



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

System of Environmental-Economic Accounting— Ecosystem Accounting

Global Consultation on the complete document: Comments Form

Deadline for responses: 30 November 2020

Send responses to: seea@un.org

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The comments 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: seea@un.org.

All documents can be found on our website at: <https://seea.un.org/content/global-consultation-complete-draft>

In case you have any questions or have issues with accessing the documents, please contact us at seea@un.org

General comments

Question 1: Do you have comments on the overall draft of the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting?

No

Comments by sets of chapters

Question 2. Do you have comments on Chapters 1-2 of the draft SEEA Ecosystem Accounting?

We would suggest adding a graphical representation of how the SEEA EA and SEEA CF frameworks speak to each other, to accompany the text that describes this. The SEEA EA conceptual framework appears, at first glance, to be missing important components that impact ecosystems, such as residuals and human inputs. Section 1.4.2 explains that these components are part of the SEEA CF, and for completeness a graphic that describes the relationship between the SEEA EA and the SEEA CF would be helpful.

Question 3. Do you have comments on Chapters 3-5 of the draft SEEA Ecosystem Accounting?

No

Question 4. Do you have comments on Chapters 6-7 of the draft SEEA Ecosystem Accounting?

No

Question 5. Do you have comments on Chapters 8-11 of the draft SEEA Ecosystem Accounting?

No

Question 6. Do you have comments on Chapters 12-14 of the draft SEEA Ecosystem Accounting?

Major comments:

1. We suggest that an indicator framework is used to provide a structured approach to understanding how indicators produced by the SEEA EA, SEEA CF and SNA are connected and can be combined to track the relationship between ecosystems and economic activity. We propose such a framework (Figure 1) in Fairbrass et al. (2020)¹, which was developed in collaboration with the Green Growth Knowledge Platform’s Natural Capital Working Group, of which the SEEA team is a member. The need for an organising framework for natural capital indicators was identified as an inter-institutional knowledge gap by the Working Group, and the UCL-GGKP team were invited to present it at the SEEA EEA Forum of Experts in 2019. This framework is currently untested and it is our intention to test it in a range of contexts over the coming years.

¹ Fairbrass et al. (2020) ‘The natural capital indicator framework (NCIF) for improved national natural capital reporting’, *Ecosystem Services*, 46: 101198, 10.1016/j.ecoser.2020.101198

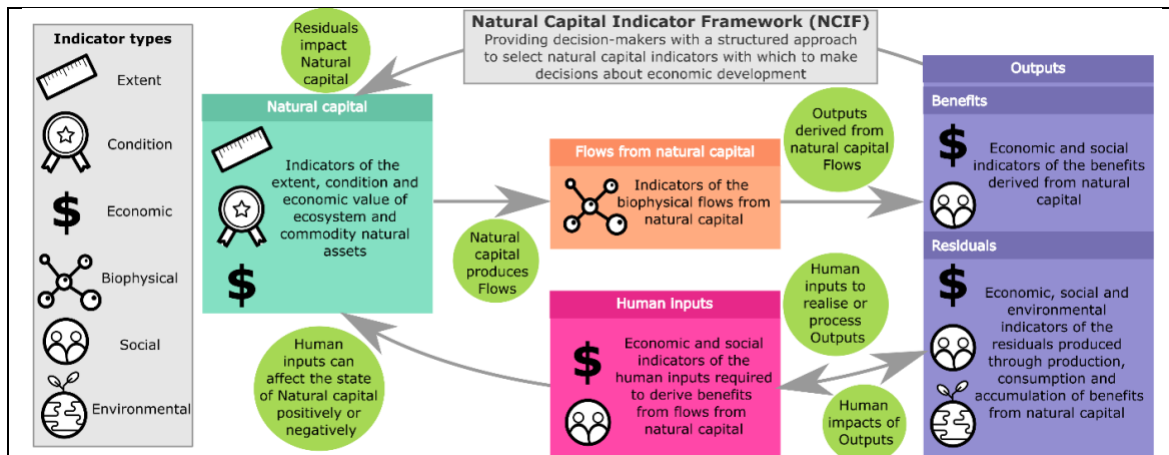


Figure 1. The Natural Capital Indicator Framework (Fairbrass et al., 2020).

Section 14.2 on *Combining presentations* describes precisely what our framework proposes which is to link environmental with socio-economic indicators in order to track the relationship between ecosystems and economic activity. This framework would cover all of the examples that are provided in Section 14.2. Environmental activities, such as expenditure on protection and restoration, would be captured by indicators in the Human Inputs component of the framework. Environmental pressures would be captured by indicators in the Residuals sub-component of the framework. The use of an indicator framework would help to clarify how indicators can be used to track social and economic dependencies on ecosystem assets and services.

2. There is very little discussion of reference values, standards or targets for indicators in Chapter 14. We are aware that reference values are discussed in chapter x in relation to ecological condition. However, it would be useful to have a more general discussion of this issue in relation to indicators in Chapter 14. This issue was raised by several participants at the 'Virtual Expert Forum on SEEA EEA - Session 4: Thematic accounts and indicators', and we feel this topic deserves a more detailed discussion in this chapter. We would also like to highlight the Environmental Sustainability Gap (ESGAP) framework² which is of relevance to this topic. The ESGAP sets the basis to measure countries' environmental sustainability performance, based on standards meant to represent the situation at which natural capital can maintain its functions over time. It is currently composed of 22 indicators, all supported by scientific standards of environmental sustainability, that can ultimately be aggregated into a single index that represents absolute environmental sustainability performance or progress over time. With funding from Agence Française de Développement and WWF France and support from UNEP this framework is currently being piloted in Vietnam, Kenya and New Caledonia. It will be featured as a chapter discussing its relationship to the SDG monitoring framework in the upcoming UNEP Measuring Progress report for publication at UNEA 5.

Minor comments:

- Table 14.2: Fifth row second column should read, 'Overall structural state...'
- Table 14.2: Final row second column should read, 'Overall characteristics of landscape/seascape...'

² Ekins, P., B. Milligan, and A. Usubiaga (2018) *A single indicator of strong sustainability for development: Theoretical basis and practical implementation*. Scoping Paper for Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

- Table 14.6: It would be helpful to include an additional column detailing which components of the SEEA EA it is envisioned would produce the indicators. Without this information it is unclear how it is intended for them to be produced by the SEEA EA.
- Section 14.37: Provide the indicator name alongside the SDG indicator 15.9.1 when it is cited as the reader may not know what this indicator is.