



SEEA NEWS and NOTES

United Nations Statistics Division

Dear Readers,



Welcome to the first edition of the SEEA NEWS and NOTES. It is the aim of this publication to update you regularly on activities in the field of environmental-economic accounting, a relatively new area



of statistics that brings together economic and environmental information in a common framework to measure the inter-relationship between the economy and the environment. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is a satellite system of the 1993 System of National Accounts (1993 SNA). By using concepts, definitions and classifications consistent with economic statistics, the SEEA provides a transparent information system for strategic planning and policy analysis which can be used to identify more sustainable paths of development.

The main mechanism to promote the SEEA, its elevation to an international statistical standard and its implementation in countries is the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA). The Committee was established by the [United Nations Statistical Commission](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/) the apex entity of the global statistical system, at its 36th Session in March 2005.

The Committee has an umbrella function in providing overall vision, coordination, prioritization and direction in the field of environmental-economic accounting and related statistics.

More information is available on the committee's website: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/ceea/default.asp>

To achieve these objectives, the UN Committee's programme of work will focus on the following activities:

- (a) Ensure coordination, integration and complementarity among programmes in environmental-economic accounting and related statistics among international organizations and countries;
- (b) Encourage the use of environmental-economic accounting in countries in support to decision making through technical recommendations on the compilation, harmonization and dissemination of the accounts, linking the accounts to indicators and developing a closer relationship between the users and producers of environmental-economic accounts and related statistics;

(c) Further methodologies in environmental-economic accounting and statistics through identifying, and prioritizing issues that need to be addressed establishing appropriate mechanisms to address those issues, monitoring progress made, reviewing proposed solution and submitting recommendations to the United Nations Statistical Commission for approval;

(d) Advance the implementation of the SEEA in developed and developing countries;

(e) Work towards the harmonization of data collection activities of environment and related statistics with concepts and definitions of environmental-economic accounting including the assurance of data quality.

The selected members of the Committee comprise high-level experts from national governments and international organizations with a broad range of experience in statistics and in the uses of environmental-economic accounts. Members have been selected so as to ensure equitable regional representation.

The SEEA NEWS and NOTES will serve as the official vehicle to widely disseminate on-going activities in environmental-economic accounting and related statistics. It covers ongoing activities, recent releases, and features a calendar of past and upcoming events. It will also pay due attention to the revision process of the System of Environmental and Economic Accounts by discussing issues that are on the research agenda. In doing so, the SEEA NEWS and NOTES targets a broad audience of both producers - environmental accountants, national accountants, environment statisticians - and users of the accounts - policy makers, researchers and others.

I hope you will enjoy the SEEA NEWS and NOTES !

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In the Spotlight

The UN Statistical Commission adopts SEEA as interim international statistical standard

The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) at its [38th Session](#) held in New York from 27 February to 2 March 2007 adopted part 1 of the System of Environmental and Economic Accounting for Water (SEEA) as an interim international statistical standard, recognizing significant demand from the users' community, and encouraged its implementation in countries.



The SEEA was developed in order to standardize concepts and methods in water accounting. It provides the information system for organizing economic and hydrological information in a common framework permitting a consistent analysis of the contribution of the hydrological system to the economy and the impact of the economy on water resources in support of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). The SEEA is a satellite system of the 1993 SNA, which is the statistical standard used for the compilation of economic statistics, and of the SEEA, thus linking water to the economy and to other natural resources.

The Contents

The SEEA includes the following information:

- Stocks and flows of water resources within the environment;
- Pressures of the economy on the environment in terms of water abstraction and emissions added to wastewater released to the environment or removed from wastewater;
- Supply of water to and the use of water by industries and households;
- Reuse of water within the economy;
- Costs of collection, purification, distribution and treatment of water, as well as service charges paid by the users;
- Payments of permits for access to abstract water or to use it as sink for discharge of wastewater;
- Financing of these costs, that is, who is paying for the water supply and sanitation services;
- Hydraulic stock in place, as well as investments in hydraulic infrastructure during the accounting period.

What sets the SEEA apart from other hydrological information systems? First of all, the SEEA directly links hydrological information to the economic accounts through a common structure and consistent definitions and classifications. The SEEA provides a tool for

integrating environmental-economic analysis related to water and thus overcoming the tendency to divide issues along disciplinary lines, in which analyses of economic issues and of hydrological issues are carried out independently of one another. Secondly, the SEEA covers all the important environmental-economic interactions, a feature that makes it ideal for addressing cross-sectoral issues at the core of integrated water resource management.

The Process

The SEEA has been prepared by UNSD in collaboration with the London Group on Environmental Accounting, one of the so-called city groups established by the UNSC, and in particular its Subgroup on Water Accounting. Members of the Subgroup contributed text and country examples, reviewed the various versions of the draft manuscript and assisted in the finalization of the document. The Sub-group comprised of approximately 20 experts from countries, international organizations and academia. The work of the Eurostat Task Force on Water Accounts in the development of harmonized concepts, definitions and classifications as well as the set of standard tables served as an input in the SEEA.

The final draft was presented at the [User-Producer Conference: Water Accounting for Integrated Water Resource Management](#) (Voorburg, 22-24 May 2006), organized by UNSD under the auspices of the UNCEEA and hosted by Statistics Netherlands. The Conference, gathering the major users and producers of water information, endorsed the SEEA and recognized that it provides the much-needed conceptual framework for organizing hydrological and economic information in support of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). The Conference recommended its adoption by UNSC as the international statistical standard for water statistics. The SEEA was adopted by the UNSC upon recommendation of the UNCEEA.

Implementation Strategy

The UNCEEA at its Second Meeting welcomed the draft implementation strategy for the SEEA prepared by UNSD upon request by the UNSC at its 38th session. The strategy comprises the following four components:

- Development of practical guidelines for the establishment of a water statistics programme in countries including an agreed list of variables in physical and monetary terms, and the compilation of the water accounts standard tables;
- Development of training and promotion material;
- Development of a technical cooperation programme consisting of regional activities as well as pilot projects in selected countries in various regions;

The SEEA in a nutshell

The [SEEA](#) is structured in two parts.

Part I includes internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications, standard tables and accounts covering the framework, physical and hybrid supply and use tables and asset accounts (Chapters 1 to 6).

Part II consists of those accounts that are considered of high policy relevance but still experimental because international accepted best practices did not emerge (Chapters 7 to 9). It covers quality accounts, the economic valuation of water beyond the market valuation of the 1993 SNA and examples of applications of the SEEA.

- Harmonisation of international data collection activities with the SEEA concepts and definitions.

UNSD has received to date requests of technical assistance from about 40 countries, and an inter-regional advisor has been appointed to assist countries.

Compilation guide

Work is also underway on a compilation guide on water statistics, which will facilitate the compilation of water accounts.

For more information contact seea@un.org; for further reference see: the [Report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting](#) to the UN Statistical Commission at its 38th Session, or the [Report of the User-Producer Conference](#)



What's New?

International workshop on ecosystem and natural capital accounting

The Workshop (Copenhagen, 30 November to 1 December 2006), jointly organized by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the UN Statistics Division, reviewed developments in measuring ecosystem services and natural capital accounting based on the conceptual framework of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. It brought together for the first time experts from different communities, including national and environmental accountants, scientists, biologists, ecologists and experts in satellite imaging.

Land and Ecosystem Accounting (LEAC) is a powerful tool to better understand and protect the environment. Land and ecosystem accounts are systemic descriptions of how related assets change over time and space (where an asset is anything valuable or useful). It works by providing a single overview where the social, economic and environmental resources on which our wellbeing depends can be linked within a single framework.

“Land and Ecosystem Accounting provides the overview that we need to better protect and maintain our natural capital; both now and into the future”, said Professor Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director of the EEA. Professor McGlade was co-chairing the International workshop on ecosystem and natural capital accounting together with Mr Ivo Havinga, Chief Economic Statistics Branch, UN Statistics Division.

“The accounting framework will eventually allow us to connect the natural system to the economic system”, said Mr Ronan Uhel, Head of the EEA Spatial Analysis group. “These accounts are tools that help us understand how well the environment would be able to withstand change and still provide us with the services and resources we need in the future”. The Workshop welcomed the efforts of EEA to implement a Millennium Ecosystem Assessment for Europe by 2012 using the SEEA, by bringing together information from different sources including from space earth observation programmes and monitoring networks. It identified methodological issues that need to be resolved in order to advance the research agenda and which will serve as useful input in the revision of SEEA-2003.

The Workshop considered SEEA as the necessary framework for measuring the interaction between the economy and the environment and

a useful tool for monitoring the ecosystem services and the threats that ecosystems face as well as the possible consequences for economic development and well-being. SEEA was thus recognized as a valuable tool in support of Ecosystem Assessments.

The workshop also launched EEA’s Technical report, “[Land accounts for Europe 1990-2000 - Towards integrated land and ecosystem accounting](#)”.

For more information on the workshop please visit [EEA’s press release](#) or contact Jean-Louis Weber: jean-louis.weber@eea.europa.eu

Results of the Global Assessment - Phase 1

The Global Assessment of Environment Statistics, Environmental-Economic Accounting and related statistics is undertaken by the UN Statistics Division under the auspices of the UNCEEA. The Global Assessment is carried out in two phases.

Table 1: Existence of Environmental-Economic Accounting programmes in countries

| | Number of countries (1) | Number of countries responded (2) | Number of countries with a Programme (3) | Percentage of responding countries (4)=(3)/(2) |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| All Member States of the United Nations..... | 192 | 99 | 49 | 49 |
| <i>Economic regions</i> | | | | |
| Developed regions | 48 | 40 | 29 | 73 |
| Developing regions | 154 | 59 | 20 | 34 |
| <i>Economic grouping:</i> | | | | |
| Developed economies | 37 | 32 | 27 | 84 |
| Transition economies | 19 | 11 | 3 | 27 |
| Developing economies..... | 136 | 56 | 19 | 34 |
| <i>Geographical grouping:</i> | | | | |
| Africa..... | 53 | 14 | 5 | 36 |
| Central, Eastern and Southern and South-Eastern Asia..... | 30 | 14 | 7 | 50 |
| Europe and Northern America..... | 45 | 37 | 26 | 70 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 33 | 18 | 4 | 22 |
| Oceania..... | 14 | 6 | 4 | 67 |
| Western Asia..... | 17 | 10 | 3 | 30 |

Phase 1 of the Global Assessment covers general information on the programmes of environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting, including the institutional infrastructure, subject areas covered, constraints encountered in the development and implementation of the programmes and countries’ future plans.

Table 2: EEA modules compiled

| Module | Number of countries | Percentage of countries |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Total countries - World | 44 | 100 |
| Energy and emission accounts..... | 33 | 75 |
| EPEA..... | 24 | 55 |
| Water Accounts..... | 22 | 50 |
| Forest Account..... | 22 | 50 |
| MFA/Waste accounts..... | 22 | 50 |
| Mineral Asset Accounts..... | 14 | 32 |
| Land and Ecosystem Accounts..... | 10 | 23 |
| Fisheries Accounts..... | 9 | 20 |
| PSUT..... | 5 | 11 |
| Other..... | 9 | 20 |

Considering that environmental-economic accounting is a relatively new area of statistics, it is noteworthy as shown in Table 1 that a considerable number of countries — about half of the countries that responded to the assessment — have an environmental-economic accounting programme. An institution is considered having a programme on Environmental-Economic Accounting if it compiles any part/module of the accounts in physical or in monetary terms. In addition, about 20 countries which are not currently compiling environmental-economic accounts indicated that they are planning to start with their compilation in the near future. This would



bring the percentage of countries compiling environmental accounts to about 70 per cent.

According to Table 2, Energy and Emission Accounts, followed by Environmental Protection Expenditure Accounts and Water Accounts are currently the most frequently compiled EEA modules.

Phase 2 of the Global Assessment consists of several follow-up questionnaires focusing on specific subject areas identified in Phase 1. A module on [energy statistics and balances](#) has already been sent out. A module on energy and emission accounts as well as a module on water statistics and accounts are expected to be carried out in 2007, and the analysis of the results submitted to the UNSC in March 2008.

For more information visit the [global assessment website](#), [download](#) the complete analysis of Phase 1, or contact seea@un.org

Online searchable archive of publications

The [Searchable Archive of Publications on Environmental-Economic Accounting](#) was launched in March 2007. The archive, developed by UNSD under the auspices of the UNCEEA, disseminates widely methodological publications and country practices on environmental-economic accounting with the aim of facilitating the work of statisticians, researchers and practitioners in the field.

At present, the archive covers publications related to environmental-economic accounting. It excludes publications on environment statistics, sustainable development indicators and economic valuation, unless directly linked to environmental-economic accounting. It includes handbooks, reports, papers and articles (countries and international organizations) and more broadly technical reports and publications by academia and NGOs. It does not include presentations and minutes of meetings. Although the majority of publications in the archive is in English, some are in French or Spanish.

The archive can be searched by keyword or by country. The keyword search (see screenshot below) allows a search by type of resource (for instance *water*) or by type of accounts (for instance *physical and hybrid flow accounts*) or by type of publication (for instance *compilation*) and combinations thereof. Search results can be refined in a second step (for instance if *physical and hybrid flow accounts* were chosen in step 1, by selecting one or more of the following *air emission accounts*, *waste accounts*, *energy flow accounts* or *water emission accounts*).

Search the Archive Database - by Keyword

Type of Resource: (Please select one or more from the following keywords)

| |
|--------------------|
| --ALL-- |
| Air |
| Fisheries |
| Forest |
| Land and Ecosystem |
| Mineral and Energy |
| Water |

Type of Account: (Please select one or more from the following keywords)

| |
|---|
| --ALL-- |
| Asset Accounts |
| Environmental Protection Expenditure Accounts |
| Physical and Hybrid Flow Accounts |
| Applications |
| Governance |
| Valuation |

Type of Publication: (Please select one from the following keywords)

| |
|-------------|
| --ALL-- |
| Compilation |
| Methodology |

Submit

The archive currently contains more than 320 publications.

For more information contact Bram Edens: edens@un.org Publications that you would like us to consider posting in the archive can be sent to seea@un.org

Country News

The US Government Accountability Office / National Academy of Sciences' Forum on Environmental Accounting

The U.S. Government Accountability Office and the National Academy of Sciences cosponsored a forum on environmental accounting on June 19 in Washington DC. Comptroller General David M. Walker and Glenn-Marie Lange, of Columbia University's Center for Economy, Environment, and Society, co-moderated the forum. Other participants included U.S. federal agency officials and national and international statistical, energy, environment, and natural resource experts. Participants at the forum discussed the following questions:

- What components of environmental accounts should the United States develop and why?
- What can the United States learn from other countries' experiences in developing environmental accounts?
- How should the United States address key challenges in developing national environmental accounts?

The U.S. experience with environmental accounting began in 1994, when the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) released the nation's first set of environmental accounts for subsoil minerals and planned to develop other accounts. However, Congress prohibited BEA's work after some members representing coal-producing states raised concerns over how the information would be used. In 1999, an independent National Academy of Sciences panel sponsored by BEA found that developing a set of comprehensive environmental accounts should be a high priority for the nation. The panel reported that these accounts have many benefits, including providing valuable information on the interaction between the environment and the economy; helping determine whether the nation is using its natural resources and environmental assets in a sustainable manner; and providing information on the implications of different regulations, taxes, and consumption patterns on environmental sustainability. Congress' prohibition on BEA's development of environmental accounts ended in 2002.

The forum discussions were conducted on a non-attribution basis to encourage an open and candid exchange of ideas. A summary of the forum will be published later this summer.



Past events

- 2nd Meeting of the Oslo Group**
[Delhi, India 5-7 Feb. 2007](#)
- 38th Session of the UN Statistical Commission**
[New York 27 Feb.- 2 March 2007](#)
- 11th Meeting of the London Group**
[Johannesburg, 26-30 March 2007](#)
- 3rd Meeting of the WGSSD**
[Geneva, 19-20 April 2007](#)
- Working Group on Environmental Accounts**
[Luxembourg, 7-8 May 2007](#)
- DIMESA 2007: Directors' Meeting on Environment Statistics and Accounts**
[Luxembourg, 6-7 June 2007](#)
- The US Government Accountability Office's Forum on Environmental Accounting**
[Washington DC, June 19 2007](#)
- Global Assessment – Phase 2:**
[Energy Statistics and Balances](#)
- 2nd OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy**
[Istanbul, 27-30 June 2007](#)
- 2nd Meeting of the UNCEEA**
[New York, 5-6 July 2007](#)
- 63rd SPC and 93rd DGINS Conference**
[19–21 September 2007, Budapest](#)

Recent Releases

[Land accounts for Europe 1990-2000](#) - Towards integrated



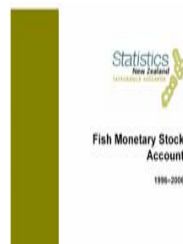
land and ecosystem accounting. The report is organized into four parts. Part I provides an introduction and overview. Part II focuses particularly on how the accounts can be used to gain an insight into the processes of land cover change on a range of spatial scales across the EEA member countries. The third part looks at methodologies, data resources and analytical techniques in more detail. Part IV concludes and looks towards the future.

The **[Updated Water Accounts for South Africa](#)** for 2000 are constructed according to the recommendations of the United



Nations. The accounts are presented as a Satellite Account to the 1993 System of National Accounts. This document forms part of the work Statistics South Africa is currently doing on natural resource accounting (environmental economic accounting).

The asset value of New Zealand's commercial fish resource, as managed under the quota management system (QMS), is estimated at \$3.8 billion, is one of the findings of the **[Fish Monetary Stock Account 1996–2006](#)**. From 1996 to 2006, New Zealand's commercial fish resource is estimated to have increased in value by 40 percent, from \$2.7 billion in 1996 to \$3.8 billion in 2006.



More info: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/inforequest.htm>

Upcoming events

- 4th Meeting of the WGSSD**
[8-9 November 2007, Bucharest](#)
- Beyond GDP: Measuring Progress for Better Policy**
[19-20 November 2007, Brussels](#)
- Global Assessment – Phase 2:**
Energy and Emission Accounts
Water Statistics and Accounts
- United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 13 and CMP 3)**
[3-14 December 2007, Bali](#)
- 12th Meeting of the London Group**
[17-19 December 2007, Rome](#)
- 3rd Meeting of the Oslo Group**
[4-6 February 2008, Vienna](#)
- 39th Session of the UN Statistical Commission**
[26-29 February 2008, New York](#)

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