United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Forest ecosystems and ecosystem services in the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA)

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Valuing Forest Ecosystems in National Policy and Strategy: Experiences, Challenges, and the Way Forward

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Forest Ecosystems and Forest Ecosystem Services

Critical importance of Forest Ecosystems and Forest Ecosystem Services for:

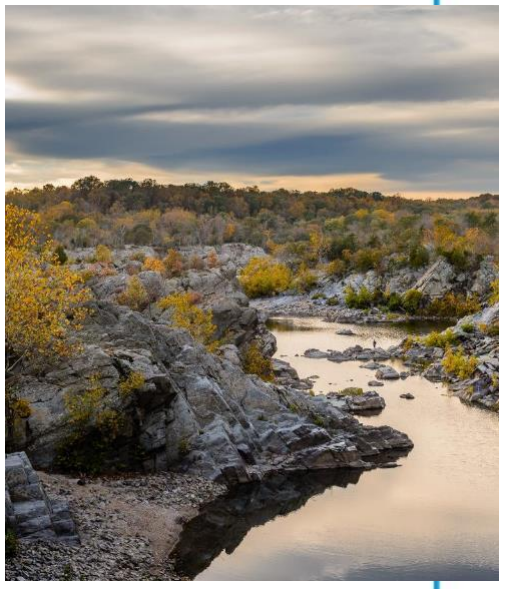
- Climate regulation
- Biodiversity conservation
- Soil conservation and prevention of land degradation and desertification
- Recreation
- Disaster risk reduction
- Livelihood

Examples of Forest Ecosystem Services:

- Provisioning services
  - Wood provisioning services
- Regulating services
  - Global climate regulation services
  - Air filtration services
  - Soil quality regulation services
  - Water flow regulation services
  - Flood control services
- Cultural services
  - Recreation-related services
  - Education, scientific and research services
  - Spiritual, artistic and symbolic services

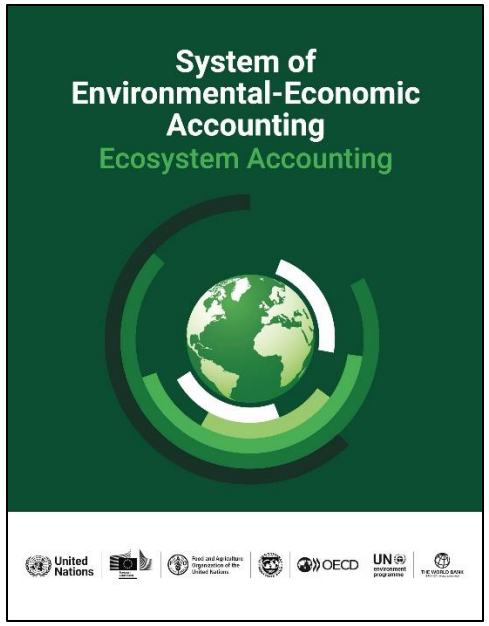
- Our economy and well-being crucially depend on nature
- Recognize natural capital as asset:
  - Provide flows of benefits to people
  - Stocks that can be degraded / depleted or enhanced / restored
- Both aspects important to assess the impacts and dependencies on natural capital which is not fully reflected in the GDP and the SNA
- Decision makers need key information necessary to effectively pursue and track sustainable development
- SEEA was developed to address those needs by extending the SNA accounting framework to more fully account for nature



The System of Environmental-Economic Accounts

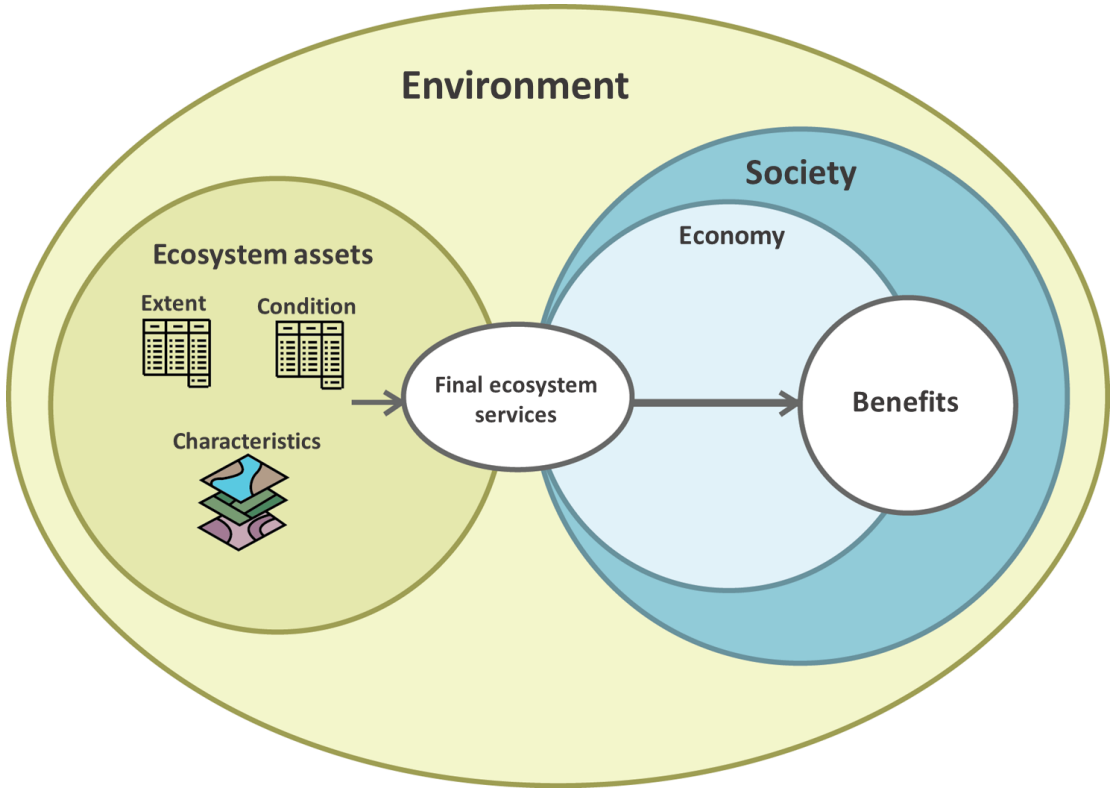
Adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2012



Adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2021

- Brings together environmental and economic data using the same accounting principles of the SNA
- Credibility, reliability, replicability of data
- Consistency over time and space
- Common language between different communities
- Breaks down silos and fosters collaboration

SEEA Ecosystem Accounting



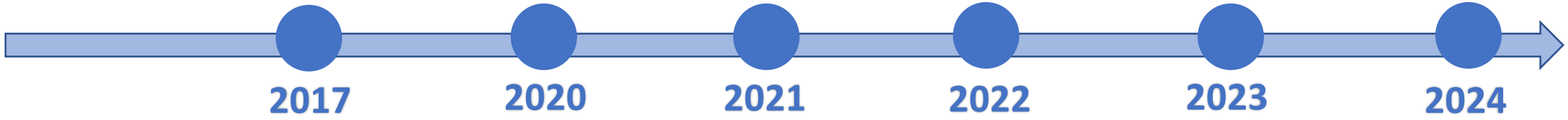
Integrated system which includes:

- Assessment of the extent and quality of ecosystems assets in physical and monetary units
- Assessment of the ecosystem services provided by ecosystems and their uses by the economy in physical and monetary units

Benefits of the SEEA

- Mainstreams environmental information in economic development policies and decision making
- Because of a system approach, it allows for the assessment of trade-offs and scenario modelling
- Contains clear methods, concepts, definitions and classification, thus allowing for comparability over time and across countries
- Allows granular organization of data by ecosystem type, ecosystem service type, type of beneficiary, spatial location
- Ensures consistency of the information at local (subnational) and national level

Implementation of the SEEA around the world



	2017	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
SEEA	69	89	90	92	90	94
Central Framework	69	87	88	91	89	94
Ecosystem Accounting & Thematic accounts	14	34	36	41	41	53

Important aspects in the SEEA implementation

- Multi-stakeholder engagement and coordination
- Assessment of policy priorities and data needs
- Flexible and modular approach
- Communication of the results
- Institutionalization and regulatory environment

Based on https://seea.un.org/content/towards-institutionalization-seea-implementation-guide

"This is a historic step forward towards transforming how we view and value nature. We will no longer be heedlessly allowing environmental destruction and degradation to be considered economic progress."

On the UNSC adoption of the SEEA EA in 2021