

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS

National Natural Capital Accounting Strategy

Summary of the ten-year strategy for advancing Natural Capital Accounting in South Africa:

Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) is a practical tool to measure how nature supports people and the economy. Just as we have a system of national (economic) accounts to measure the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other indicators to track the performance of the economy, and the population census to track progress in social outcomes, we also need a system to track the natural environment. Natural capital accounts, including ecosystem accounts, provide indicators that tell us about stocks of natural assets and flows of natural resources, and the benefits that people receive from nature, to inform planning and decision making in a range of sectors.

South Africa is one of the leading countries in the growing field of NCA. In June 2021, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) released South Africa's first National NCA Strategy: A ten-year strategy for advancing NCA in South Africa.

VISION OF THE NATIONAL NCA STRATEGY:
NCA is widely used to provide credible evidence for integrated planning and decision-making in support of the development needs of the country



Intensive co-development process with range of stakeholders over 3 years



The National NCA Strategy is owned and published by Stats SA, but was co-developed with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) through an intensive co-development process with a range of stakeholders over 3 years and guided by the NCA Strategic Advisory Group involving (in alphabetical order): Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), National Business Initiative (NBI), National Treasury (NT), South African National Parks (SANParks) and the Water Research Commission (WRC).

The purpose of the National NCA Strategy is to respond to the need to focus the efforts of Stats SA and other institutions engaged in NCA on developing priority natural capital accounts and effective statistical systems and institutional mechanisms to inform South Africa's sustainable development policy objectives. It strengthens Stats SA's Strategic Plan to harness statistics through collaboration with other data producers in the data ecosystem.

The National NCA Strategy has two strategic objectives per goal, that it works towards. It is developed for the next 10 years, but it is envisaged that it will be reviewed and revised after 5 years.

GOALS	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
GOAL 1. NCA is used for integrated planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation across a range of sectors	1.1. Increased use of natural capital accounts-based indicators and information for high-level and sectoral policies and planning 1.2. Public discourse stimulated with information from NCA
GOAL 2. NCA offers credible evidence of how nature supports people and the economy	2.1. Statistics and information are drawn from natural capital accounts providing evidence of how nature supports people and the economy 2.2. Documentation of key messages, practice, lessons and guidance contribute to NCA awareness and knowledge
GOAL 3. An integrated suite of natural capital accounts is produced based on best-available methods	3.1. Regularly compile an integrated suite of natural capital accounts 3.2. Standards, prescripts and methods for compiling natural capital accounts are used, improved and documented
GOAL 4. Capacity and data for advancing NCA are well developed and robust	4.1. Data standards, classifications, definitions and sharing are strengthened for regular compilation of integrated suite of accounts 4.2. Capacity and skills for NCA grows
GOAL 5. NCA is well resourced, underpinned by effective and collaborative institutional arrangements	5.1. Institutional arrangements to advance NCA collaboration and coordination is stronger 5.2. National and donor-funded support for NCA in South Africa has increased

NCA is inherently multi-disciplinary, requiring expertise, data and information from various organisations, and information from natural capital accounts is or could be used by a wide range of organisations. The National NCA Strategy is an example of cross-sectoral co-production and collaboration that is ever more important in times of resource constraints and in tackling the complex challenges of the future.

The National NCA Strategy is intended to support:

1. Coordination of an integrated body of NCA work in SA;
2. Development of statistics from natural capital accounts within and outside of the national statistical office through agreed standards;
3. Derivation and use of relevant indicators for statistical purposes from NCA in measurement of national indicators in South Africa; and
4. Collaboration between institutions in such a way as to strengthen investment and commitment to the production of natural capital accounts that provide credible and useful evidence for integrated planning, monitoring and decision-making.

Implementation of the National NCA Strategy is led by Stats SA, guided by the NCA Strategic Advisory Group and coordinated through the NCA Coordination Unit. It is available on the Stats SA website (<https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=14403>).