



United Nations Environment  
Programme



Statistics Division  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations

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# Global Economy Wide Material Flow Accounting Manual

Global Consultation Comment Form

Deadline for responses: 1 March 2019

Please send responses to: [seea@un.org](mailto:seea@un.org)

Your name:	Mário Baptista
Your country/organization:	Portugal / Statistics Portugal
Contact (e.g. email address):	<a href="mailto:mario.baptista@ine.pt">mario.baptista@ine.pt</a>

To submit responses please save this document and send it as an attachment to the following e-mail address: [seea@un.org](mailto:seea@un.org).

The comment form has been designed to facilitate the analysis of comments. In Part I general comments on the general style, structure, content and coverage of the chapter are sought. In Part II any technical and other comments should be included.

## Relevant documents

Relevant documents are available on the SEEA website at:

<https://seea.un.org/content/global-consultation-global-economy-wide-material-flow-accounting-manual>. The documents provided include:

- A cover note on the global consultation
- Draft manual and accompanying questionnaire
- Copy of comment form

## 1 GENERAL COMMENTS

In this section please provide general comments on the draft. You may like to consider providing comments on the style and tone, the structure and organisation, the content and coverage, and the general accessibility of the material.

The Global Economy Wide Material Flow Accounting (GEW-MFA) Manual is fortunately aware (from the perspective of an EU country) of the work that Eurostat has been developing in establishing binding conventions for the integration of EW-MFA under the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which were recently compiled in the Eurostat EW-MFA Handbook - edition 2018.

From our perspective, the fact that this manual is based on the experience of Eurostat accounting guidelines is of great importance in a global harmonization of processes and in the consequent prevention of the proliferation of only seemingly comparable indicators.

The assumption of intentionality to provide guidance to statisticians from national statistical offices around the world to develop capacities to carry out EW-MFA at a national level is reflected in the structure, content, form and definition of the GEW-MFA Manual.

The fact that this is a handbook intended to be of global application and, therefore, to address a wide and diverse set of countries, defines the GEW-MFA Manual in terms of its strengths and weaknesses.

Its strengths result from a defined pedagogical perspective linking EW-MFA accounts to environmental and economic policy issues. This pedagogical line, which is evident in a very explanatory and modular approach to EW-MFA accounting, in the attention given to specific issues of economies in developing countries (generally based on resource extraction and subsistence economic activities) and in the privilege of practical aspects in detail (excellent the introduction of decision trees in the selection of data sources), provides sufficient versatility and a focus on methods that enable statisticians to grasp the important aspects of material flows in their economy.

Its weaknesses stand out from the inability to go beyond the theoretical discussion in more demanding areas in terms of access to information, not defining specific accounting guidelines. In this perspective are presented only two intentions of development, namely the unused extraction that occurs in the context of domestic extraction and the flows between and within different specific branches, which are processes that contribute to the articulation with the tables of uses and resources and contribute to a higher connection of the project with reality.

In conclusion and from a general perspective, the GEW-MFA Manual is a well-established, coherent, pertinent, highly acceptable document with assertive intertextuality, adequate informativeness. Thus, we assess that it is in compliance with its objectives.

## **2 TECHNICAL AND OTHER COMMENTS**

In the box below please supply any additional comments including those of a more technical nature. Please reference your responses with the relevant paragraph numbers or section numbers.

It is important to note that the GEW-MFA Manual specifically mentions that the type of data available at the national institutions responsible for data collection will be determinant of the level of ambition of the project.

The fact that statistical reporting is carried out in the same way (or with small, easily convertible differences) of the EW-MFA project is a decisive technical factor in the use of existing data sources and in reducing statistical burden.

The chapters devoted to domestic extraction, trade and material outflows are manifestly solid in technical, informative and instructive terms. We think it is relevant and positive that the manual recommends guidelines aligned with those of Eurostat on how to establish datasets for modules dealing with the domestic extraction of materials, direct imports, exports, waste streams and emissions (DPO) and net additions to stocks, which allows harmonized datasets for these modules to be established with those currently available within EU.