

Session: D11, Tuesday 9 September 2014, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

Title of session: Advancing SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting

Session host / primary contact person:

Name	Organisation	Email
Julian Chow	United Nations Statistics Division	chowj@un.org

Co-host(s)/ secondary contact person(s):

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Short description of the session:

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting 2012 - Central Framework (SEEA Central Framework) was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission as the international statistical standard for environmental-economic accounting. It is a multipurpose statistical framework for describing the interaction between the economy and the environment and for describing stocks and flows of environmental assets. The SEEA Central Framework is complemented by the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting 2012 - Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting). SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting offers a synthesis of the current knowledge in ecosystem accounting and serves as a platform for its development at national and sub-national levels. It provides a common set of terms, concepts, accounting principles and classifications, and an integrated accounting structure of ecosystem services and ecosystem condition in both physical and monetary terms.

The purpose of this session is to provide opportunity to discuss and develop a deeper understanding of the concepts and methods of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting. Presentations on the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting will provide participants with an awareness of plans, strategies, and practical experiences in the area of ecosystem accounting.

Additional information:

Format:

Four 20-minute presentations and followed by a 30-minute discussion time.

Planned Output:

Speakers:

ID	Name	Organisation	Title of presentation
	Julian Chow	United Nations Statistics Division	Overview of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting
	Luis Rivera	WAVES Country coordinator - Costa Rica	Perspectives for developing ecosystem accounting in Costa Rica
	Keisha Garcia	ProEcoServ - Trinidad and Tobago	Mainstreaming natural capital accounting in policy; experiences in Trinidad and Tobago
	Julian Chow	United Nations Statistics Division	SEEA as a monitoring framework for sustainable development

Presentation abstracts:

Ecosystem accounting is an emerging field dealing with integrated biophysical data, monitoring changes in ecosystem assets and linking those changes to economic and human activity. The development of ecosystem accounting is in response to a wide range of demands for integrated information that can link analytical and policy frameworks on environmental sustainability, human well-being, and economic growth and development.

Increasingly, policies are being considered in a more integrated, multi-disciplinary fashion with economic, social and environmental factors being assessed when determining appropriate policy responses. Ecosystem accounting can provide a new perspective that can be used to support decisions on the most effect use of ecosystems in support of individual and societal well-being.

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Experimental Ecosystem Accounting (EEA), considered by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its 44th session in 2013 as an important step in the development of a statistical framework for ecosystem accounting. It provides a synthesis of the current knowledge in this area and represents a strong and clear convergence across disciplines of ecology, economics and statistics on many core aspects related to the measurement of ecosystems.

Increasing the application of SEEA EEA can provide an integrated measurement framework to inform the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals monitoring process. The structural links between SEEA EEA and the standard economic accounts of the System of National Accounts (SNA) make it possible to evaluate the extent to which ecosystems are impacted by economic activity and assess the potential for alternative patterns of consumption and production, alternative uses of energy and the extent of decoupling of growth, the effectiveness of resources spent to restore the environment, and the trade-offs between alternative uses of the environment.

The SNA provides an integrated and coherent set of information on the economic system. SEEA EEA provides a picture of trends in ecosystems through integration of information on stocks and changes in stocks of ecosystem assets, and information on flows of ecosystem services. Linking the changes in stocks and services with beneficiaries (individuals and society) can provide a coherent picture of trends. Through the application of consistent principles and conventions, ecosystem accounting provides a tool for compiling information on environmental changes and linking these changes to economic and human activity.

The development and testing of the SEEA EEA requires multiple disciplines across many agencies. The establishment of appropriate institutional mechanisms is essential if the work is to be routinely implemented. The advancement of the SEEA EEA program will improve the integration of information on ecosystems into decision making and policy processes.