



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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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?**

We find that presented logic chains are helpful to understand the differences and connections between ecosystem services and benefits, also for identifying inputs to supply and use and users. More examples on cultural ecosystem services and examples for intermediate services (pollination, nursery/habitat provisioning) would be useful.

How is the scope of benefits related to the scope of ecosystem services assessment? When determining benefits and users of ecosystem services, should all related benefits be considered or only those that are relevant depending on the concrete definition of the ecosystem service, the assessed indicators and assessment methods, i.e. we determine benefits based on the information we get from the assessment. Just a small example in order to illustrate the question: we use data of medical herbs marketed as drugs in apothecaries in the assessment of the service value of provisioning of medical herbs and it is clear that the drugs made from medical herbs are benefits, but should benefits that are not included in the exact process but provided by medical herbs in general, such as ingredients for food supplements, teas, cosmetics and associated health improvements, also be in a scope of benefits noted?

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

It is stated in p 6.48 that compilers are encouraged to include as many types of ecosystem services as possible in the reference list. That arouses the question what is the use of the reference list when we already have CICES classification. It is noted in p 6.39 that CICES classification is still in development, but so is the reference list proposed in the document, therefore the role of the reference list should be explained.

We suggest rethinking if provisioning of peat should be added under biomass provisioning services and purification of groundwater recharge by natural processes should be added as a regulative ecosystem service. Also one important sub-type under biomass provisioning services is missing, terrestrial game species.

Provisioning genetic material can be also possibly considered intermediate service (e.g., if approached via habitats for species important for maintaining native species).

**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?**

Peat provisioning (CICES 1.1.5.2, 1.1.5.3) should be possibly considered as an ecosystem service, not as abiotic flow as it is indispensable part of bog (wetlands) ecosystems and the layer of peat, especially upper parts have a connection with the ecosystem situated there. Also the speed for the growth of peat layer is often sufficient for regeneration so it could be considered as renewable energy source.

Groundwater from deep aquifers should be possibly considered as an ecosystem service in addition to groundwater from shallow aquifers. First, it is difficult to separate the groundwater extraction volumes from confined and unconfined aquifers from existing data. Second, even when the groundwater recharge takes centuries or millennia depending on the depth of the aquifer, the process is still ongoing.

P 6.60 states that for ecosystem accounting, it is recommended that the principles of the SEEA Central Framework should be applied such that quantity of biomass provisioning services should be equal to the harvest in gross terms, i.e., before harvest losses, felling residues and discarded catch are deducted. According to SNA supply must equal use. When we take gross harvest as supply, then we find that we have to artificially increase economic use (and who are the uses) to have supply equal use. A way to distinguish losses in use tables would be to show these on a separate row.

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

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

**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 units of ecosystem services should be marked such that they are relevant regardless of assessment method and we suggest further discussions of those. E.g., what is the definition of unit “visits” for pollination service and can the value be found when using different assessment methods? What shall the total score of the visits possibly show?

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

In P 7.15 where top-down method is discussed, the usefulness of bottom-up methods, when and where these could be used, should be accentuated because these give more detailed results.

P 7.16 states that, in practice, there is no requirement for reporting at fine level spatial detail, especially for accounts covering a national scale or large areas within a country and SUA table is sufficient for reporting. It makes the suggestions of the standard ambiguous (when it comes to accounting, is the spatial explicitness then relevant or not?) and in addition, the validity of the statement can be argued because there is a clear practical use of spatial data when considering alternative land or resource use as stated also in p 7.58. Spatial dimension is especially important when assessing cultural and several regulative services.

The definition and use of “ecosystem measurement baseline” in p 7.63 is confusing, it can be easily confused with base level and critical level which are dependent on ecosystem capacity and also condition. It should be more clearly opened (using also specific examples) and further discussed.