

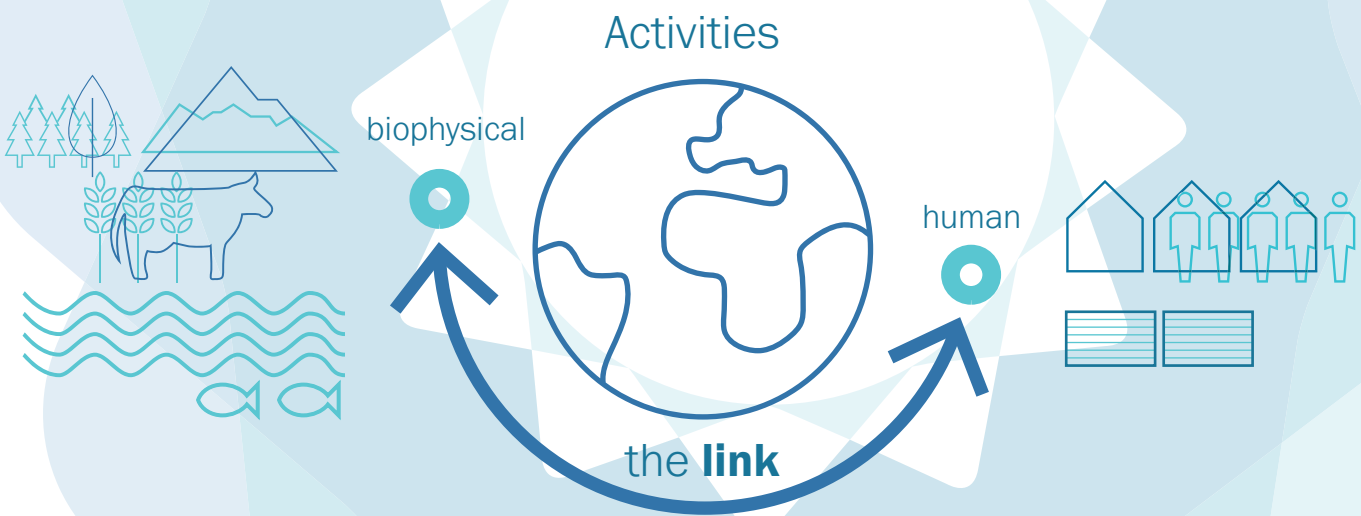


United Nations



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of **Ecosystem Services**



Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa are developing Natural Capital Accounts to advance understanding of the many ways economic well-being depends on biodiversity and ecosystems.



The project

The “Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services” (NCAVES) project is funded by the European Union. It is jointly by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The goal of this pathbreaking project is to advance the theory and practice of ecosystem accounting, informing policy and generating valuable experience for the development of accounts across the globe. Five countries – Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa – are strategic partners in the creation of pilot ecosystem accounts applying the System of Environmental Economic Accounts - Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) framework.



various images of ecosystem distress...



Natural Capital Accounting

Healthy ecosystems supply essential services that humans depend upon in their daily lives, such as clean air and water, productive soils, pollination, carbon sequestration and flood control. But the contribution of our “natural capital” has too often been taken for granted when making important economic decisions. The resulting overexploitation, habitat destruction, and pollution of our natural world has created profound damage to our biosphere.

Continuing down this path could lead to a tipping point resulting in a catastrophic reduction in the ability of ecosystems to provide the services critical to human wellbeing. Tragically, it is often the poorest and most vulnerable populations that are most directly dependent upon the benefits of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems for their daily needs.

We can no longer afford to ignore our dependence on a thriving environment rich in life. We must change the way we measure development so that nature and its benefits appear on the ledger.

Natural capital accounting (NCA) provides the essential information needed for this change. Physical and monetary measures of the stocks and flows of natural capital and the extent to which ecosystems contribute to economic activity and provide essential services to society enable decisionmakers to more effectively chart the path to a sustainable future.

Ecosystem Accounting

The SEEA EEA and its accompanying Technical Recommendations form an integrated statistical framework for organizing biophysical data, measuring ecosystem services, tracking changes in ecosystem assets and linking this information to economic and other human activity.

One of the distinguishing features of the SEEA EEA is that it is spatially explicit, with the accounts being derived from underlying maps. An intergovernmental process is underway to revise the SEEA-EEA into an agreed international statistical standard. This process is scheduled to be completed by 2021.



Ecosystem extent account: This account serves as a common starting point for ecosystem accounting. It organizes information on the extent of different ecosystem types (e.g. forests, wetlands, agricultural areas, marine areas) within defined geographic boundaries in terms of spatial area.



Ecosystem condition account: This account measures the overall quality of an ecosystem asset and captures, in a set of key indicators, the state or functioning of the ecosystem in relation to both its naturalness and its potential to supply ecosystem services.

