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?

6.8: "[…] , the supply of an ecosystem service will be associated with an ecosystem process or an ecosystem *characteristic* or a combination of ecosystem processes and characteristics […]"
In the other paragraphs of chapter 6, the terms „ecosystem structures and processes" are used and not "characteristics" (e.g. paragraph 6.76 and 6.82). For consistency reasons, we would propose to use following formulation:
"[…] , the supply of an ecosystem service will be associated with **an ecosystem structure or process or a combination of ecosystem structures and processes** that reflect the biological, chemical and physical interactions among ecosystem components (Potschin and Haines-Young 2017). **Their characteristics can be aggregated into different groups of functional outcomes (Schneiders and Müller 2017).** These **structures and processes** are observable and measurable but are not themselves flows of ecosystem services as defined in ecosystem accounting since this requires a connection to be made to users.

References: Potschin M, Haines-Young R (2017) From nature to society. In: Burkhard & Maes (Eds.) Mapping Ecosystem Services. Pensoft AND Schneiders A, Müller F (2017) A natural base for ecosystem services. In: Burkhard & Maes (Eds.) Mapping Ecosystem Services. Pensoft

6.14: Per definition, ecosystem services are already linked to human-wellbeing. Thus, it is not necessary to mention that "the scope of non-SNA benefits for ecosystem accounting purposes **is limited to** the contributions of ecosystem services with an identifiable link to human well-being."

6.30: All bullet-point-titles are a copy of the headers in table 6.1, except the first one: ecosystem assets versus ecosystem types/s

6.34: The paragraph reads: "[…] the capacity of ecosystem assets to continue **to generate** ecosystem services into the future:"
We suggest using the term "provide" instead, since we think it is more suitable in this context.

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

We suggest renaming the regulating and mainetenance service "Water regulation services" into "Water **flow** regulation services", since the subcategories also include the term "flow" ("baseline flow maintenance" and "peak flow mitigation").
In addition, it would make it easier to distinguish this specific service from the other services related to water.

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?

6.51: "Thus, for example, felling residues and discarded catch should be considered as part of the ecosystem service flow"
We suggest including a more specific definition on what is meant by "residues" and "discarded catch". For instance, do residues also include organic material that is left on the field or only post-harvest residues?
This aspect is also relevant with regard to carbon storage as mentioned in paragraph 6.66.

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

Section 6.2.9
The section on the link between biodiversity and ecosystem services is very general and it the purpose of it is not entirely clear. For instance, it includes a reference to various complex (and important) concepts, such as "ecosystem resilience", "option value" or "tipping points", but it is not stated how these concepts should be approach in the SEEA EEA context.

6.84: The last bullet point on Energy from hydropower states: "[…] and water purification (in terms of sediment retention) […]"
According to table 6.2, the relevant ES is "Soil erosion control services (includes also sediment retention services)"
For reasons of consistency, we propose to use the same formulation in this paragraph.

<u>Questions related to Chapter 7</u>

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

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

7.63: The paragraph mentions that as a baseline for water flow regulation service forest should be compared to grassland even though in table 7.6 it is compared to bare land. In order to be consistent with table 7.6, bare land should also be used as a baseline in 7.67 for forest.