



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: | ABS, Australia  |

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?**

- Section 6.2 - concepts and principals in accounting for ecosystem services - excellent explanations of ecosystem services, benefits, users and beneficiaries, final and intermediate services. Good to see a section on abiotic flows, although we would recommend some more detail around which abiotic flows should be included and excluded. Generally supportive of the biodiversity section. The logic chains are a great concept and useful tool. Would recommend a couple of graphics to help explain some of the concepts. Is it worth including a schematic diagram of the boundaries of what is and isn't in scope for a country in terms of ecosystem flows, imports/exports?
- Paragraph 6.34 - perhaps consider using the term 'stochastic' for environmental change?
- Paragraph 6.36 - there is a grammatical error in the first sentence: '...the maintenance of biodiversity itself will be impact on the types of...' We also found this paragraph a little hard to follow, we suggest a restructure.

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

WE are broadly comfortable with the reference list, noting that it will be a starting point for implementation. One observation is that it is possibly a little light on with regards to marine ecosystems. Also, should we be specific about "SOLID waste remediation? What about liquid waste? Why not just call it "waste remediation"?

Information like the criteria provided in Table 3.6 of SEEA EEA 2012 manual will be useful as compilation guidance.

**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?**

*Proposed treatments for selected ecosystem services.* Agree with the proposed treatments for each, although the Biomass Provisioning section is perhaps a little lengthy. The global climate regulation services second is important and addressed well. Mostly happy with the treatment of water supply - strongly agree that this is directly affected by ecosystem structures and processes and, as such, should be treated as an ecosystem service.

6.4.3 - we think it would be worthwhile explicitly mentioning indigenous cultural services under one of the points

6.80 - groundwater - the distinction between deep and shallow aquifers is an interesting one - I don't think it's as clear cut as "water abstracted from deep aquifers is an abiotic flow and water abstracted from shallow aquifers is an ecosystem service" - would prefer one treatment for both and recommend including both as ecosystem services. It's very

difficult to distinguish between the aquifers that are affected by ecosystem processes and those that are not.

Chapter 6 addresses abiotic flows, but doesn't specify whether or not they should be included in the accounts - Chapter 7 addresses this point but we would recommend at least mentioning in Chapter 6 that recording abiotic flows can help to provide a more comprehensive picture.

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

Could be stronger emphasis on the flexibility in the Ecosystem Accounts to enable better analysis of particular impacts due to cross border changes in ecosystem services provision, links to changes in extent and conditions for human well-being etc.

**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?**

We note that the format has broken away from the Natural inputs, products and residuals format from the Central Framework. It would seem logical that we could bring the supply use tables together thinking about the supply from ecosystem types as natural inputs, harvesting/final consumption by industry as production and regulation services not accessed directly as residual (or change in ecosystem).

It could answer some of the questions around the supply of ecosystem services from heavily modified landscapes.

That said, we are supportive of the proposed recording approaches. Supply and use table (7.1) is an excellent example - very comprehensive – and tables 7.2 to 7.4 provide clear and concise examples and provide easy-to-follow practical demonstrations of important concepts.

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

- Some of the examples consistently referrals to mostly temperate zone products, e.g. apples, strawberries, wheat - does this imply little consideration as to how the accounting will stack up in practice for non-temperate countries? This appears to be unintentional, but should be noted.
- For cultural services, is it best to use proportion of population rather than figures for comparison between countries? For example, 20 million people engaged in tourism will mean something quite different in an Australian context compared to an American one.
- On the baselines (7.3.2), an example would be useful to explain the utility of the technique and why they are critical to policy/planning. For example, the Philippines study on the storm protection of mangroves or the southern highlands of Australia example on the water provisioning and regulation for Melbourne.
- On imports/exports (7.2.5), are purchasing carbon credits from reforestation overseas considered to be an import of an ecosystem service or an economic asset (which is out of scope for ecosystem assets)? Our assumption is that this is out of scope as ecosystem service (as it is outside the EAA), but it would be useful to clarify these types of transactions.