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The analytical usefulness of a system of environmental accounts

Economic activities have direct consequences for the pressures exerted on environmental systems. This paper will argue that the environmental accounting framework (SEEA, 2003) is particularly useful to assess the interrelationships between economy and environment. The environmental accounts have the advantage that they are consistent with national accounts. Furthermore, they can be coupled to the framework of supply and use tables and input-output tables. This makes it possible to perform in-depth analyses. In this paper, among other things, we will illustrate the advantages and insights that can be obtained using data for CO₂-emissions for the period 1990-2005 for the Netherlands. Useful indicators, such as the 'environmental balance of trade', are calculated. Also other examples of the analytical usefulness of environmental accounts will be presented. The paper will conclude with a number of opportunities for increased international co-ordination as well as methodological and statistical improvements.