

The SEEA At a Glance

- SEEA accounts provide detailed information on the relationship between the environment and the economy.
- Over 80 countries are implementing SEEA accounts.
- Accounts provide information in both physical and monetary terms.
- SEEA accounts are consistent with traditional economic measures under the System of National Accounts like gross domestic product and national income.
- The SEEA uses a systems approach to measure stocks of environmental assets as well as flows of services from the environment for economic and human benefit.
- The SEEA Central Framework (SEEA CF) looks at individual environmental assets, such as water, energy, forests and fisheries resources and their use in the economy.
- The SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) enables the presentation of data and indicators of ecosystem extent, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services in both physical and monetary terms in a spatially explicit way.

ABOUT

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is an international statistical standard that uses a systems approach to bring together economic and environmental information on the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impact of the economy on the environment. Environmental accounts are an extension to the System of National Accounts (SNA) and facilitate the development of indicators and analysis on the economy-environment nexus.

Visit seea.un.org to learn more about the SEEA and biodiversity, including how to sign up for online courses on multiple topics including ecosystem accounting.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS ARE WELCOME.

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System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

Accounting for Biodiversity

The SEEA and the Post-2020 Biodiversity Agenda



System of
Environmental
Economic
Accounting

The SEEA

The System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA) is the agreed international standard for organizing and presenting statistics on the environment and its relationship with the economy. It is produced and released under the auspices of multiple organisations, including the United Nations, the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank.

THE SEEA CENTRAL FRAMEWORK

The SEEA Central Framework (SEEA CF) was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission as the first international standard for environmental-economic accounting in 2012. The Central Framework looks at individual environmental assets, such as water, energy, forests and fisheries resources and how those assets are extracted from the environment, used within the economy and returned back to the environment in the form of emissions into air, water and waste.

THE SEEA EXPERIMENTAL ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING

The SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) complements the SEEA CF and represents international efforts toward a coherent accounting approach to the measurement of ecosystems. Ecosystem accounts enable the presentation of data and indicators of the level and value of ecosystem extent, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services in both physical and monetary terms in a spatially explicit way. A revision of the SEEA-EEA is underway and scheduled to be completed by 2020.

The SEEA and a New Biodiversity Agenda

ENABLING A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA FOR BIODIVERSITY

The SEEA is well-positioned to support the post-2020 biodiversity agenda. It can provide a consistent monitoring framework that produces actionable indicators on ecosystem extent and condition, as well as the supply and use of ecosystem services. The SEEA also can be used to track expenditures on conservation efforts in both the public and private sectors. Its integrated systems approach can clarify the major drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem changes, identify key trade-offs, and support the development of “win-win” conservation approaches.

MAKING THE CASE FOR BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

Biodiversity and natural capital are essential for a well-functioning economy and sustainable development. By providing a full picture of its connection to the economy, SEEA accounts can help make the case for protecting and conserving biodiversity. Ecosystem accounts used in combination with information on expenditures provide decision-makers with a clear picture of the return-on-investment from biodiversity protection.

PROVIDING THE CREDIBLE DATA

The SEEA offers a dependable measurement framework enabling an in-depth understanding of the connections between economic well-being and natural capital. It integrates economic and environmental information using internationally agreed-upon statistical standards developed and applied by governments worldwide. The SEEA provides a common approach for disparate data initiatives, so that policies can be evaluated through a unified system of environmental accounting. Because of its integrated nature, the SEEA enables the establishment of partnerships among data producers and between data users and producers for policy applications.

The Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services Project

Five countries, Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, are piloting ecosystem accounting as part of “The Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services” project.

This project’s objectives are to:

- Improve the measurement of ecosystems and their services (both in physical and monetary terms) at the national and/or subnational levels;
- Mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem considerations in national and/or subnational policy-planning and implementation; and
- Contribute to the development of internationally agreed methodology and its use in partner countries.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project is funded by the European Union through its Partnership Instrument. It is implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division (lead agency) and the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The project’s main outcomes will be presented at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2020 to be held in Beijing, China.

