

Review of the outcome of the consultation on CICES V4.3 and introducing CICES V5.1

Jan-Erik Petersen, European Environment Agency,
Rocky Harris, DEFRA, United Kingdom, and
Roy Haines Young, University of Nottingham

Introduction

This brief paper presents work on developing the *Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services* (CICES) during the past years. It summarises key steps in the consultation on CICES 4.3 in 2016 and 2017 and reviews the main changes introduced in CICES V5.1 as a result of the feedback from the various consultation rounds and the discussions in expert meetings on ecosystem service classifications (see associated separate paper). In doing so it follows on from the paper presented to the London group last year on 'Methodological issues for ecosystem service accounting in SEEA-EEA' (Petersen & Haines-Young, 2016) which also reviewed early results of the consultation on CICES 4.3.

Steps in the consultation on CICES 4.3 during 2016 and 2017

The version of the *Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services* (CICES) in current use (V4.3) was published in 2013 following a substantial consultation on a previous version of CICES. The outcome of the earlier consultation leading to V4.3 as well as explanatory papers for CICES V4.3 are still available on www.cices.eu.

Given the importance of ensuring a good fit between the conceptual approach and structure of CICES and the needs of ecosystem accounting based on the principles laid out in SEEA EEA a new consultation and review period for CICES was initiated at the end of 2015. The work on the new 'Version 5' was informed by a review of the relevant scientific literature, the results of the 2016 Survey conducted by Fabis Consulting Ltd. for the EEA, and workshops held in 2016 as part of the EU-funded ESMEALDA and OpenNESS Projects. The revision also builds the outcomes of a meeting hosted by the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), in June 2016 which was supported by the EEA, and a subsequent workshop in Wageningen, in November 2016, co-organised between the EEA, US-EPA and UNSD.

The resulting final draft proposal was circulated again to members of the EU KIP INCA project and a small group of European and international experts associated with the SEEA technical review committee as V5.0 during summer 2017. This review round resulted in final modifications which form the basis for the current updated version (V5.1) that is being presented to the London Group.

An extensive guidance document on the new version of CICES (V5.1) as well as the complete classification structure in an excel file are available as separate files.

The intention is to make this material formally available (after final editing) as final, official version of CICES 5.1 as of 1 November 2017 for use in ecosystem accounting and assessment, on www.cices.eu. This will allow access to an improved and stable version of CICES, yielding necessary experience with its suitability for real-life application. This testing of CICES (and of other ES classifications) will provide input for further reflections on classifying ecosystem services in the SEEA EEA review process.

Summary of main changes introduced with CICES V5.1

The extensive consultation and review of CICES V4.3 resulted in a number of significant changes to CICES that are introduced with CICES V5.1:

a) Reinforcing the focus of CICES on final services by introducing use clauses

In CICES ecosystem services are defined as the *contributions* that ecosystems make to human well-being, and distinct from the goods and benefits that people subsequently derive from them. These contributions are framed in terms of ‘what ecosystems do’ for people. However, CICES is employed by many different users for a wide range of analytical purposes, not all of whom are familiar with the SEEA EEA definition of ‘final service’. Thus, in the revised version the definition of each service identifies both the purposes or uses that people have for the different kinds of ecosystem service *and* the particular ecosystem attributes or behaviours that support them.

b) Providing a clearer distinction of ecosystem services by adding a parallel classification of abiotic ecosystem outputs

CICES primarily aims to classify the contributions that ecosystems make to human well-being that arise from living processes. However, ecosystems are comprised of biotic and abiotic components and many (lay) users do not clearly appreciate that difference. Consequently, the feedback from the user community to broaden the classification to cover abiotic outputs has been addressed. However, the aim to identify ecosystem services remains the focus of V5.1, but the additional table on abiotic outputs helps to keep that focus in interaction with stakeholders. The new version allows users to select only those ecosystem services that depend on living systems (i.e. biodiversity in its broadest sense), or to include the non-living parts of ecosystems that can also contribute to human well-being.

c) Adding additional guidance for users to enable more precise and correct use of CICES

The importance of providing detailed guidance to help people apply the classification was one of the key points to arise from the consultation on V5.1. The more formal and systematic definitions provided in V5.1 will help people identify more easily what the different services categories cover. The new structure also provides examples of the services themselves and types of associated benefit. In order to help users to work in more informal settings with the classification, suggestions for simpler non-technical names for services are also provided in the new classification structure.

d) Modifying the classification structure for easier use for ecosystem accounting

Although the majority of the classes included in V4.3 carry over to V5.1, their ordering and coding has been modified in the new version to enable users to more easily aggregate Classes for reporting purposes. The classification structure for provisioning services has, for example, been modified in V5.1 to permit aggregation where no ‘end use’ is known so that the classification can be more easily used for accounting purposes. A full set of equivalence tables between V4.3 and V5.1 is available.

e) Revising the approach to classifying cultural ecosystem services to align with SEEA EEA

The definitions in the section on cultural ecosystem services were revised to better distinguish services from benefits. Thus, cultural services are now seen as the characteristics of elements of nature that provide *opportunities* for people to derive cultural goods or benefits. In the new version, cultural services are grouped into those opportunities that are realised from direct contact with nature or a more remote type of interaction; in the case of direct contact services are further classified according to whether the interaction is active or passive.

f) Using CICES as a reference classification

In addition to providing a way to classify ecosystem services, CICES was also intended as a reference classification that would allow translation between different ecosystem service classification systems, such as those used by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB). This feature has been retained in V5.1, and equivalence tables will be provided via the CICES web-site (www.cices.eu). Draft tables for equivalences between CICES V5.1 and the USEPA FEGS¹ tool for classifying ecosystem services (Landers et al. 2016) categories are also available. The intention is to further develop this comparison effort as a potential contribution to further discussions on classifying ecosystem services in the SEEA EEA review process.

References:

Landers D., Nahil A., Rhodes C.R. (2016) The beneficiary perspective – benefits and beyond. In Potschin M, Haines-Young R, Fish R, Turner RK (eds) Routledge Handbook of Ecosystem Services. Routledge, London and New York: 74-88.

Petersen, J-E. and Haines-Young, R. (2016) Methodological issues for ecosystem service accounting in SEEA-EEA– some reflections building on EU experience and a recent CICES survey. Paper presented to 22nd Meeting of the London Group on Environmental Accounting, 28-30 September, Oslo, Norway. Available from: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/londongroup/meeting22/F_31a.pdf

Annexes (in separate files):

- Guidance document on the new version of CICES (V5.1)
- Excel Spreadsheet documenting CICES V5.1

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/eco-research/final-ecosystem-goods-and-services-classification-system>