



Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Outline

Section 1: Introduction

The IFFO RS Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system has been significantly upgraded and developed using the ISEAL documentary guidance, specialist consultancy support and stakeholder consultation workshops.

This MEL outline document aims to provide stakeholders and other interested parties with an easily digestible and comprehensive explanation of what the IFFO RS MEL system entails, its importance and the meaning of the terminology used within MEL documentation and documentation in relation to ISEAL compliance.

Differing from ISEAL, rather than name this system Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), IFFO RS uses the term Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). This is due to the significant importance that not only does IFFO RS as an organisation need to monitor and evaluate the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts it has on the global sourcing and production of Marine Ingredients, it should also learn from those findings in order to ensure continual development and that the desired impacts are achieved.

The IFFO RS MEL system is based on a Theory of Change developed from the overarching objective or Statement of Change *'Improved global responsibility of the sourcing and production of Marine Ingredients'* and takes into consideration the assumptions associated and possible negative and unintended outcomes.

The MEL system includes a detailed and concise MEL Plan that clearly sets out the indicators, baselines, targets, responsibilities and schedules, as well as the production of annual reports and subsequent stakeholder reviews.

1.1 Benefits of a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning System

Monitoring and evaluation systems are an important component of ISEAL compliance, therefore, in order for IFFO RS to achieve ISEAL associate membership (and ISEAL full membership within 3 years) IFFO RS implemented the IFFO RS MEL System. Becoming a member of ISEAL will enhance the IFFO RS Certification Programme's credibility allowing greater recognition by other schemes and international markets.

Beyond the benefits of ISEAL, the MEL system is a useful tool that can be used to demonstrate IFFO RS's impacts within the global sourcing and production of Marine Ingredients. This is done through data collection, analysis and evaluation reports whilst at the same time showing complete transparency in its findings.

Furthermore, the MEL system allows IFFO RS to learn, adapt and improve as it assists in the recognition of areas in which there are deficiencies or short falls in its organisational activities, and to effectively adjust in advance in order to achieve its objectives.



1.2 Objectives

The principal objectives of the MEL are as follows;

- **Traceability** – To demonstrate credibility and transparency to stakeholders and interested parties, including;
 - Ensuring ongoing compliance with ISEAL’s Impacts Code.
 - Enhancing IFFO RS’s credibility as the leading responsible Marine Ingredient Standard
 - Increasing transparency of the success of the schemes approach and impacts
- **Engagement** – To seek engagement from stakeholders and other interested parties.
- **Performance** – To track performance of MEL activities.
- **Improvement** – To facilitate development and improvement for particular indicators of concern.
- **Communication** – To communicate the findings of data collection, analysis and evaluation findings

1.3 Scope and Boundaries

- The IFFO RS MEL system is intended to span:
 - All IFFO RS activities that are identified in the Theory of Change as important to delivering the change that IFFO RS seeks to bring about: *“Improved global responsibility of the sourcing and production of Marine Ingredients.”*
 - All the critical assumptions on which the Theory of Change is based.
 - Any potential negative and unintended effects wherever practicable.
- The MEL system is to be phased in over time, as shown in the MEL Plan, based on assessment of urgency and/or importance and its impact within the IFFO RS Theory of Change.
- The full scope and boundaries, along with possible negative and unintended effects, are detailed in the MEL Plan available in the downloads section of the IFFO RS MEL [click here](#).
- The strategies, and intended outcomes and impacts (detailed in the Theory of Change [here](#))
- In line with the global geographic scope of the IFFO RS programme, the geographic scope of the MEL system is also global.
- Time boundaries for the activities of IFFO RS’s MEL system are align with those of IFFO RS. A full-time Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Coordinator has been recruited to accelerate progress, and to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of intended and unintended effects.
- The MEL Plan illustrates how each of the most significant effects are covered in the M&E system - by performance monitoring or through Outcome and Impact evaluations.



Section 2: Statement & Theory of Change

The IFFO RS Statement of Change is; **“Improved global responsibility of the sourcing and production of Marine Ingredients”**. This statement communicates the desired change that IFFO RS endeavours to bring about through its standards, which consists of; The IFFO RS Global Standard for Responsible Supply (IFFO RS), the IFFO RS Chain of Custody for Responsible Supply (IFFO RS CoC), and the IFFO RS Improvers Programme (IFFO RS IP).

Combined with this, the Theory of Change ([available here](#)) is then used as a tool to illustrate the process of change i.e. how it is IFFO RS intends to achieve the change it aims to drive.

2.1 Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes & Impacts

Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts are the processes through which IFFO RS will achieve the objectives of the Statement of Change and Theory of Change. The process of following the Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes and/or Impacts up the Theory of Change can be described as a ‘results chain’ and for the purpose of this outline document they will be referred to as such.

- **Outputs / Inputs:** The Inputs are the activities the organisation carries out as part of its day-to-day operations.
- **Outcomes:** The Outcomes are direct, short and medium-term consequences of the Outputs / Inputs as part of the services provided by the organisation.
- **Impacts:** The Impacts are the longer-term desired change that IFFO RS aspires to achieve.

Below you can find a detailed breakdown of the IFFO RS Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts;

Long-term Impacts;

1. **Improved global responsibility of the sourcing and production of Marine Ingredients** (IFFO RS Statement of Change)
2. More Marine Ingredient Factories reduce the effects on the environment to an acceptable* level
3. More Marine Ingredient Factories become socially responsible
4. More Reduction Fisheries reduce the effects on the environment to an acceptable* level
5. More Reduction Fisheries become socially responsible

*an acceptable level here refers to being compliant or aligned to the IFFO RS Standard requirements

Medium-term Outcomes;

1. Increase the proportion of Marine Ingredients which are sourced from responsibly managed Fisheries.
2. Reduce the proportion of Marine Ingredients which are produced using IUU raw material.
3. Increase the proportion of fish processors with an implemented and effective recognised Quality Management System.



RESPONSIBLE
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4. Demonstrate to stakeholders that fishmeal and fish oil products have been responsibly sourced and processed under a recognised Quality Management System.

Short-term Outcomes;

1. Provide globally relevant and credible IFFO RS Standards
2. Provide a credible Assurance System
3. Provide accessibility to the IFFO RS Standards

Outputs/Inputs (Organisational activities);

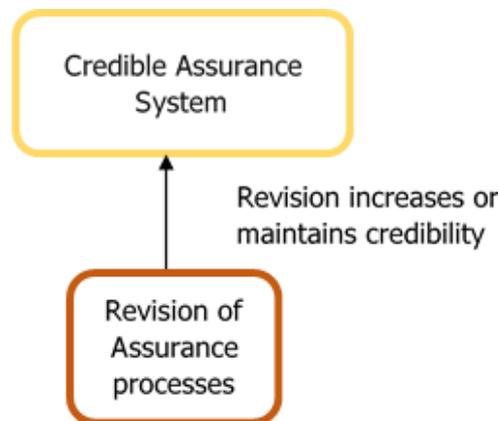
The above long, medium and short-term Outcome and Impacts will be achieved through the Outputs outlined in the IFFO RS Theory of Change and MEL Plan. Below is a complete list of the IFFO RS' Outputs;

- Stakeholder engagement
- Research
- Training
- Advocacy & awareness in industry
- Advocacy & awareness in government
- Support & advice
- Standard revision
- Monitoring, Evaluation & learning
- Revision of assurance processes
- Improvers Programme

Section 3: Assumptions

3.1 What is an assumption?

In essence, an ‘assumption’ in relation to the Theory of Change is the way in which IFFO RS ‘assumes’ it will get from A to B. What we mean by this is if A happens, i.e. ‘*Revision of Assurance Systems*’ then B, i.e. ‘*A Credible Assurance System*’ will be the Outcome. Therefore, the assumption associated to get from X to Y is that ‘Revision increases or maintains credibility’.



3.2 How do assumptions link with the Theory of Change?

Within the Theory of Change you will see that each Input, Output, Outcome and Impact has an arrow leading up the results chain. These arrows all carry at least one assumption and some may carry more than others.

3.3 What is the importance of assumptions?

Assumptions within the Theory of Change play a highly important role in the assurance that the results chain is successful. As already highlighted, assumptions are what IFFO RS as an organisation expects to be true and in order to ensure that this is the case these assumptions must be tested.

The testing of whether these assumptions are accurate is invaluable as it allows IFFO RS to not only identify areas in the Theory of Change that remain relevant, work successfully and efficiently but also aids in the identification of weak, incorrect or ineffective assumptions before an issue arises. As a result, IFFO RS will be able to adapt and rework appropriately to ensure the safeguarding of the Impacts it aims to bring about.

Furthermore, each assumption has been allocated an importance or ‘priority’ level, either high, medium or low by considering the aforementioned risks as well as the practicalities of testing each assumption.



3.4 Assumptions in practice

The most significant assumptions are included directly in the Theory of Change. These have been defined as significant due to the weight of importance they hold on IFFO RS accomplishing its goals. Major assumptions are considered highly pivotal for the reason that should one of the major assumptions prove to be incorrect it severely hinders the desired Outcome or Impact, and therefore carries the potential risk not only to the overall success of the Theory of Change but also the possibility of achieving the Statement of Change.

The 'Enabling Environment' i.e. big picture assumptions, are the business structures IFFO RS requires to function as an organisation and 'assumes' are in place to facilitate the Theory of Change. These assumptions cannot be associated with a specific arrow as is seen with each individual Input, Output, Outcome and Impact. Instead, each of these elements (Good Governance, Funding, Financial management, Human resources & management) all need to be in place throughout the results chains at each level to allow the Theory of Change to function in its entirety.

Whilst the bigger picture and enabling environment assumptions are incorporated in the Theory of Change, as there are so many assumptions associated, a separate document with a complete list of all of the assumptions has been created, ([click here](#)). These assumptions have been colour coordinated in order to clearly link with the Theory of Change and numbered accordingly so as to also clearly correlate with the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (MEL Plan), which is explained in detail in Section 4.



Section 4: Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Plan

Developed from the Statement and Theory of Change, the MEL Plan ([available here](#)) is a fundamental tool that illustrates exactly how IFFO RS intends to achieve the organisations targeted Impacts by specifically outlaying the following key areas;

- The means/methods and metrics (indicators) of data collection
- The frequency of data collection
- Who collects the data
- Baseline data and targets
- The priority level of each indicator
- The assumptions (if) associated to be tested using particular indicators

Not only is the MEL plan illustrative of how IFFO RS intends to achieve the organisations targeted impacts but it is actively implemented in order to carry out the necessary research and analysis for the purpose of performance monitoring.

4.1 Indicators

An indicator is the quantitative and/or qualitative data that are collected and analysed in order to either test assumptions or to be presented in MEL and evaluation reports to evaluate whether certain elements within the results chains are successful.

When looking at indicators within the IFFO RS MEL Plan it was taken into consideration that the indicators were specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. When attributing indicators it was key to ensure that the important indicators were made measurable and that the easily measurable indicators were not made important or unnecessarily scrutinised. Focussing on the easily measurable indicators rather than the important, but often more challenging to measure, runs the risk that the data collected and subsequent analysis would not provide the level of value towards the evaluation required therefore, hindering potential learning and development.

Indicators clearly relate to at least one element of the Theory of Change and an appropriate balance of effort is invested across the results chains.

4.2 Negative and Positive Unintended Effects

The unintended effects included within the MEL plan refer to Outcomes or Impacts not directly defined within IFFO RS's Theory of Change and can be negative or positive in nature. This is because, as the title suggests, these are not part of the 'intended path' that IFFO RS wishes to take in order to achieve the desired Impacts. It is important to acknowledge and consider the possible negative and positive unintended effects IFFO RS as an organisation may have outside of the Theory the Change in order to advance the positive and mitigate the negative.



4.2 How the MEL Plan links to the Theory of Change

As previously mentioned, the MEL Plan was developed from the Statement of Change and Theory of Change and as a result is inextricably linked to these. In the Theory of Change itself, each Output, Input, Outcome and Impact is assigned a colour, likewise to the way in which the list of assumptions is linked with the MEL plan, these same colours are carried over to the MEL Plan.

Taking the example *Standard Revision* from the Theory of Change, this Output/Input has been attributed with the colour orange. This colour orange then transfers into the MEL Plan where the indicators, baselines, frequency responsibilities, targets, priority and test assumption(s) are clearly set out.

4.3 The MEL Plan in use

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Coordinator is the principal person responsible for the M&E system and will also have specific outlined responsibilities for the collection of data as depicted in the MEL plan. Each member of IFFO RS staff participating in the MEL system has an individualised MEL plan specific to their role to facilitate its implementation.

Baseline data collection is currently underway for many indicators and opening surveys will be rolled out at the end of 2017. The first annual MEL Report is scheduled to be conducted within the first 12 months of the MEL system launch in which a description of how the data collection and analysis will take place will be included in the methodology.

As a result of the data collected from the MEL Plan, Outcome and Impact evaluations will be commissioned to cover, in rotation, IFFO RS' four major intended Outcomes: environmental impacts at Factories, social responsibility of Factories, environmental performance of Fisheries, and social responsibility of fisheries.

In addition, the MEL plan will undergo an annual review preceded by an annual MEL Report that will include, where appropriate, reference to progress on refinements from previous MEL Plan reviews. The first annual MEL Review will be in mid-2018 as stated in the MEL Plan. The aim of each annual report is to not only to consider refinements or changes to IFFO RS's work but also modifications to IFFO RS's Theory of Change and MEL Plan itself. Each annual MEL Report shall report on progress regarding previous year's changes and refinements, in a process of continuous improvement.

Closing Paragraph

IFFO RS wholeheartedly embraces the value of MEL to facilitate the achievement of its objectives, to demonstrate its Impacts, and to aid wise and timely use of data. This is a long journey, and we have much to learn. IFFO RS has developed the framework for a robust but flexible system, and with the help of partners, stakeholders, and ISEAL we are committed to making good progress.