



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 3: Spatial units for Ecosystem Accounting

Chapter 4: Accounting for Ecosystem Extent

Chapter 5: Accounting for Ecosystem Condition

Comments Form

Deadline for responses: 30 April 2020

Send responses to: seea@un.org

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| Name: | Jovana Elizabeth Palacios Matallana |
| Organization & country: | National Administrative Department of Statistics DANE, Colombia |

The comment form has been designed to facilitate the analysis of comments. There are nine 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

Question 1: Do you have any comments on the definition and description of ecosystem assets and ecosystem accounting areas and the associated measurement boundaries and treatments?

The recognition of the atmosphere as part of the environmental assets is fully consistent with the definition of the environmental assets and allows monitoring the interactions that determine ecological processes and the provision of ecosystem services. Thus, its incorporation into the conceptual scope of environmental assets is relevant and consistent with the national position submitted in the expert consultation carried out during 2019.

The definition and delimitation of application-adjustable ecosystem accounting areas (eg regional, national) combine with the flexible approach to the establishment of basic spatial units (BSU), recognizes spatial, ecological and data availability differences between regions and between countries by providing decision-making tools for the implementation team. Similarly, the addition property between accounting areas of the ecosystem provides an adequate framework for control of areas.

Regarding specific ecosystems and features, the needs to refine their treatment have been well synthesized. Referring to complex mosaics - urban areas, the specific treatment is considered relevant and responds to the national position referred in the 2019 expert consultation. With respect to marine ecosystems, the application of a differentiated approach for those within of the continental shelf and those beyond, it is necessary to ensure that the conceptual scopes of the SEEA - EEA are consistently applicable to all ecosystems (continental or marine).

Question 2. Do you have any comments on the use of the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology as the SEEA Ecosystem Type Reference Classification?

Starting from the advances in the measurement and classification of ecosystems already available in the countries, facilitates the implementation processes and enables the use of a large amount of information available with different analysis scales. Grouping national classifications using the IUCN global ecosystem typology as a reference facilitates the necessary comparison between countries, without requiring the implementation of new classification systems.

Although the proposal to use the IUCN global ecosystem typology as a reference classification of ecosystem type in the SEEA-EE, aims to provide a theoretical solution to the challenges of comparability of results between countries, it is convenient to foresee that progress in the implementation processes may reveal new challenges or shortcomings, not contemplated from the purely conceptual application.

There is still national concern regarding the possibility of centrally constructing a correlative proposal between the IUCN global ecosystem typology and the set of ecosystem classifications commonly used by countries. This would have the advantage of standardizing the grouping criteria and would provide additional tools to ensure comparability.

Question 3. Do you have any comments on the recording of changes in ecosystem extent and ecosystem condition, including the recording of ecosystem conversions, as described in chapters 4 and 5?

In the examples for managed regression (paragraph 4.13) the reference to deforestation and increases in urban areas is confusing. Does It mean that a differentiated register (in a unique variable for them) should be made when they happen? or really the examples refer to an inclusion and not an exclusion as mentioned.

The way of recording changes in the extension contemplated in paragraph 4.21, is confusing, taking into account that the accounting record must be temporarily defined, it is convenient to record the affectation of the surface by extreme phenomena, regardless of whether recovery of the area is expected after the disturbance (be it in a short or long period), therefore, only to this extent is the existence of registry variables makes sense: consistency or extreme events. Likewise, since it is an accounting system, recording the extent of the affected area better justifies the impact on the condition, gaining coherence.

On the other hand, the registry also makes it possible to track the recovery of the affected area, determine if indeed the expected recovery is happening and how long it takes. The above provides management tools, which is one of the objectives of the SEEA - EE. Decisions on the registration of the extension account are more relevant if it is considered that ecosystem accounting begins with it. Additionally, paragraph 5.86 invites to interpret the changes in the condition of the ecosystems based on the changes associated with their extension, which reinforces the suggestion of giving it a consistent treatment and recording it.

If the suggested recording form in paragraph 4.21 is retained and areas are expected to recover after the disturbance, would recording of extreme events no longer be necessary for accounting for natural surfaces? Finally, taking into account that in the accounting of the extension there is an exchange of area between the different ecosystems, an additional concern arises when one thinks about what type of ecosystem to assign the area that was lost due to extreme events.

In terms of the structure of the ecosystem condition account, the presentation of differentiated tables for the Ecosystem condition variable account, Ecosystem condition indicator account and Ecosystem condition index account contributes to overcoming the challenges of delivering a large amount of correctly organized information. The above responds to the importance of establishing a suitable presentation form for a wide flow of information, which had been manifested during the 2019 expert consultation process.

In Chapter 5, Tables 5.4: Ecosystem condition indicator account and 5.5. Ecosystem condition index account, should they include at the end a column indicating the change in condition? That is, a conclusive column that makes evident the positive or negative affectation of the condition?

Question 4. Do you have any comments on the three-stage approach to accounting for ecosystem condition, including the aggregation of condition variables and indicators?

The staged approach is appropriate, given that it starts from the specific key characteristics and the relevant variables. Thus, after the reference conditions are determined, normalize indicators that account for the condition. This is an exercise with a logical order that facilitates understanding and implementation. Additionally, a gradual migration is proposed between the stages and it is recognized that each one of them provides relevant information for decision-making.

Question 5. Do you have any comments on the description and application of the concept of reference condition and the use of both natural and anthropogenic reference conditions in accounting for ecosystem condition?

Taking into account the relevance of the definition of the reference condition for the determination and evaluation of changes in the condition of the ecosystem, it was decisive to establish differentiated points of comparison for natural and anthropogenic ecosystems, since their dynamics and interests are considerably different, just as their management techniques are very particular. Considering the above, the same starting point would have produced results that are difficult to analyse and compare.

Regarding the definition of the reference condition for anthropogenic ecosystem types discussed in paragraph 5.33, it is confusing that the suggestion for its determination focuses on the use of stable ecological conditions when, in Annex 5.4, stable environmental characteristics are considered auxiliary data for the measurement of the condition of the ecosystem and it is recognized that they are practically constant. So if these characteristics do not meet the criterion of temporal reference and in many cases lack regulations, what would be the justification for considering them relevant in determining the reference condition?

On the other hand, if the suggestion of the use of stable ecological conditions does not correspond to the above interpretation, what would be the criteria to establish them? What are they referring to conceptually?

Question 6. Do you have any comments on Ecosystem Condition Typology for organising characteristics, data and indicators about ecosystem condition?

Faced with a large number of paths for the selection of relevant characteristics by countries, the decision to work on the basis of an ecosystem condition typology (TCE) provides one of the most important tools to guarantee comparability between countries and best guide the implementation processes and facilitate decision-making. However, it is convenient to foresee that only the advances in the practical application of the SEEA - EE will account for the effectiveness of the application of the typology.

Question 7. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 3?

The annexes to the chapter contain valuable conceptual information for the implementation processes. Details about the practical application facilitate and guide decision-making, which strengthens subsequent comparison processes.

Question 8. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 4?

The annexes to the chapter contain valuable conceptual information for the implementation processes. Details about the practical application facilitate and guide decision-making, which strengthens subsequent comparison processes.

Question 9. Do you have any other comments on Chapter 5?

The annexes to the chapter contain valuable conceptual information for the implementation processes. Details about the practical application facilitate and guide decision-making, which strengthens subsequent comparison processes.