the principle that all our work contributes to the strategic priorities and objectives laid out in the Medium Term Strategy (2017-2019). Basic project monitoring, which occurs in all projects, feeds into reporting at the organisational level. CABI's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) encompass CABI's work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and corporate achievements on issues such as staffing and finance. The critical milestones of the MTS are monitored and reported on a quarterly basis with information obtained from across CABI themes, centres, projects and programmes. The reporting system will be streamlined to address inconsistencies between the KPIs, critical milestones and theme reporting.

4. Evaluation, Learning and Context Analysis

4.1. Mixed method approach

CABI works in complex agricultural systems where interventions in one area will be influenced by other aspects of the agricultural system, and in turn the intervention may affect other parts of the system that were not anticipated to be affected by the project. Approaches must be flexible enough to identify intended and unintended outcomes and impacts, both positive and negative. CABI uses a variety of evaluation designs and methods (e.g. experimental, case-based, participatory) and a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods at different scales (e.g. impact stories, case studies, large scale studies) to evaluate outcomes and impact. Often a number of different methods will be used in one study, because one method on its own will provide insufficient evidence to enable a thorough understanding of the complexity of the system, the cause, effects and feedback loops that all lead to impact.

4.2. Decision criteria for evaluations

The increased demand for evaluating outcomes and impact creates a need for broader engagement across the organisation and with partners in deciding what work should be carried out. Budgetary allocations for such work varies so some work will be funded by centrally planned investments as a complement to project funding. Identification of outcome and impact evaluations will be determined through a process of consultation amongst the Global Directors (GDs) who will consult with staff and partners working in their themes to identify activities that merit investment. Key criteria to guide selection of work and investment are as follows:

1. **Innovative:** The intervention or technology is testing a new approach with a potential for impact.
2. **Replicable:** The intervention or technology is replicable in other countries or scalable to a large population of beneficiaries particularly in CABI member countries.
3. **Strategic:** The intervention or technology is strategically relevant to the CABI medium term strategy and science strategy that link to delivery against the SDGs.
4. **Need for evidence:** Understanding how the intervention is implemented, including influences of context, is critical to understanding how impact can be reached.
5. **Policy relevance:** The results of an impact study provide evidence that contributes to development debates.

Development of the pipeline will also be used to inform planned external communications by the Marketing and Communications team.

4.3. Value for Money

CABI aims to provide a broader range of evidence representing value for money (VfM). We already have in place a number of systems to deliver efficiency, economy, effectiveness and equity in our work. We will continue to review our practices to ensure that we obtain high levels of efficiency and economy. We will pay particular attention to assessing the relative cost-effectiveness of our actions, recognising that effectiveness measures go beyond assessments of cost effectiveness alone. The relationship between the cost of delivery and the outcome of the action will be analysed to ensuring that the effectiveness of the measure measured against the cost. Where appropriate we will distinguish between the costs of introducing an intervention as part of a programme of work (e.g. the costs of work CABI staff carry out to introduce Plantwise in a country) and the long term cost of the intervention itself (e.g. cost to a country of implementing Plantwise interventions).

4.4. Resources for evaluations and social science research

CABI will continue to invest in the production of outcome and impact evaluations. Our pipeline of work will be reviewed and updated annually. We aim to:

- Invest in at least one impact evaluation per year beyond the major programmes such as Plantwise and the Invasives programme. This will either be a standalone study or will complement funds already identified in projects to enable a more in-depth study to be carried out.
- Invest in 1-2 smaller mixed-method impact case studies that carry out ex-post investigations to assess project outcomes and impact and
- Support CABI staff, with back up from a technical editor, to narrate the findings from existing published/ unpublished work.

Additional funding will be required to meet the increasing demands for impact evaluations, and this will be incorporated into project development, or within the life of a project.

Currently, CABI has nine M&E staff (of which one is a trained agricultural economist, and a further five staff are agricultural/socio-economists. Other staff are employed in more general roles with a social science element, and contribute to some elements of outcome and impact evaluation work. To make the best use of these existing resources we are developing an internal community of practice to enable these staff to discuss technical issues, support each other in survey design, analysis and report writing. This community is already active in the Africa centre and virtually with staff based in other centres. Stronger coordination is needed to ensure resources are available for the work we have, ensuring ownership and understanding of the need for social science staff.

5. Dissemination of Evaluation and Learning Results

Evaluation and learning results will be documented and communicated to optimise their use for operational, strategic and policy decisions both inside and outside CABI at country, regional and programme levels. As specified in CABI's Science Strategy, CABI aims to ensure its research is published in open access sources to increase availability, visibility and use. There are currently robust procedures in place in CABI to monitor publication outputs and CABI working papers, through the Chief Scientist. However, there is a need to strengthen the processes around the production of research briefs and case studies. An internal peer review process is proposed to ensure that these publications adhere to high quality control standards, which complements the proposed structure for evaluation investment decision making. The editorial procedures aim to ensure the workload of producing high quality case studies and research briefs is spread across CABI scientists.

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