



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?

The conceptual overview is well laid out. The description of ecosystem services highlight the need for the service to be used in economic or human activity. It is useful that benefits are divided into SNA and non-SNA benefits. The section on “well-being” is a little confusing, I am not sure totally sure why it is included. Users and beneficiaries make sense. It might be worth mentioning the types of users, and that common goods are technical “government” users for the purposes of accounting. It might also be helpful to have a graphic that shows the entire ES process from Asset to Flow to Benefit to User to Account, since the level of understanding may be varied and a good graphic would help to clarify the terminology throughout the process.

6.26: In the definition of intermediate services the phrase "user of the ecosystem services is an ecosystem" does not sound interesting, suggest finding an alternative way of saying this.

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

Table 6.2 is a very comprehensive overview of ecosystem services. I might add an additional column or make it easy to quickly scan in a service is intermediary, final, or both. I think that would make the table more useful for understanding how different services fit into the accounting. Space could be saved by deleting the second column and simply list that information beneath the broader ES category.

Table 6.2: I must admit that I am surprised that "rainfall pattern regulation services (at sub-continental scale)" is considered a final ecosystem service. Please explain further how it is a final service or consider removing it from the list. Rainfall pattern regulation by ecosystems directly translates into water supply and regulation services, so that's already accounted for.

Consider deleting “ecosystem and species appreciation services” as well, it is already captured in other cultural services in the reference list. The intent is right but I don't see it is useful for accounting purpose, plus it can lead to confusion and double counting.

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?

Overall, I think that the treatment section is well laid out and describes the multiple issues that accountants will need to consider when recording ecosystem services. The logic chain is extremely helpful for illustrating the process treatments. I am still a little unclear where and when abiotic services are captured in the ecosystem account and when they are supposed to be captured elsewhere. Again, the logic chain is helpful, but it would be good to show when it is applicable and maybe an example where it is not.

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

Overall, the chapter is very well laid out and covers a lot of material. Opportunities to provide graphic, charts, and examples is appreciated as it helps to explain/illustrate some of the complex processes.

6.15: Beyond private and public there are benefits that businesses rely on, for example, hydroenergy companies relying on water supply. The three situations mentioned below do not recognize that, so may be add this as another situation where businesses benefit from services even if they don't own the ecosystems that supply the service?

Annex 6.1: I find this table extremely useful. I'd recommend expanding this table by breaking down the ecosystem services column even further.

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?

The example tables were helpful for illustrating the process and how the various components interact. It is still a little unclear to me how “landscape” derived process, rather than ecosystem asset derived processes, are accounted for in the SU table. Additional guidance would be helpful for this point.

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

I think that this chapter was written for the accountants. I had a little trouble following all the inputs and outputs and how/where they were recorded. To this end perhaps a fully developed and annotated SU table could be included. Also the section on connections with the Central Framework is really important and might need additional description, for example, what is the difference or relationship between residuals and disservices? And the ecosystem service benefit of breaking down residuals from other activities (such as pollution) also warrants additional examination (I think it would be an ES benefit).

Table 7.1: use “Biomes” instead of “realms”?

7.7: delete the last sentence, it's obvious, does not add anything

7.35. Use of the terms export/import to refer to supply/use within a national boundary can be confusing, as these are generally understood as international trade terms.

Related to that is the treatment of transboundary ES flows (e.g. within Amazon basin) where a service originating in one national boundary can benefit another country (e.g. water regulation). This concept is worth mentioning as a separate paragraph if not in detail.