

AN ANALYSIS OF AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM CASE STUDIES OF COLLABORATIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN MAHAWELI SYSTEM H

S Thiruchelvam and H M Somaratne
Faculty of Agriculture,
University of Peradeniya

Collaborative resource management has been a focus of a number of national environmental policy developments in Sri Lanka. The irrigation sector provides a rich source of experiences and lessons in user participation. The Mahaweli System H began an accelerated programme of transferring management responsibility to Distributory Canal Farmer Organisations (DCFOs) in 1998. This study attempted to construct a suitable weighted composite performance index (WCPI) to evaluate the participation and performance of DCFOs in the co-management of the Mahaweli System H. Data were collected from 60 DCFOs from Madatugama and Eppawala blocks.

Outcomes of the co-management provide evidence of a significant (36%) increase in water productivity of the DCFOs. There was a marginal increase in agricultural productivity and profitability. Irrigation fee collection rates (90%) and accumulation of reserves (27%) in DCFOs had improved significantly in the DCFOs in both blocks. However, financial self-sufficiency was affected due to inadequate opportunities for new sources of income and less control on cost. Relative less participation was found among tail-end farmers compared to head-end farmers in meetings and decision-making. This means that they risk not gaining the crucial benefits that can be realised from co-management. Compared to Eppawala the DCFOs in Madatugama had gained control over many operational decisions and secured the opportunity to stabilise their performance. WCPI analysis shows that in both the studied blocks future sustainability remains on 50% of the weakly performing DCFOs. Systematic continuous monitoring and evaluation of the performance particularly in financial and institutional aspects, as well as more training and additional time will improve the performance of the weak DCFOs.