



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

System of Environmental-Economic Accounting 2012 – Experimental Ecosystem Accounting Revision

First Global Consultation on:

Chapter 3: Spatial units for Ecosystem Accounting

Chapter 4: Accounting for Ecosystem Extent

Chapter 5: Accounting for Ecosystem Condition

Comments Form

Deadline for responses: 30 April 2020

Send responses to: seea@un.org

Organization & country:	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
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The comment form has been designed to facilitate the analysis of comments. There are nine guiding questions in the form, please respond to the questions in the indicated boxes below. To submit responses please save this document and send it as an attachment to the following e-mail address:

seea@un.org.

All documents can be also found on the SEEA EEA Revision website at:

<https://seea.un.org/content/seea-experimental-ecosystem-accounting-revision>

In case you have any questions or have issues with accessing the documents, please contact us at seea@un.org

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the definition and description of ecosystem assets and ecosystem accounting areas and the associated measurement boundaries and treatments?

Reference Chapter 3, pg. 9 paragraph 3.36, the paragraph reads as under:

“From the two-dimensional perspective of an EAA, the area of all marine ecosystems beyond the continental shelf cannot easily be incorporated. Therefore, for the purposes of accounting for ecosystem extent and aligning the area of the EAA and EAs, only the area of ocean beyond the continental shelf should be included in the extent account.”

In the above text, the underlined word should be replaced by “within”, because it contradicts the previous sentence.

Question 2. Do you have any comments on the use of the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology as the SEEA Ecosystem Type Reference Classification?

In the Indian context, it was observed that the nomenclature used for the different ecosystems was not the same as being used in the country. This being the case, an amount of subjectivity is bound to creep in building a concordance of the national ecosystem to the IUCN GET. This could be minimized by adding adequate descriptive text for the IUCN GET. It is found that that IUCN has collated information on the presence and absence of the different ecosystems across countries. This could be made available in advance to the countries, at a level of disaggregation that can help the countries identify the local equivalent, so as to avoid cases of misclassification.

Question 3. Do you have any comments on the recording of changes in ecosystem extent and ecosystem condition, including the recording of ecosystem conversions, as described in chapters 4 and 5?

With the anthropogenic pressures on the ecosystems not likely to decline anytime soon, at least in the developing economies, ecosystem conversions are more of non-reversible process and therefore, any land use changes, especially those implemented on purpose, should be reflected in the ecosystem extent and therefore, the condition as well. For instance, in respect of the croplands created from the erstwhile forests that are now being cultivated regularly, it seems to make sense to assess them with reference to the condition indicators of a cropland rather than a degraded forest. Comparing them to degraded forests may not help in assessing the effect of the farming practices on the plot of land, and therefore, may not be informative enough for the decision makers.

Question 4. Do you have any comments on the three-stage approach to accounting for ecosystem condition, including the aggregation of condition variables and indicators?

It may not be always possible to aggregate the condition variables for producing a composite indicator. Further, for the purpose of arriving at modelled estimates of ecosystem services, it may be sufficient to have the condition variables that are not combined or aggregated. Therefore, flexibility could be provided to countries for the adoption of the three stage approach.

Question 5. Do you have any comments on the description and application of the concept of reference condition and the use of both natural and anthropogenic reference conditions in accounting for ecosystem condition?

The objective of the SEEA-EEA is to incorporate natural capital and ecosystem services into economic decision making by describing how the economy depends on the environment, as well as its impacts on it. Therefore, it may make sense to use the anthropogenic reference conditions, along with the natural reference conditions, which can help in informing on the trade-offs between the different policy options affecting environment and economy in different ways.

Question 6. Do you have any comments on Ecosystem Condition Typology for organising characteristics, data and indicators about ecosystem condition?

Only as indicated in Questions 3, 4 and 5.

Question 7. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 3?

No other comments

Question 8. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 4?

No other comments

Question 9. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 5?

At page no. 11, paragraph 5.65, reference seems to have been wrongly provided as Table no. 5.4; this may need to be corrected as Table no. 5.5.

As stated in paragraph 5.90, "The use of variables, indicators, or ancillary information to assess the capacity of ecosystems to supply ecosystem services is an important application for the purpose of informing policy on the future availability of ecosystem service flows from ecosystem assets." Therefore, it is imperative that the list of variables prescribed for condition accounts include all such variables that have a direct bearing on the estimation of flows of ecosystem services. This will help in standardizing not just the methods used by different countries for valuation of ecosystem services, but also the formats used for depicting ecosystem condition.