



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?

We welcome the proposed draft. Particularly useful are the clear linkages with the central SNA framework that allows integrating ecosystem aspects in the economic analysis and deriving corresponding policy implications. To that aim, the use of “exchange value” for the monetary valuation of ecosystem services and assets, in line with the SNA principles, is instrumental.

The extension of SNA transactions and stocks to incorporate ecosystem flows enables the derivation of measures of product, income, savings and wealth adjusted for ecosystem degradation, of great importance for sustainability analysis.

On a separate subject, we note that the SNA/BPM Review Task Team on Communication is looking into the development of digitally-enhanced statistical handbooks that take full advantage of interactive cross-referencing and easy navigation facilities within and across manuals; this new manual could serve as a proof of concept in the context of that workstream.

Comments by sets of chapters

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

In line with the relevance attached to the relationships with the SNA, a clearer conceptualisation of the links between “ecosystem assets” and “institutional units” in SNA would be beneficial in these chapters.

In the current draft handbook such conceptualisation comes relatively late in paragraph 8.23, while the introductory discussion on linkages with SNA in section 1.4.3 does not mention it directly. Similarly, the rich discussion on the allocation of ecosystem assets in terms of economic ownership by institutional units in section 11.4 is only briefly referred to in the introductory chapters in paragraph 2.7. Thus, the key concept of “ecosystem trustee” only appears briefly in paragraph 1.32.

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

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

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

It would be helpful to provide high level methodological criteria for distinguishing between “ecosystem services” and “abiotic flows”. The related discussion in section 6.4.5 focuses on clarifying borderline cases, without sufficiently underpinning the general conceptual differences.

It is welcomed the (non exhaustive) reference list of ecosystem services. Given the current focus in the political, social, health and economic debates, it could be considered including within the “Regulating and maintenance services” those related to the prevention of zoonosis episodes.

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

It is welcomed the use of the concept “exchange value” for the monetary valuation of ecosystem assets and flows. The concept is in line with the SNA valuation criteria and facilitates the provision of traditional core SNA indicators adjusted for relevant ecosystem effects, in particular ecosystem degradation, and to identify the role of ecosystems in the (SNA) production process and in provisioning additional (non-SNA) benefits following comparable valuation criteria.

At the same time, please consider the following comments on

(1) Valuation of ecosystem assets:

- a. Some explanations are needed on why abiotic flows are not considered and discounted to contribute to the valuation of ecosystem assets (the indication in that sense for instance in paragraph 6.112 comes without a clear reasoning for the exclusion);
- b. More discussion is needed on the separability of the ecosystem services for deriving the value of the ecosystem assets through the NPV calculations. Actually, the services are in general not separable; for instance the recreational services provided by a forest, and the associated degradation pressure on the ecosystem posed by the individuals enjoying such benefit, go in detriment of its air filtration services;
- c. Similarly, asset enhancements relative to a certain ecosystem service might actually imply degradation relative to others: protection measures that limit the access of individuals to a given ecosystem asset would reduce its future flow of recreational services that increase provisioning and regulating and maintenance services.

(2) Flows and extended accounting

- a. Similar as in table 11.3 on extended balance-sheets, a table showing the relation between degradation and depletion flows (and consumption of fixed capital for completeness) would be illustrative;
- b. While there is a discussion on the derivation of degradation adjusted measures of value and income (illustrated with a numerical example in table 11.5), it is not clear whether such measure should also be adjusted for ecosystem enhancements, or whether such ecosystem enhancement adjustment is suggested for yet a third set of measures of value and

income.

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

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