



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION  
UNITED NATIONS

**ESA/STAT/AC.322**  
UNCEEA/11/3a

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Eleventh Meeting of the UN Committee of Experts on  
Environmental-Economic Accounting  
New York, 22-24 June 2016

**Cover Note for Session 3.a -  
The SEEA Central Framework Research Agenda**

Session Organizer: Chair of the SEEA Central Framework Technical Committee

*(for discussion)*

# RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE SEEA CF, 2016

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2012 the System of Environmental Economic Accounting Central Framework (SEEA CF) was adopted as an international standard by the United Nations Statistical Commission. During the preparation of the SEEA CF, some important topics were identified that would benefit from further research and consideration with the international statistical community. These topics are described in the Research Agenda that is part of the SEEA CF (ANNEX II).

Since 2012, work has started in various areas based on the issues identified during the drafting of the SEEA and other issues that have arose in subsequent years. In order to move the SEEA CF research agenda forward, a revised complete list of issues has been developed, which also provides a deeper overview outline of those issues identified. The UNCEEA also established a technical committee for this purpose. In November 2015, the SEEA CF research agenda was discussed at the London Group meeting for further input and then elaborated in more detail by the SEEA CF Technical Committee. This resulted in an updated multi-annual research agenda for the SEEA CF.

This note provides a summary of that updated SEEA CF research agenda and addresses some questions for the UNCEEA.

## 2 RESEARCH AGENDA FOR SEEA CF

The SEEA CF must be regularly reviewed to assess its ongoing relevance to reflect changes of the environment and the economy, better understanding of the links between the environment and the economy, and evolution of policy and analytical requirements. In addition, as implementation of the SEEA CF advances across the world, the range of experience gained offers new insights that should be considered in the conceptualization of the environmental and economic accounts. Furthermore, new developments in the System of National Account (SNA) need to be considered as these may have implication on the SEEA which is fully consistent with the SEEA.

The research agenda for SEEA CF consists of two parts:

- A. A list of conceptual issues which needs to be addressed.

- B. A list of implementation issues which arose and needs to be addressed, and is primarily focused on methods of data collection/compilation.

The table below provides an overview of the topics of the revised SEEA CF Research agenda and the lead agencies. A more detailed description of the issues can be found in the updated SEEA CF research agenda.

		Lead agencies
<b>A: Conceptual issues</b>		
1.	<b>Development of classifications</b> Most of the classifications presented in the SEEA CF are still preliminary in nature and need further development to come up with a more definitive classification. In this regard, classifications for 1) emissions (to air, water, soil), 2) land use and 3) the resource management component of the Classification of Environmental Activities (CEA) are most likely to be prioritized.	UNSD / EUROSTAT/ FAO
2.	<b>Development of consistent valuation techniques</b> The SEEA CF does not address the valuation of stocks and flows that are neither “market” nor “near market”, but that fall within the measurement boundary in physical terms.	OECD, World Bank
3.	<b>Definition of resource management and structure of the resource management expenditure accounts</b> The SEEA CF now contains only a small section on accounting for resource management expenditure (ReMEA). Based on recent experience, it needs to be determined a) whether the structure of the ReMEA is indeed the same as for EPEA, b) whether EPEA and ReMEA can be described within the same accounting structure c) whether there are specific conceptual issues related to compilation of ReMEA which need to be addressed.	Eurostat
4.	<b>Depletion of natural biological resources</b> The depletion of natural biological resources, in particular natural timber and aquatic resources, is an important flow described in some detail in the SEEA CF. There is however a need for further research and application of these principles.	???
5.	<b>Integrated framework for environmental activity accounts</b> The two main environmental activity accounts, the EPEA and EGSS, partly overlap, but also differ with regard to accounting structure, scope and valuation of adapted goods. It needs to be investigated whether the different aspects of monetary activity accounts can be further integrated into a single accounting framework.	Eurostat
6.	<b>Losses</b> There are a number of issues related to losses which are not fully described in the SEEA CF and which need to be further clarified to assist countries in implementation. These include energy losses and water losses.	???

<b>B: Implementation issues</b>	
<p><b>1. Implementation issues related to classifications</b></p> <p>There are a number of implementation issues linked to classifications that need further clarification, including a) the linkages between land accounting and air / carbon emissions, b) CEA classification</p>	UNSD, Eurostat
<p><b>2. Approaches to the measurement of adapted goods</b></p> <p>In practice, measurement of adapted goods is a challenging task. Research should be undertaken to further develop relevant measurement techniques and approaches for adapted goods that might be applied better at a national and international levels.</p>	Eurostat
<p><b>3. Economy wide material flow accounts</b></p> <p>There are several differences in treatment between EW-MFA and the physical supply and use tables, as described in SEEA CF. A short note is needed for further clarification of the issue, pointing out the alternative solutions and possibilities for review of the SEEA CF Text.</p>	OECD, ISTAT
<p><b>4. Input output techniques</b></p> <p>Doing environmental input output analyses is quite complex. Some of these issues need further consideration to provide guidelines for the users of these analytical techniques.</p>	OECD, Eurostat
<p><b>5. Global DSDs for data exchange for SDMX</b></p> <p>A set of global data structure definitions (DSDs) will be needed to ensure that data can be exchanged using SDMX.</p>	Eurostat

Please note that the research topics that are part of the SEEA CF research agenda do not cover topics related to the development of SEEA experimental ecosystem accounting (SEEA EEA) as agreed in the mandate given by the UNCEEA to the SEEA CF technical group

The SEEA-CF research agenda can be updated when needed. New topics may be added based on consultation with and discussion within in SEEA CF Technical Committee. A process still has to be developed by the UNCEEA how these solved issues eventually will be incorporated in the SEEA CF. An option to be considered is to introduce 'SEEA News and Notes', similar as for the SNA.

The proposed timeline for the topics currently identified for the SEEA-CF research agenda is 2-4 years. The development of classifications (A1) may take more time. The SEEA CF Technical Committee will oversee the resolution of both the research issues and implementation issues. It will provide an annual progress report to the UNCEEA and in addition once or twice to the UNCEEA Bureau. Expert groups on specific topics may be established to assist the Technical Committee in advancing the research agenda. The London Group on Environmental Accounting will play an important role as the forum where the different issues are presented, discussed and refined.

### 3 ISSUES FOR LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT

Some topics were identified by the SEEA CF technical committee as potentially important, but were not considered part of the SEEA CF research agenda at this stage. They may be added at a later stage. These are issues that were considered to be 'low priority' to develop them in the short term. In addition there are some topics, such as extension of SEEA into the social domain, which first require broader consultation to determine whether it is appropriate for SEEA to move in this direction.

1. Classifications (long term development)
2. Accounts and statistics relating to the minimization of natural hazards and the effects of climate change
3. SEEA CF and tourism accounts
4. Extension of SEEA in the social domain

#### Questions for the UNCEEA

- Does the UNCEEA agree with the proposed topics on the research agenda for SEEA Central Framework?
- What are the priority topics to be addressed in the research agenda?
- Are there resources within the various institutions involved sufficiently available to solve the issues in the priority list?
- Does the UNCEEA agree with the proposed timeline for the SEEA CF research agenda?
- How should clarifications, interpretations and changes to the SEEA Central Framework be communicated? Should the UNCEEA introduce a 'SEEA News and Notes', similar as for the SNA?