



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS

**SEEA Revision
Issue 3b
Cover Note**

Cover Note

Issue #3b: Boundary issues in air emission accounts

Outcome paper for global consultation

Outcome Paper Issue #3b: Boundary issues in air emission accounts

Issue description

Emission inventories follow the methodology developed by UNFCCC and they differ from the emission accounts in several ways including the following: - Use of the territory principle in the emission inventories and the residence principle in the emission accounts - Use of sectors based on technology in emission inventories and use of economic activities in the emission accounts - Treatment of short lived biomass, carbon sinks and land (produced and non-produced). This would require a close analysis of the differences in the approaches and classifications. The question is how bridge tables linking emission inventories and emission accounts can be developed. Can a correspondence between the IPCC source classification and ISIC be developed?

Background

Air emission accounts have been a long-standing area of interest for environmental accounts. Most focus in recent times has been on the extent of carbon emissions to the atmosphere but historically there has been interest in a wide range of substances that are emitted to the air as a by-product of economic activity.

The starting point for investigation of this issue was the reconciliation between emission inventories using Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) methods and the definitions and conventions of the System of Environmental and Economic Accounts (SEEA) air emission accounts. However, it became clear that the issues involved in reconciling these datasets that there were a number of boundary issues and definitions for the SEEA that needed to be confirmed before a reconciliation could be completed. Hence the focus of the issue turned to recommending relevant definitions for the revised SEEA in this area.

The outcome paper for this issue discusses the boundary for SEEA air emission accounts for greenhouse gas (GHG) and other emissions. The finalisation of this work will require the development of bridge tables which explain the linkages between SEEA air emission accounts data and IPCC GHG emissions data. The general topic of bridge tables is discussed at more length under SEEA Revision Issue #3a: Bridge tables in the revised SEEA.

Summary of outcomes

The investigation of this issue led to eight recommendations regarding the definition and boundary of the SEEA air emission accounts. They are:

Recommendation 3b.1: That, in the revised SEEA Volume 1, the accumulation of carbon emissions in living biomass and soils should not be recorded except for the accumulation of carbon in timber resources and when necessary for the compilation of bridge tables.

Recommendation 3b.2: That, in the revised SEEA, the air emission accounts should record emissions that are captured and stored where there is a reasonable degree of control over the storage facility.

Recommendation 3b.3: That, in the revised SEEA, all air emissions from the burning of biomass should be recorded in the air emission accounts including emissions from unintended forest and grassland fires.

Recommendation 3b.4: That in the revised SEEA air emissions from capital equipment and consumer durables should be recorded on an ongoing basis over the life of the equipment.

Recommendation 3b.5: That for the purposes of hybrid accounting for air emissions, consumer durables should be accounted for as being consumed over their operating life rather than at the time of purchase.

Recommendation 3b.6: That in the revised SEEA, air emissions from controlled landfills and carbon storage facilities should be recorded in the air emission accounts.

Recommendation 3b.7: That, in the revised SEEA, air emissions from natural processes should be excluded from the SEEA air emission accounts except for emissions due to enteric fermentation of livestock and humans.

Recommendation 3b.8: That in the revised SEEA, air emissions should be recorded when they enter the environment and the production of secondary emissions should not be recorded. Air emissions transferred within the economy should be recorded.

Questions

1. Do you agree that, in the revised SEEA Volume 1, the accumulation of carbon emissions in living biomass and soils should not be recorded except for the accumulation of carbon in timber resources and when necessary for the compilation of bridge tables?
2. Do you agree that, in the revised SEEA, the air emission accounts should record emissions that are captured and stored where there is a reasonable degree of control over the storage facility?
3. Do you agree that, in the revised SEEA, all air emissions from the burning of biomass should be recorded in the air emission accounts including emissions from unintended forest and grassland fires?
4. Do you agree that in the revised SEEA air emissions from capital equipment and consumer durables should be recorded on an ongoing basis over the life of the equipment?
5. Do you agree that for the purposes of hybrid accounting for air emissions, consumer durables should be accounted for as being consumed over their operating life rather than at the time of purchase?
6. Do you agree that in the revised SEEA, air emissions from controlled landfills and carbon storage facilities should be recorded in the air emission accounts?
7. Do you agree that, in the revised SEEA, air emissions from natural processes should be excluded from the SEEA air emission accounts except for emissions due to enteric fermentation of livestock and humans?
8. Do you agree that in the revised SEEA, air emissions should be recorded when they enter the environment and the production of secondary emissions should not be recorded. Air emissions transferred within the economy should be recorded?
9. Any other comments?

To submit responses to these questions please complete the accompanying comment form available on the website. You are encouraged to submit a short response to the questions (yes/no/no comment) even if you have no further comments to submit.

Deadline for responses: 24 December 2010