



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

Expert Meeting on Ecosystem Accounts
London, 5-7 December 2011

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Monday, December 5th

Registration (9:00-9:30)

Session 1 (9:30-11:00)

Opening of the meeting and policy applications of ecosystem accounts

This session will feature opening statements by Jil Matheson, UK National Statistician, Peter Unwin, Head of the Environment Group within the UK Department for Food and Rural Affairs, and introductory remarks by representatives of the United Nations Statistics Division, the European Environment Agency and the World Bank.

Session 2 (11:00 – 5:00): Chair: Ivo Havinga, UNSD

Structure of accounts (Issue 2)

This session will discuss the framework of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounts and its relationship with the SEEA central framework. In particular, a basic set of accounts that can support assessments of the state of ecosystems and flows of services to the economy will be presented. These basic accounts would extend the SNA and SEEA Central Framework production and asset boundaries by including flows of non-market ecosystem services and stocks of natural substances (e.g. nutrients, carbon, etc.). Possible extension of the asset accounts would include measures of the state or health of ecosystems, defined in terms of capacity for delivery of all types of ecosystem services.

Principles of monetary valuation (Issue 10)

The session will discuss existing practices in the valuation of ecosystem services starting from the principle that monetary valuations in SEEA should be consistent with the SNA. In particular, methods to separately identify ecosystem services already included in the SNA and to estimate non-market value of services outside the SNA production boundary using market based techniques would be discussed.

Tuesday, December 6th

Session 3 (9:30 – 12:30): Chair, Peter Helm, DEFRA

Classification of ecosystem services (Issue 8)

Ecosystem services can be defined broadly as the functions of ecosystems that provide benefits to human well-being and arise from the interaction of biotic and abiotic processes. A Common International Classification for Ecosystem Services (CICES) is needed in order to integrate and compare across potential data sources for ecosystem service flows.

Prioritization of ecosystem services (Issue 9)

The ecosystem services within the scope of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounts are (i) services that increase overall production and welfare but are not currently captured in the SNA, and (ii) services that support economic activities already captured in the SNA, though not necessarily explicitly. The session will discuss criteria prioritization including: (i) economic importance; (ii) possibility to consistently include the service in SEEA; and (iii) availability of data. Data availability, which will often be fragmented and/or spatially heterogeneous, will be taken into consideration for constructing meaningful national level physical and monetary accounts.

Session 4 (1:30 – 5:30) Chair, Jock Martin, EEA

Land cover mapping, land cover classifications, and accounting units (Issue 3)

The statistical units for ecosystems are fundamental to ecosystem accounts. A proposal on defining these units as functional units of the environment that have the capacity, in their own right, to provide services to humanity vis-à-vis the statistical units in the economy (i.e. establishments/ enterprises and households), will be discussed. This session will also discuss the application of the land cover classification developed in the SEEA Central Framework to ecosystem accounts. Current practices using remote sensing technology for ecosystem accounts as well as data availability internationally will be discussed in order to obtain an understanding of the feasibility of the accounts.

Carbon accounts (Issue 4), nitrogen and phosphorus balances and soil accounts

This session will discuss the methods to calculate full carbon accounts including the stocks and flows of carbon in the forest and soil and net ecosystem carbon balance calculated as net primary production less removals. This session should aim to reach an agreed set of recommendations for carbon accounting in SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounts. In addition, the issue will include discussions on nutrients cycle/balances and soil accounting more generally.

Wednesday, December 7th

Session 5 (9:30 – 12:30): Chair: Paul Allin, ONS

Ecosystem Health/Total ecological potential (Issue 7)

A key objective for the ecosystem accounts is to derive information for monitoring the general health, or state, of ecosystems in their capacity to provide services to humanity, now and in the future. This session would discuss a minimum set of measures, which may include carbon accounts, landscape accounts, and biodiversity, in addition to other measures related to water, soil, etc., for approximating the overall capacity of ecosystems for providing a bundle of services. Furthermore, the discussion would cover the methods for integrating the different sources and types of information on ecosystem health, reviewing the possibility for multi-criteria analysis and methods for deriving a single index or a “common currency” for ecosystem assessment.

Landscape accounts and landscape ecological potential (Issue 5)

This session will discuss methods to develop landscape accounts characterizing landscapes from an ecological point of view, considering that the impacts of land cover changes may be completely different according to the ecosystem in which it takes place. Land cover change is an important indicator related to capacity for delivery of ecosystem services.

Session 6 (1:30 – 5:00): Chair: TBD

Biodiversity accounts and indexes (Issue 6)

Biodiversity is an attribute of ecosystem resilience and therefore an important proxy indicator for assessing changes and risks over time. This session would review existing studies on the applicability of biodiversity measures for compiling regular ecosystem diagnostic accounts taking into account data availability.

Concluding remarks and closing of the meeting

This session will include a review of the main conclusions of the meeting including the way forward leading to the draft of outcome papers on the issues discussed and the preparation of the draft text of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounts.