



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

**SEEA Experimental
Ecosystem Accounting**

Consultation Draft

SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting

Cover Note

As part of the revision of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), the United Nations Statistical Commission supported the advancement of work on ecosystem accounting at its 43rd session in February 2012. The ongoing work on ecosystem accounting is complementary but distinct from the work on the SEEA Central Framework that was adopted by the UNSC in February 2012 as the initial international standard for environmental-economic accounting.

Ecosystem accounting is an approach to the assessment of the environment through the measurement of ecosystems and the measurement of the flows of services from ecosystems into economic and other human activity. It provides a complementary perspective to the accounting approaches described in the SEEA Central Framework.

Work on ecosystem accounting over the past 18 months, under the auspices of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEAA), has led to the completion of a consultation draft, SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, which summarises the state of knowledge on ecosystem accounting from the perspective of environmental-economic accounting.

The concepts and terminology used in SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting are less advanced than those adopted in the SEEA Central Framework. Consequently, much effort has been placed on synthesising developments in this area that have been made by ecological scientists and ecological economists, and combining them with well-known concepts of official statistics, in particular national accounts, statistical units and classifications. It is anticipated that the framework and the concepts, terms and definitions proposed will provide a foundation to encourage and support statistical and measurement work in this area on an experimental basis.

The content of the consultation draft has been the subject of discussion among a number of inter-disciplinary expert meetings including the London Group on Environmental Accounts and will benefit from this current, broader round of consultation. The short term aim is to finalise a version of SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting, for discussion at the next UNSC meeting in February 2013. While the document is reaching a final draft stage, there is scope for further development of the document and additional clarification on technical issues, which will take into account the responses from this broad consultation.

Furthermore, an appropriate references and a glossary will be incorporated in the final draft.

There is no intention that this document becomes an international standard. Rather, the intent is that SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting marks the beginning of a more integrated, multi-disciplinary research programme in this area that benefits from the strong role that official statisticians can play. One key finding over the past 18 months is that some of the core roles of official statisticians in collecting, organising and integrating data; in developing standards, definitions and classifications; and in framing national level information sets; are ones that have been missing in the conceptual developments that have taken place in the scientific and ecological economic approaches to ecosystem accounting.

Some NSOs may be better positioned at this stage than others to reflect on this document given their mandates to undertake research and/or their experience with compiling and disseminating environmental and geospatial information. Whatever the case may be,, you are encouraged to discuss the content of the consultation draft with relevant agencies in your country, potentially including those responsible for environmental and economic policies, those responsible for geo-spatial information, research agencies and academia.

Deadline for responses: 15 January 2013