



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?

Chapter 6 provides a nice and clear introduction to the place of ecosystem services in the new accounting framework carefully distinguishing benefits from services while pushing the boundary of production that was set in the SNA. Clearly, some ecosystem services such as certain provisioning services have been and continue to be within the SNA boundary.

The following sentence in #6.14 is not clear and needs to be redrafted: 'While ecosystem accounting does not require the recording of non-SNA benefits, their description is needed such that the relevant ecosystem contributions can be defined and measured.'

#6.31 – we suggest exact source of definition of biodiversity from CBD.

#6.36 – rephrase since sentence is unclear, 'Further, while biodiversity underpins the supply of ecosystem services, the maintenance of biodiversity itself will be impact on the types of ecosystem services used by people and the extent of that use.'

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

The list appears to be exhaustive and possibly overlapping in the case of some categories (see under cultural services). The detail provided under Regulation services is useful conceptually but would be very difficult to measure in practice.

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?

The chapter does not spell out how data providers might estimate the specific ecosystem contribution to gross biomass output.

#6.55

'In practice, there is a considerable measurement challenge in either identifying all of the relevant individual inputs or accurately measuring the ecosystem contribution to the gross biomass that is harvested that takes into account the diversity of cultivated production contexts. Thus, a suitable proxy for the measurement of the flow of biomass provisioning services in cultivated production contexts is the gross biomass harvested.'

The above sentence seems to suggest that gross output is an acceptable proxy for ecosystem provisioning. However, this assumes no contribution from human or produced

assets including fertilisers and pesticides. The following paragraphs up to 6.58 are obtuse and vague.

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

The treatment of water in 6.4.4 is opaque and needs to be expressed more clearly. However, Annex 6.1 provides a very useful and detailed summary of the key dimensions of ecosystem services.

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?

These tables are comprehensive and clear. The use of IUCN GET level 3 categories have global currency. However, some adaptation to different global regions will be required. This point is captured, correctly, in paragraph 7.9:
“The set of classes shown is not exhaustive for that level. In practice, it is expected that countries will apply a national or regionally applicable classification of ecosystem types.”

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

Table 7.2 might be confusing in the absence of a note specifying that the shaded cells denote ‘not applicable’.

“the focus of ecosystem accounting should remain on recording final ecosystem services and entries for intermediate services should concern only those flows that can be clearly connected to a final ecosystem service – as in the example above. It is not the ambition in ecosystem accounting to provide a full documentation of all ecological processes or connections. “ Good point!

#7.38 Not convincing to treat supply of services as an export if they relate to use outside an ecosystem accounting area. Multiple areas and communities may be included in a single national territory.

#7.52 Need to re-phrase this sentence: “This allocation can in turn would support, for example, understanding the critical ecosystems within a catchment.”

#7.72 Discussion of residuals is unclear.

#7.75 ends the chapter rather abruptly.