



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?

With relation to the glossary:

- It may be useful to add 'natural capital' to the list, or perhaps add it as alternative term for natural resources, or environmental assets. I'd suggest the inclusion of the term 'natural capital' because it is used in various contexts to mean either natural resources or environmental assets.
- Since 'depletion' is added as a glossary term with relation to the decrease of quantity of a specific natural resource, it would be good to add 'degradation' definition too, to relate the decrease in quality of a natural resource.

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

- For 'regulating and maintenance' services, if this isn't a direct attempt for shifting the terminology, could the term instead be 'regulating and supporting' services? This would be more consistent with the current categorisation of ecosystem services.
- Under the section "Ecosystem and species appreciation services" under "Cultural Services" (Table 6.2 Pg 13), the terms 'existence value' and/or intrinsic value may be useful to use, again for consistency with the literature.

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?

- Perhaps some ambiguity/confusion in the way that 'genetic material services' are categorised under 'provisioning services', whereas 'scientific and research services' are categorised under 'cultural services'. Intuitively, they seem along the same theme of use.

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

- In section 6.37, regarding tipping points and taking the precautionary approach: This paragraph may benefit from an example of what type of ecosystem services accounted for in SEEA EA are likely to entail tipping points. Additionally, to be consistent with other literature, the term planetary boundaries might be used instead of/as well as, tipping points.

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?

- Throughout section 7.7 to 7.11, it is not necessarily straightforward to comprehend the information about units of measure for supply versus use. It's not entirely clear if, for one specific type of ecosystem service, how it is conceptually sound to use the same metric and amount for use and supply, until later in section 7.20 where it's articulated very clearly. Is it possible therefore to put section 7.20 a bit earlier in the chapter?

- Overall though, the tables are comprehensive in terms of ecosystem and service types, and easy to understand.

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

Regarding the statement 'The flows for each ecosystem service are recorded using a unit of measure that is appropriate for that ecosystem service', this may be fine for 'pollination' where various contexts could use the same metric, but for the 'amenities' services, which encompasses 'recreational opportunities, visual aesthetics and lower levels of air and noise pollution', perhaps the cultural services may be disaggregated further to account for plurality of metrics/units needed.