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Istat | Italian National Institute of Statistics

WORKSHOP
CHALLENGES IN THE MEASUREMENT OF NATURE IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS

CONCEPT NOTE

25-26 MAY 2026
Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) | Aula Magna, Via Cesare Balbo 14, Rome, Italy

OVERVIEW

The December 2026 deadline for the first release of European Ecosystem Accounts under the amended Regulation on Environmental Accounting is approaching. Although the basic conceptual common ground for the successful start of this new adventure in Official Statistics has been developed, several methodological challenges remain. Official statistics' Ecosystem Accounting (EA) production chains need to be strengthened, and the peculiar contribution and role of EA in the wider official statistical information landscape to be further clarified.

The workshop will provide an opportunity to showcase and spread advanced solutions for official statistics' EA that enhance their precision or widen their scope, raise methodological issues and discuss about how to tackle them effectively, link EA to other thematic issues, and in particular develop their connections with broader information frameworks on well-being and sustainability, and reflect upon policy-relevance and possible uses and misuses of ecosystem accounts.

Moreover, since EA is the only accounting system where the direct observation of nature - considered in terms of its structural, functional and dynamic characteristics - prevails, the workshop will tackle in depth the issue of how to include in EA reporting the relevant economic aspects without renouncing to this unique feature of having nature at the core.

STRUCTURE OF WORKSHOP

The workshop will be organised around the following four substantive sessions:

1. **From environmental and territorial statistics to Ecosystem Accounting**
2. **Accounting for the diverse economic values connected to ecosystems**
3. **The role of Ecosystem Accounting in beyond GPD measures**
4. **Policy implications (final roundtable)**

The first session will explore the challenge of defining and mapping ecosystems, assess their condition, and dynamics. In order to perform ecosystem accounts from a nature restoration perspective, the demand for thematic and geographical sources will be considered, with a particular focus on models for estimating ecosystem services.

The second session will tackle the measurement of the economic importance of ecosystems and of the costs of inaction, with particular attention to multiple values and non-pricing perspectives.

The third section will focus on the value added of EA and its possible conceptual and informational contributions to multi-dimensional information systems, in which the economy does not have, per se, a special place and the state of nature and ecosystems' "contributions" deserve an important role.

A final round table will address the policy relevance of monetary and non-monetary information on the economic importance of ecosystem services and reflect on how official statistical institutions may best communicate such values and highlight their specificities.

An informal social dinner at the end of day 1 will facilitate the circulation of ideas.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS WORKSHOP

Contributors will help develop innovative approaches to the compilation and interpretation of ecosystem accounts, touching upon key topics for methodological development, such as:

Participants to the workshop will help develop innovative approaches to EA, concerning the statistical measurement and the interpretation of, e.g.:

- nature restoration needs from an ecological and economic perspective;
- non-monetary benefits that the economy would not be able to generate (directly or indirectly) without ecosystems' "contributions";
- exchange value flows and stocks connected to ecosystems and their services.

They will also explore the potential for use of Ecosystem Accounts in policy-relevant multidimensional information systems developed in the "beyond GDP" perspective, as well as the issue of how to communicate appropriately the monetary values connected to ecosystems and their services, as to avoid misunderstandings around the concept of value.

A few papers and/or presentations and/or posters will be selected for discussion or display during the workshop.

Contributors to Session 1 will explore several relevant issues concerning classifications, source integration, and output harmonisation. These issues include:

- how to improve the ecosystem extent account using detailed national sources?
- how to make ecosystem accounts consistent with the Nature Restoration Regulation?
- how to harmonize different sectoral classifications with ecosystem accounting processes?
- The relationship between ecosystem conditions and ecosystem services.

The ambition of Session 2 is contributing to respond to the UNSC request to resolve the "outstanding methodological aspects in chapters 8-11" of the SEEA EA by suggesting solutions based on a multiple, connected values approach. Contributors will explore "beyond pricing" monetary measures, informing on one or more aspects of the economic importance of ecosystems and their services, such as:

- the economic costs of remaining inactive in the face of the threats posed by ecosystems' degradation and the consequent lack of ecosystem services (actual and potential losses);
- the economic costs and opportunities of necessary or potential action ("Ecological Debt", "Environmental Sustainability Gap");
- the actual monetary flows of the "biodiversity economy";
- the economic flows actually connected to the protection and restoration of ecosystems (EGSS; Ecosystems' Protection expenditure);
- the fiscal aspects of the ownership and appropriation of ecosystems and their services (connected taxes and subsidies);

- the incomes deriving from ecosystems' economic ownership: rents, payments for ecosystem services PES, resource rents, etc.;
- the economic costs and opportunities of nature-based solutions (ecosystems' restoration, shadow projects) and of substitution of ecosystem services through technological artifacts.
- How to best link EA to the diverse values of nature IPBES framework?
- How to best link EA to SNA and/or SEEA CF, in particular as far as monetary values are concerned?
- How to best classify monetary values connected to ecosystems and their services, to make sense of them and link them appropriately to actual and potential policy uses?
- Which monetary values connected to ecosystems and their services have to be calculated on a hypothetical basis? What is the role of scenarios in their calculation?
- What is the official statisticians' role in the calculation of specific economic values connected to ecosystems and their services?
- How to interpret the dynamics of specific monetary and non-monetary values connected to ecosystems and their services?
- How do ecosystem services' dynamics depend on potential supply and actual demand?
- How to exploit the link between the concept of ecosystems' capacity and that of sustainability?
- How to communicate multiple monetary and non-monetary values connected to ecosystems and their services?
- How to use non-monetary EA information in policy-making?

Substantial time will be allowed for discussion among the presenters and between them and the public.

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