

Valuing Human Milk in GDP: Market Values for Imputation of Non Market Household Production through Breastfeeding

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This paper addresses debates about future reform of the SNA and its boundaries, through considering market valuation of human milk and breastfeeding.

For over half a century, the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) framework has shaped how economies are viewed, economic performance is measured, and public policy priorities are set. Its central element, GDP, is facing heightened pressure to make it more relevant and useful as an indicator of economic advancement.

Human milk has been demonstrated to fit SNA criteria for inclusion, yet is not counted in GDP. International trade in human milk reinforces arguments that national accounts should impute the value of non-marketed human milk into GDP.

This paper examines how market values can be used to value non market household production of human milk, and argues for experimental estimates of human milk and breastfeeding, to generate more accurate and gender inclusive measurement of economic well-being within current SNA production boundaries.