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

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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?

On assets

The first paragraph describing ecosystem assets explains that they are spatial units. If ecosystem assets are spaces does that mean that they have to be measured in hectares? It becomes difficult to provide measurements of assets based on their spatial place. In the technical recommendation the asset is explained as being "bounded spatially"(§3.5, p.39) which would mean something different than saying as now it to be a spatial unit. Or maybe as I consider "assets" to be such things as timber, oil etc it becomes confusing.

It would be beneficial if you could provide examples of the differences between "ecosystem assets" and "environmental assets". If you would to say that "timber assets" (I don't know if you do!) are both but would be measured differently that could be one type of example.

In §3.8 you also say that a requirement are to establish an economic ownership of ecosystem assets and attributed benefits – can this be done using the definition of the "ecosystem asset" or is the wider definition of "environmental assets" better then? How is the transition to be made?

§3.9 describe that the ecosystem asset are envisaged as 3D. when producing statistics on these particular assets – should there be some dominant part that leads the statistical production? Or is it self-explanatory that you as a compiler simply choose the space yourself and its coverage?

On areas

This has for a long while been interesting to follow. The SEEA EEA provides complex descriptions of the areas to cover with new acronyms that follows. Important to note in the text is that if the extended information is the aim – i.e to link socio-economic information the administrative boarders are essential to keep in your data management. Specific "cut-outs" of land require other means of linking existing data e.g. geographical coordinates or such things.

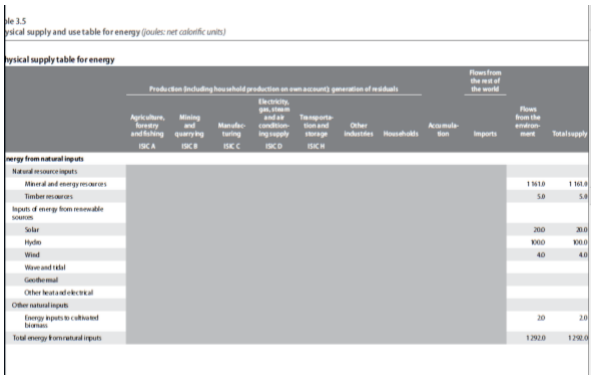
Question 2. Do you have any comments on the use of the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology as the SEEA Ecosystem Type Reference Classification?

As only a couple of known tests have been done using the IUCN in combination with the SEEA EEA (NL and EE that I know of?) the careful position would be to not include it now as a reference typology, but examples of their typology could be used as illustrations of how a table could look like.

As it is focusing on a red list does this mean that we lose some ecosystem typologies?

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?

In this chapter it would be beneficial to include the extent accounts using the ownership/ISIC/NACE approach as well. An example could be used from the CF and in the rows have ecosystem types instead of energy products. There are now a fair few countries compiling this type of data.



le 3.5
ysical supply and use table for energy (joules: net calorific units)

hysical supply table for energy

	Production (including household production on own account); generation of residuals							Flows from the rest of the world		
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing ISIC A	Mining and quarrying ISIC B	Manufacturing ISIC C	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply ISIC D	Transportation and storage ISIC H	Other industries	Households	Accumulation	Imports	Flows from the environment	Total supply
nergy from natural inputs											
Natural resource inputs											
Mineral and energy resources										1 161.0	1 161.0
Timber resources										5.0	5.0
Inputs of energy from renewable sources											
Solar										20.0	20.0
Hydro										100.0	100.0
Wind										4.0	4.0
Wave and tidal											
Geothermal											
Other heat and electrical											
Other natural inputs											
Energy inputs to cultivated biomass										2.0	2.0
Total energy from natural inputs										1 292.0	1 292.0

With regards to table 4.1 the split between "managed" and "natural" is a difficult one and the question is if it is necessary? Could there be better sub-categories to use? Productive/un-productive or intensive/extensive? There is e.g. basically no natural forest left in Europe and the proposed table would be rendered somewhat missing of interesting results.

In § 4.13 where it is described the distinctions and guidelines on how to think becomes difficult to follow. There is e.g. a text saying that the losses of coral reefs due to effects of climate change although influenced by human activity should be included in natural regression. If you insist on keeping the two groups then it is probably better to be very clear on what should be included in natural regressions – because it is not much that isn't affected by human activities anymore. Climate change impacts storm patterns, drought, flooding etc.

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 is not straight forward why the document considers placing the name "account" in all the various tables. Simply having a starting of stock and closing of stock is not sufficient. The compilation of the indicators are not clear and the reason for the three stage approach is not apparent.

Regarding the inclusion of un-named indices as described in table 5.5: It appear as if much more information is required in order to understand the rational for including index to the manual. The text assumes that the reader knows what is meant by this, and how the indicator weights are used. There are a few known indices calculated by the statistical offices as official statistics – such as consumer price index or production value index. These have been developed and assessed with years in the making. Assuming now that the table

5.5 has something in mind that has bearing on ecosystems that is already existing it makes little sense to include it in the main document. If index are of interest to calculate that are already developed in other communities they suit better in another document related to applications and use.

It would be most interesting if the text related to indirect measurements of condition could be elaborated with examples of tables/variables that could be used. That current sub-chapter (§5.4.3) seems to address data that might be available within the statistical community and thus more helpful to us to relate to.

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?

Not at this point in time.

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

Not at this point in time.

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

The discussion on ecosystem assets with start in §3.5 deserves it's own heading. I would not see the definition of an asset as a type of spatial unit.

The reference of the ecosystem assets to be seen as a business register (§3.6) is very confusing and we propose to delete it. Unless you foresee that each ecosystem area should be registered as a type of LKAU or similar and that you want to build and connect to other types of statistics via this approach? Are you suggesting that each spatial unit of an ecosystem asset would have an id similar to a business id? This analogue is either very superficial or very local. Rather these could be analogous to a property of a piece of land, like an industry classification.

§3.8 Please add a note to specify that the owner can be an industry, a state or a private person, and that not all parcels of land have an owner. We are not suggesting that all natural resources must have private owners, as it might be read.

The all too frequent use of abbreviations makes the text really difficult to read.

§3.23 point 4: This exclusion is not necessary to implement. Since the land or ocean can have several different types of ecosystem on them, it is possible to make different types of ecosystem analyses with the same parcels of land.

§3.41 makes reference to "international reporting and comparisons". As far as we know there is currently no international reporting on SEEA EEA. We propose deleting this paragraph.

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

Click here and start typing (The length of your response is not limited by this text box.)

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

Click here and start typing (The length of your response is not limited by this text box.)