The biosphere is valuable to us in many ways, some of which are more easily visible than others. Human beings are an integral part of it and fundamentally depend on the Earth’s capacity to provide services for human development and well-being from local community levels to the global level of the biosphere.

The benefits that nature provides are called Ecosystem Services, and they can be divided into several categories. The most visible ones are the provisioning services which deliver the resources we use on a daily basis, such as food and clean water. The Earth also provides us with abiotic resources, such as (renewable) energy and minerals in the soil.

Regulating services, which aid in the delivery of provisioning services, include pollination, production processes taking place in healthy soils, and also less visible processes, such as carbon sequestration. Nature also provides recreational space and carries parts of our cultural history and identity. However, while the consciousness about our dependency on the Earth and its interlinked ecosystem services is growing, we are still running the risk of dealing with the rapidly rising demand for some resources in ways that may be detrimental to others. Sustainable management of the natural resource base is required to support the future delivery of services to people all over the world.

People depend on the many goods and services that nature provides, such as water, energy, and food. These services are divided into three main categories: provisioning, regulating, and cultural services. Provisioning services deliver the resources we use on a daily basis, such as food and clean water. Regulating services, which aid in the delivery of provisioning services, include pollination, production processes taking place in healthy soils, and also less visible processes, such as carbon sequestration. Nature also provides recreational space and carries parts of our cultural history and identity. However, while the consciousness about our dependency on the Earth and its interlinked ecosystem services is growing, we are still running the risk of dealing with the rapidly rising demand for some resources in ways that may be detrimental to others. Sustainable management of the natural resource base is required to support the future delivery of services to people all over the world.

Taking Natural Capital into account

Natural Capital Accounting integrates natural resources and economic analysis into the system of national accounts that provide a view on a nation’s wealth. This expansion gives a broader picture of development progress than strictly monetary measures such as GDP. Such accounts, for example, show that wealth generated in low-income countries depends for more than 30% on natural capital.

Total wealth of low-income countries
- USD 7700 per capita (including USD 141 per capita net foreign assets)

Natural capital
- Intangible capital
- Produced capital

Earth matters

Ecosystem Services: the service that nature provides us

- **Provisioning services**: All tangible material and outputs from ecosystems that can be traded or consumed, such as food, materials and energy sources, both biotic (blue) and abiotic (yellow).

- **Regulating services**: Ecosystem outputs that are not consumed, but that control or modify biotic or abiotic conditions in the environment.

- **Cultural services**: All non-material ecosystem outputs that have symbolic, cultural or intellectual significance.

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