Reviewer’s report

Title: Exploring the dynamics of food-related policy-making processes and evidence-use in Fiji using systems thinking

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Reviewer: Nanna Lien

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript "Exploring the dynamics of food-related policy-making processes and evidence-use in Fiji using systems thinking" aims to address the research question "Where could evidence levers be applied within the food-related policy-making processes in Fiji?". The method used was a Group Model Building with participants from health and agricultural ministries in two separate series of workshops (average of 10 participants in each series). The workshops resulted in identification of causes and consequences of insufficient evidence use, as well as leverage points to address this. The authors conclude that the workshops improved the participants' understanding of the systems and led to some practical system level interventions in both ministries.

The manuscript is generally well-written, methodologically sound and addresses an important issue with relevance beyond Fiji.

However, I have a few questions/suggestions which might improve the manuscript.

Major

1) It would be good to see a better alignment of the aims in the abstract and the introduction. I think the aim is not to describe the application of systems thinking (abstract), but to apply systems thinking to identify the causes and consequences etc (introduction).

2) The recruitment was both purposive and convenient (page 5, lien 24). Could you please provide some more detail about how the participants were selected and whether there were participants you wanted to include, but who you did not succeed in recruiting? Given that there probably were quite few participants compared to all that are working in these ministries, understanding a bit more who the participants were is important to interpret the results.

3) The case studies were suggested by the participants. Were there other suggestions? What were these? Why were they not chosen?
4) There were three workshops, but 4 themes. How were the themes spread out across the 3 workshops? How much time was there between the workshops?

5) How were the "reliability and validity" of the results ensured?

6) The figures are not very easy to read or understand by themselves, please consider which ones to include and whether there should be some footnotes explaining the main features of the figures.

Minor

Page 5, line 26 - the end of the sentence, after MOA, can be omitted as it is covered by the next sentence.

Page 9, line 10-11 - please describe what is meant by senior and middle managers.

Page 9, line 24 - write Figure 1 instead of Figure one

Page 10, line 21-24 - Could you explain why there is increased turnover of staff?

Page 12, line 25 - process is written twice before ref 24, could once be enough?

Page 14, lines 3-4 - I think the whole of government has been promoted as desirable for a while already, so perhaps try to be even more specific by indicating what might help to actually get it implemented?

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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