

The Use of Environmental Indicators in Taiwan's Policy Formulation

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Abstract

Environmental indicators play a critical role in the context of Taiwan's environmental policy. The results of indicators developed by either international institutions or by the Taiwan EPA are thoroughly studied to examine environmental achievements and are widely referenced in policy making to better protect the environment. The indicators of the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) and the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) are among the most widely quoted international indicators. For indicators that show need of improvement, related competent authorities are requested to find the causes of poor performance and to formulate policies and measures accordingly. The execution of improvement policies and measures will then be evaluated every three to six months, and a summary will be submitted to the premier and the president. The publications of the EPI in recent years have led to the reevaluation of agricultural subsidy and fishing policies, the promotion of reasonable use of fertilizers and pesticides, and the raising of fuel quality standards to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions. Publication of the EPI has also led to the establishment of a cross-departmental council to formulate the National Energy Saving and Carbon Reduction Action Plans, which include landmark programs covering the areas of legal foundations, energy supply, low-carbon society, industrial structure transformation, landscape and housing, technology development and public education. In addition to observing international environmental indicators, Taiwan is also dedicated to developing indicators in accordance with local features to meet its environmental needs. The indicators the Taiwan EPA has developed include the Taiwan Sustainable Development Indicator System, the River Pollution Control Performance Indicators, and the Environmental Sanitation Sustainability Indicators. The Taiwan Sustainable Development Indicator System, first established in 2003 and revised in 2009, has 12 themes and 87 indicators covering major environmental, social and economic production concerns. The River Pollution Control Performance Indicators contain 22 indicators covering five aspects of water quality, ecosystem preservation, riverbank revitalization, administrative management, and public participation. The Environmental Sanitation Sustainability Indicators consist of 14 indicators to encourage villages and townships to build a high-quality living environment. By serving as a basis for objective, quantified self-examinations of environmental performance, as well as references for forging policy, formulating measures and setting standards, environmental indicators help Taiwan shape its policy to better protect not only its own environment, but also that of the Earth, while striving towards sustainable development at the same time.