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Corporate social responsibility as a key performance indicator to value the outputs and outcomes of research associated with the commercial agriculture sector in Sri Lanka

P.C. Abeysiriwardana[1,2*] and U.K. Jayasinghe-Mudalige[2]

[1] Ministry of Education (Research and Innovation Section), Sri Lanka
[2] Faculty of Agriculture & Plantation Management, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Makandura, Gonawila (NWP) 60170, Sri Lanka

Abstract
Growing interest is there amongst the institutes involved with research and development work, remarkably from the developing country perspectives, to embed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a key factor in judging the value of those key outputs/outcomes that they generate through research. Yet, there exists a scarcity of first-hand information coming out from methodically carried out research and development work. This leads to a situation where the research institutes are heavily relied on "pure theory" and/or "strategies" that originate from alien contexts. In support of closing this gap in the literature, this study aimed to gather expert views on the merit of taking into account CSR as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to evaluate such outputs/outcomes as that facilitates developing a framework accommodating such KPIs inside a well-defined Performance Management System (PMS). The whole study was set to characterize two phases, i.e. initially, 10 top-level administrators of leading research institutes functioning in commercial agriculture sectors in Sri Lanka were subjected to an in-depth interview guided by probing questions to gather data, followed by a Thematic Analysis assisted by the MAXQDA qualitative Data analysis software. The analysis produced Single-Case Models and Code Maps reflecting 5 Themes aligned with another 12 Sub-themes, 32 Categories, and 119 Codes. The results, in the aggregate, underscored the importance of Context, Policy attributes, Enablers and Organizational benefits to be gained from a well-defined PMS. It revealed that research practices related to CSR were mentioned sparingly in the interviews and codes related to them were not prominently co-occurred with codes related to institutional management or research collaborations. However, the contextual issues that warrant more and improved awareness of CSR in PMS with particular emphasis on strengthening the linkage among CSR, commercialization and research collaboration, etc. were mentioned in association with the theme "Research for Society's Benefits". This points out the importance of setting Digitally-enabled KPIs in a Data-driven PMS that includes themes of this caliber and judges precisely the value of outputs/outcomes from research and conceptualizing them in a KPI-KPD framework to enhance the quality of the existing PMS.

Keywords: Commercial agriculture, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Performance management

Corresponding Author: abeysiriwardana@yahoo.com