

The SEEA

The System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) is produced and released under the auspices of multiple organisations, including the United Nations, the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank.

THE SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK

The SEEA Central Framework (SEEA CF) was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission as the first international standard for environmental-economic accounting in 2012. The Central Framework looks at individual environmental assets, such as water, energy, forests and fisheries resources and how those assets are extracted from the environment, used within the economy and returned back to the environment in the form of emissions into air, water and waste.

THE SEEA EXPERIMENTAL ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING

The SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) complements the SEEA CF and represents international efforts toward a coherent accounting approach to the measurement of ecosystems. Ecosystem accounts enable the presentation of data and indicators of the level and value of ecosystem extent, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services in both physical and monetary terms in a spatially explicit way. A revision of the SEEA-EEA is underway and scheduled to be completed by 2020.

ABOUT

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is an international statistical standard that uses a systems approach to bring together economic and environmental information on the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impact of the economy on the environment. Environmental accounts are an extension to the System of National Accounts (SNA) and facilitate the development of indicators and analysis on the economy-environment nexus.

Visit seea.un.org to learn more about the SEEA and land degradation neutrality, including including how to sign up for online courses on multiple topics including ecosystem accounting.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ARE WELCOME.

Please contact us at: United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Environmental Economic Accounts Section, New York, USA

seea@un.org | seea.un.org



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Natural Capital Accounting To Combat Desertification

The SEEA and Land Degradation Neutrality

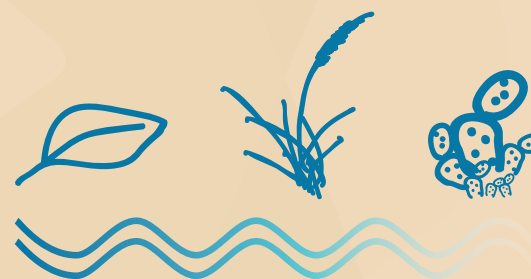
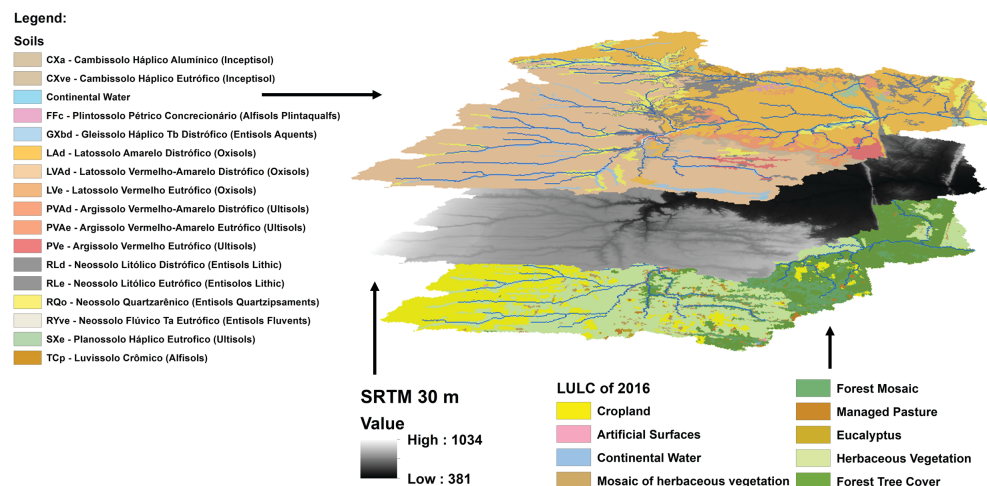


FIGURE 1 | EXAMPLE FROM MATOPIBA REGION, BRAZIL


SEEA accounts enable tracking of land cover changes over time in combination with information on soil condition and other layers (such as elevation) in a spatially explicit manner.





The SEEA and Land Degradation Neutrality

As a natural capital accounting framework, the SEEA provides a strong foundation for supporting efforts to stop and reverse desertification and land degradation. The structure of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, with its emphasis of spatial analysis of ecosystems in terms of their extent, condition and ecosystem services, corresponds well to the data needs for monitoring land degradation neutrality (LDN).

The three global LDN indicators (land cover, land productivity, and carbon stocks) that are used to derive SDG Indicator 15.3.1 — proportion of land that is degraded over total land area — can all be derived from existing core SEEA accounts:

 **SEEA land accounts present detailed spatial data on land cover.**

 **SEEA ecosystem condition accounts measure the overall quality of an ecosystem asset with a range of variables including soil organic carbon (SOC).**

 **SEEA ecosystem services accounts measure the carbon sequestration services provided by the ecosystem.**

SEEA accounts are designed to produce consistent and comparable time-series data to allow the monitoring of trends and the identification of underlying drivers of change. Data is collected at a fine-grained spatial level and can be aggregated up to produce headline indicators or used for detailed analysis of local settings.

The UNCCD encourages countries to supplement their monitoring with additional indicators for ecosystem services and social outcomes that address their national or sub-national priorities. The SEEA's alignment with the System of National Accounts means that data organized under the framework can be integrated and used with existing economic accounts relatively easily.

The SEEA's ability to integrate environmental and economic data promotes the design of effective policy, including the development of “win-win” approaches to land-use policy that improve the environment and raise incomes. As the principle of neutrality will usually involve offsetting degradation in some areas with improvements in others, the SEEA's comprehensive framework provides information for helping identify key trade-offs and the spatial targeting of restoration efforts.

The Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services Project

Five countries, Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, are piloting ecosystem accounting as part of “The Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services” project.

This project's objectives are to:

- Improve the measurement of ecosystems and their services (both in physical and monetary terms) at the national and/or subnational levels;
- Mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem considerations in national and/or subnational policy-planning and implementation; and
- Contribute to the development of internationally agreed methodology and its use in partner countries.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project is funded by the European Union through its Partnership Instrument. It is implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division (lead agency) and the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

