



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

SEEA Revision

**SEEA Experimental
Ecosystem Accounting**

Comment form

Comment form for the Consultation Draft

Deadline for responses: 15 January, 2013
Send responses to: seea@un.org

Your name:	Environmental-Economic Accounts
Your country/organization:	United Nations Statistics Division
Contact (e.g. email address):	seea@un.org

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

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

In Part I general comments on the structure and content of the draft document are sought. In Part II any other comments, particularly those of a technical nature should be included.

Relevant documents

Before submitting responses you are encouraged to read

Cover Note to the Consultation Draft

SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting – Consultation Draft

Part I: General comments

In the box below please supply any comments on the structure of the document, the balance of material and the coverage of the draft including any thoughts on missing content.

Comments on the style, tone, and readability of the text are also welcome.

Please reference paragraphs numbers or section numbers as appropriate.

UNSD welcomes and supports the development of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. The consultation draft reflects the state of the art on ecosystem accounts and provides a conceptual framework from which countries could start in the testing and experimentation of ecosystem accounting. The SEEA-Experimental Ecosystem Accounting remains work-in-progress in the sense that it would benefit from experience in countries experimenting on the application of the conceptual framework put forward. It provides a sound conceptual basis building on existing practices and scientific and economic knowledge.
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Part II: 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 number or section number.

Chapter 1

The relationship between the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, the SEEA Central Framework and the System of National Accounts (SNA) can be further elaborated in the chapter.

Chapter 2

Statistical units

In the field of official statistics, while rules on how to define statistical units and reporting units in economic and social statistics (e.g. in terms of establishments and households) are fairly established, such guidelines do not exist for environmental and geospatial statistics. The current draft is a step in the right direction; however this is an area where practical experimentation is needed in order to define the concepts more definitely and clearly. It is recommended to place this issue in the research agenda and learn from current and future country experiences.

The units model in the current draft define three different types of units: Basic spatial units (BSL), Land cover/ecosystem functional units (LCFU) and Ecosystem accounting units (EAU). The concept can be better illustrated through examples. We welcome the drafting of an Annex presenting examples on how the units model has been applied in countries.

The issue of data collection method, data sources, and data quality framework are not covered in the consultation draft. These are areas that can be further elaborated in a compiler manual.

Classification of ecosystems

The present draft does not provide a definite classification of ecosystems. Yet a provisional list of such will be useful for reader to crystallize the concept. It is recommended to put this topic in the research agenda.

Chapter 3

Boundary and CICES

We support the current text on CICES and in particular the boundary cases. We think it is important to maintain consistency with the SEEA-Central Framework boundaries when delineating the boundary between the economy and the environment. As such we agree that cultivated biological resources such as crops and plantation timber are

considered within the economy as output of economic production process (e.g agriculture) and not as final ecosystem services. Consequently, the relevant final ecosystem services for CICES are flows relating to nutrients, water, pollination, etc for these outputs.

Abiotic services, while agree not included them in CICES, we believe it is important that they are defined in a separate but complementary block in the broader framework of modelling flows in the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, to support integrated land management decision and assessment of trade-offs between alternative land uses.

Underlying rules to structure CICES and separate category at each level should be clearly defined.

Para 3.24: We have reservation on the suggestion to apply the harvest approach for cultivated crops and other plants for pragmatic reason. The SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounts is a conceptual document and compilation issues should be left to a compilers manual.

Aggregation

Methods to derive weights, their underlying assumption and pros and cons, can be explained and elaborated in details with examples in the annex.

Chapter 4

Ecosystem assets

Ecosystem assets are defined in spatial areas as such carbon and biodiversity are considered as characteristics of ecosystem assets but not ecosystem assets itself. The relationship should be clearly stated in the chapter.

As such, the relationship between ecosystem asset accounting, carbon accounting and biodiversity accounting needs also to be clearly stated in the chapter.

Degradation

The relationship between the concept of degradation and depletion (defined in the central framework) is not clearly stated in chapter 4. They are two different concepts but non-technical readers may get confused about the two definitions

According to Para 4.27, degradation will be reflected in declines in ecosystem condition and/or declines in expected ecosystem service flows. The question is whether a decline in ecosystem extent is also considered as degradation (e.g. a decrease in the forest area).

Since degradation can be reflected in terms of expected ecosystem service flows, ecosystem conditions and ecosystem extents but they are measured at different scales, methods to compare and aggregate them should be elaborated in details.

Chapter 5 & 6

We agree with and support the conservative approach taken in chapter 5 and 6 on valuation and monetary accounting, of listing out existing approaches and divergent views on valuation without providing recommendation. The topic of valuation is recommended to be placed in the research agenda. Common agreement needs to be reached and testing needs to be done in coming years before any monetary data to be considered as part of official statistics.