



Resource Policies: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Equity'

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One Planet Budgeting with the Ecological Footprint: Opportunities and Limitations

Abstract:

The Ecological Footprint method attempts to answer one particular research question: "how much of the planet's biological productivity is occupied by human activities?" If we are serious about sustainable development, there is no way around this question. If we do not live within the means of planet Earth, sustainability is elusive.

Anybody recognizes that it is relevant for a farmer to know how large his or her farm is. Similarly, the Ecological Footprint is an approach to answer this question of ecological supply and human demand at the global, national, regional or even household level. National Footprint accounting is particularly relevant since countries may want to know how much biological productivity they use, and how much they have available within their borders. Are they ecological debtors or creditors? Is their economy exposed to risks that conventional indicators just do not reveal?

Currently, our national Footprint accounts take into account approximately 5,000 data points per country and per year. Are they giving a perfect answer to the question? Certainly not. Are the results nevertheless useful? We think, yes. This presentation explains the basic concepts behind the Footprint tool and outlines the research challenges ahead.