



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?

The guidance is clearly presented, accessible, informative and very helpful. It is a super resource that I am already using to inform advice on natural capital accounts. Thank you for all the work that has gone in to producing it.

I was delighted to find that the guidance provides such clear and well explained coverage of monetary valuation in Section D and Chapter 12. It is really helpful to have thorough guidance on how to undertake monetary valuation in a manner that is consistent with the SNA. Because many ecosystem services are not traded, this is a complicated area. The guidance helpfully sets out how and why monetary valuation that is consistent with the SNA differs from estimation of welfare values. This is important for enabling analysts to make appropriate use of values estimated by environmental economists when developing accounts. It is also a great help that the guidance thoroughly explains the difference between welfare values and exchange values and their use. This will help manage the risks that exchange values for non-traded services are inappropriately used for applications outside the accounts (e.g. in appraisals). The bridge tables (presented in Chapter 12) are a handy technique for presenting the differences.

Comments by sets of chapters

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

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

Chapter 4: The ecosystem change matrix is an interesting potentially useful concept, though not easy to understand from the narrative. It would benefit from illustration with an example. I did not find the 'blank' example in Table 4.2 helpful.

Chapter 5 contains a lot of important information and detail. It would benefit from being more succinct and accessible, with clearer presentation. A diagram showing the different elements would be helpful.

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

Paras 6.70 to 6.76: what does ‘cultivated production processes’ refer to? Does it cover plants and livestock? Is measurement of ecosystem contribution being recommended or is that theoretically ideal but not likely to be feasible? If it is feasible, it would be helpful if examples were provided, for plants and livestock.

Section 6.5.1 would usefully explain how and where estimates of capacity are used in the accounts.

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

Paragraphs 8.11 and 9.3 would helpfully include explicit discussion of welfare value and explanation of what it is used for and that it is not employed for the accounts.

Chapter 9: what is ‘scope’ being used to refer to here? It would usefully be explained where the word is first used.

Para 9.42 – 9.44:

- These would benefit from clarification.
- Can the opportunity cost of time be included or should it be presented separately?
- It would be helpful if a more complete description of TCM was provided, along the lines of those provided for CV and CE in paras 9.56-7 along with clear explanation that it is different to the sum of consumption expenditure. The travel cost method provides estimates of welfare value. It involves use of regression analysis or statistical models and is not as simple as adding up all consumption expenditures (for an introduction see https://ecosystemvaluation.org/travel_costs.htm). The sum of consumption expenditure may provide an appropriate estimate of exchange value, but it does not provide an estimate of welfare value.

Chapter 11 contains useful information. It would benefit from clearer and more accessible presentation.

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

Table 12.1: assuming that recreation non-use value is not determined by the exchange value and consumer surplus, it would be helpful if this was explained and the figure for non-use value employed was not related to the other figures (e.g. 3 instead of 25).

Para 12.9: the bullet point discussing valuation of benefit would usefully explain that the value of benefit includes value of ecosystem service (environment’s contribution), but also the value of other contributions (e.g. of labour, equipment etc). It is different to the value of the service (as explained previously in the document).

Para 12.11 would usefully include further discussion re: regulation and maintenance services given that generally, they are not traded.

Section 12.3.1. It would be helpful if this started with further explanation. Early in the section, a brief summary explaining how degradation should be valued when the underlying asset can be identified would usefully be provided along with an explanation as to why that is the recommended approach (I appreciate it is set out in detail in a previous chapter). The section would also usefully be rounded off with clear guidance as to the circumstances in which restoration cost-based approaches may be used, whether the cost can be recorded in the core account and if not, where it should be recorded.