

System of Environmental Economic Accounting

January 29, 2021

In News: This year the chair of the UNCEEA convened an extraordinary session to discuss the revised System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA) as well as the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, ocean accounting and strategic outreach to promote the SEEA.

What is the SEEA?

- The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is a framework that integrates economic and environmental data to provide a more comprehensive and multipurpose view of the interrelationships between the economy and the environment and the stocks and changes in stocks of environmental assets, as they bring benefits to humanity.
- It contains the internationally agreed standard concepts, definitions, classifications, accounting rules and tables for producing internationally comparable statistics and accounts.
- The SEEA framework follows a similar accounting structure as the System of National Accounts (SNA).
- The framework uses concepts, definitions and classifications consistent with the SNA in order to facilitate the integration of environmental and economic statistics.
- The SEEA is a multi-purpose system that generates a wide range of statistics, accounts and indicators with many different potential analytical applications.
- It is a flexible system that can be adapted to countries' priorities and policy needs while at the same time providing a common framework, concepts, terms and definitions.

The SEEA consists of three parts:

1. The SEEA Central Framework (2012) was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission as the first international standard for environmental-economic accounting in 2012.
2. The SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting offers a synthesis of current knowledge in ecosystem accounting.
3. The SEEA Applications and Extensions illustrates to compilers and users of SEEA Central Framework based accounts how the information can be used in decision making, policy review and formulation, analysis and research.

SEEA Eight Thematic Areas

The SEEA is a guide to integrating economic, environmental and social data into a single, coherent framework for holistic decision-making

1. Agriculture, forests and fisheries
2. Material flows
3. Environmental activities
4. Land
5. Water
6. Air emissions
7. Ecosystems and biodiversity
8. Energy

UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA)

- The UN Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) was established by the UN Statistical Commission at its 36th session in March 2005.
- The UNCEEA functions as an intergovernmental body to provide overall vision, coordination, prioritization and direction in the field of environmental economic accounting and supporting statistics.

- The UNCEEA meets once a year in New York and is governed by the Bureau of the UNCEEA.
- The UNCEEA has the following three broad objectives:
 - Mainstream environmental-economic accounts and supporting statistics
 - Elevate the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA) to an international statistical standard
 - Advance the implementation of the SEEA in countries