



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 6: Ecosystem services concepts for accounting

Chapter 7: Accounting for ecosystem services in physical terms

Comments Form

Deadline for responses: 20 August 2020

Send responses to: seea@un.org

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The comment form has been designed to facilitate the analysis of comments. There are six 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

Questions related to Chapter 6

Question 1: Do you have comments on the concepts and definitions for ecosystem services, benefits and associated components of the ecosystem accounting framework?

6.14 What will be the process when 'non-SNA' benefits are substantial and ignoring them implies decisions leading to mis-management of natural capital?

6.24-6.27 Additional on intermediate services: This runs afoul of the same challenges with GDP in reporting an actionable number. If you want to influence sustainable harvest of fish, tracking only the number of fish harvested doesn't help you craft effective seabed management policy.

Intermediate services

It is clear why in 6.26 it is said "For ecosystem accounting purposes, measurement of intermediate services is limited to those flows that are part of an observable chain of flows to a final ecosystem service." However, it is not clear whether the statement "it is expected that only a limited number of intermediate services would be recorded in a set of ecosystem accounts," means an intention to allow a further reduction of measurement of intermediate services. The intermediate services seem to have an enormous importance (analytical and policy-relevant) and if not listed, documented and measured may make the final ecosystem services less understood and measured in an incomplete way.

Question 2. Do you have comments on the content and descriptions in the reference list of selected ecosystem services?

6.46 There is a possible benefit of having the fourth broad category 'supporting services', which would re-categorize some of the services currently placed under 'regulations and maintenance'; but it would also include many more ecosystem services mostly labelled as intermediate.

Question 3. Do you agree with the proposed treatments for selected ecosystem services described in Section 6.4 for biomass provisioning services, global climate regulation services, cultural services, water supply and abiotic flows?

It seems to be a comprehensive take on the treatment of specific ecosystem services and other environmental flows.

6.84 How will externalities across energy sources be addressed?

Question 4. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 6?

It might be useful to have a subsection on 'biodiversity for sustainable ecosystems' as a separate sub-section mainly expanded from 6.35-6.37.

Questions related to Chapter 7

Question 5. Do you have comments on the proposed recording approaches for ecosystem services supply and use tables described in section 7.2?

7.29 Can impure public goods (e.g., club goods) be accommodated? In general, do institutions matter (e.g., price distorting policies or sub-optimal management regimes)? Will a PES or other market-based approach always result in greater valuation than communal/customary management? Is more always better (e.g. too much instream flow makes for a flood and more money is spent on flood control...that is, does it have the same problem with GDP counting bads as goods?)

7.37 With something that cannot have a global market (e.g., freshwater consumption) are international comparisons (and comparing export good values to local good values) valid under conditions of great differences in income?

7.58 Similar to 6.24 on attribution at the point of supply rather than the location of the benefit/demand. Consider the real estate value benefits of the view of a majestic mountain. These benefits would be assigned to the mountain, but the surrounding communities have the policy levers to affect the value. Houses are the intermediate good. How complete are these intermediate accounts going to be when the cross spatial boundaries of supplier and beneficiary?

Question 6. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 7?

-no comments