



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION  
UNITED NATIONS



System of  
Environmental  
Economic  
Accounting

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## 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](mailto:seea@un.org)

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Organization & country:	Expert in environmental accounting and assessments

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](mailto: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](mailto: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?**

The conceptual framework distinguishes benefits from both SNA and non-SNA benefits. When linking these welfare perspectives in terms of accounting, a useful formulation concerns the distinction between outputs and outcomes. In the context of ecosystem accounting principles, an ecosystem services framework addresses the supply of ecosystem services to users and recognizes that ecosystem services contribute to benefits. Although ecosystem accounting does not require recording non-SNA benefits, their description is necessary to identify and measure relevant ecosystem contributions. Ultimately, measuring ecosystem services is linked to the concept of individual and public well-being. In an economic framework, well-being is usually described in terms of well-being and utility, which in turn can be related to the consumption of goods and services as well as getting benefits.

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

The reference list of selected ecosystem services and related descriptions is structured around the three categories: provisioning services; regulating and maintenance services and cultural services. The reference list is not intended to provide a complete classification system for ecosystem services. It is expected that a complete and internationally agreed classification system for ecosystem services will be developed. There are examples where the fuzzy boundary between two ecosystem services, such as provisioning and regulating and maintenance services, leads to ambiguity. "Water supply services", which are defined as the combined ecosystem contributions of water purification and water regulation to the supply of water. Otherwise, water purification and water regulation services are part of "regulating and maintenance services".

**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?**

For wind or sun/solar energy, which are not included in the definition of ecosystem services and are therefore considered as abiotic flows. These abiotic flows can be relevant to the assessment of ecosystem services and the use of specific ecosystems. For example, when producing solar or wind energy, the installation of solar panels or wind turbines will be reducing the potential for a given location to produce ecosystem services. Recreational services by definition include overlapping with economic activities such as tourism. When a recording of the service is made in quantity or visits or visitors. How to distinguish between local and tourism-related services to reflect the type of visitor interacting with ecosystems (terrestrial, marine, and freshwater). If they are the final ecosystem services or not. According to the UN and [World Tourism Organisation](#) "tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes. Tourism" refers to all activities of visitors, including both "tourists (overnight visitors)" and "same-day visitors".

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

Ecosystem processes and characteristics that reflect biological, chemical, and physical interactions between ecosystem components are observed and measured but are not flows of ecosystem services as defined in ecosystem accounting, as they require a link to the user. In this conceptualisation, ecosystem services are the contribution of ecosystems to benefits used in economic and other human activities. Ecosystem services are recorded as flows between ecosystem assets and economic units; where ecosystem assets are defined as the contiguous spaces of specific ecosystem types.

**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?**

Accounting for the supply and use of ecosystem services is highly dependent on data and resources available for the compilation and assessments. This information can inform analysis of the relative importance of specific ecosystems, support analysis of trade-offs between different ecosystem services in spatial planning and land management, and provide information to delineate areas for specific land uses, including conservation and protection. Physical data underpin the monetary valuation of ecosystem services and demonstrate the nature of the expansion of the SNA production boundary used in ecosystem accounting. More generally, they support the inclusion and discussion of broader, non-private benefits of ecosystems.

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

The clarity in defining ecosystem services more broadly by avoiding duplication in classifying ecosystem services and identifying abiotic flows that are not considered ecosystem services. Any approach chosen requires that linkages between ecosystem services be recorded once and that no double counting is allowed. Registering water supply is considered a final ecosystem service and it may be appropriate to record flows of related ecosystem services, such as water flow regulation and water purification as intermediate services. Alternatively, these input services may be considered as final ecosystem services and water supply as an abiotic flow.

In the examples given in Tables 7.2;7.3;7.4 ecosystem services contribute to benefits and cover a wide range of services provided to economic units, both households and farmers, as businesses. It would be relevant to give an example where the government would benefit from ecosystem services and use them in a complementary table – “Basic services physical supply and use account”.