Marine Management Organisation

The MMO and the UK Fisheries Objectives: a framework for shared outcomes and the role of fisher agency

Aim

To produce a framework, which states how the MMO and its programme of activities can support the achievement of the UK Fisheries Objectives. This logical framework is to support MMO's strategic planning for fisheries management and to guide improved monitoring and evaluation by MMO.

Introduction and methodology

The study provides a framework depicting what the MMO is trying to achieve in support of the UK Fisheries Objectives. It explains how a theory of change can be used to support strategy design and monitoring and evaluation; it also identifies a set of common outcomes that need to be delivered (preconditions) for achievement of the objectives and lays out key areas of activity and actors relevant to each area. The study focusses on one outcome, fisheries compliance, and reviews the role of incentives to encourage compliance and how to enhance the power of fishers' agency.

Results

The study identified a set of target outcomes which need to be achieved, in whole or in part, if any given "impact" objective is to be met. The outcomes include:
- a) Opportunity and regulations within sustainable limits
- b) Capacity matches fishing opportunities
- c) Compliance with rules and regulations
- d) Voluntary changes in fisheries practices
- e) Functioning markets

There are also four activities that need to happen to deliver these outcomes, which include defining management, allocation of opportunities, enhancing incentives and improving access to markets. The MMO is a key partner in these, along with a range of stakeholders.

Exploring 'agency' through the theory of change involved focussing on the compliance outcome and examining whether co-management can provide a strategic approach for greater motivation among fishers to adhere to regulations. The sense of agency is pertinent to fisheries management for two reasons:
- At an individual level, compliance depends to a large extent on voluntary actions and individuals need to be motivated to do so.
- At a societal level, there is a basic societal and legal tenet that members of a society are held accountable for what they do. Fisher's negative opinions of regulations and regulators combined with the absence of involvement in fisheries management could be argued to reduce perceived accountability.

The report then sets out the preconditions and design elements required for a co-management strategy and a draft theory of change and logic model for fisher agency.

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Conclusions and recommendation

Recommendations include: a) Fisheries Management Plans need to be informed by evidence of the causes of current underperformance against the objectives, and of the challenges/barriers to achieving them, b) the theory of change and logic model should be continued using the fisheries management plans so they can benefit from the weaknesses or gaps highlighting in the ToC development, c) a series of objective or issue-specific theories of change should be developed first, with an overarching model before synthesising the theories, d) the MMO should work through these theories of change articulating its specific role and identifying where it will contribute, e) the MMO should develop indicators that represent the outputs and outcomes and f) robust monitoring and evaluation will be needed throughout to support learnings to see what works and where implementation issues are concerning.

MMO comments

The theory of change and outcomes produced in this report can help the MMO to shape its fisheries management in a way that delivers better outcomes for the industry, the environment and government. It is relevant to fisheries policy delivery and regulatory assurance work done by MMO as well as for others interested in fisheries management.

It could contribute to how the MMO measures progress against its Strategic Plan 2030. The theory of change outlines measures that the MMO can use to assess progress, for example as part of MMO's Goal 4 and Goal 6.

The exploration into fisher agency complements later reports (MMO1383 and MMO1389) in determining the drivers for communication and engagement from the industry with the government and lessons learned will be applied and considered in future engagement strategies.

Commented [LA1]: If we can put in the links to these on gov.uk when they are published too that would be great. I think they can give you the links ahead of the upload but check in with Chris S on that.

Further information

Please direct any correspondence to the Evidence Team (evidence@marinemanagement.org.uk)

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