

**THIRTY-SIXTH MEETING OF  
THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF  
CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS**

**SCCS/2011/36/4**

**Belize City, Belize  
25-26 October 2011**

**17 October 2011**

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**Status Report on Merchandise Trade – Data Submitted by National Statistical  
Offices, Data Quality, Developmental Work and the Programme of Work 2012**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

This paper provides an update of the work being undertaken in the area of Merchandise Trade Statistics since the last meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS). The paper focuses on the status of submission of 2010 annual and 2011 quarterly trade data to the Secretariat; the status of the implementation of the Correlation Table based on HS2007, Common External Tariff (CET); progress made relative to the activation of detailed reports on the Online Facility and the major achievements of Phase II of the project - Enhancement of Trade Information System in Member States. It also provides information on the work being done by the Technical Working Group (TWG) for Merchandise Trade Statistics; and an overview of the regional work plan for 2012/2013.

**2. STATUS OF SUBMISSION OF 2010 ANNUAL TRADE DATA TO THE  
SECRETARIAT AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**

**2.1 Annual trade data - 2010**

The CARICOM Secretariat continues to update the regional trade database with data received from Member States. However, the submission of annual trade data to the Secretariat, by the April timeline, continues to be a challenge for some countries. The

experience this year revealed that as at the April timeline, **six (6)** countries had submitted 2010 data to the Secretariat, with **five (5)** of these countries submitting completed datasets and **one (1)** country submitting exports only. Overall, this represents an improvement over the submissions last year, as only **three (3)** countries submitted data by the timeline.

As at September 2011, data for 2010 were received from **thirteen (13)** countries, which include completed datasets from **twelve (12)** countries and exports only from **one (1)** country. Outstanding are imports from **one (1)** Member State. It should be noted that exports data received from one Member State could not be incorporated in the regional database due to the level of aggregation of the data. Revised 2009 data were also submitted by two countries.

The Secretariat congratulates **Antigua and Barbuda** for being the first country to submit a complete set of trade data to the Secretariat. This Member State data was received in March 2011. The Secretariat also commends **Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, Montserrat and Suriname** for adhering to the timeline and urges other countries to make every effort to do the same.

## **2.2 Adherence to the Data Submission Protocol**

Countries are required to submit data as per the requirements outlined in the Data Submission Protocol. For 2010 submissions, data received from **two countries, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago** were fully compliant with the Protocol while data received from **five (5)** countries **Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia** were missing only one field. In addition, datasets received from **Guyana** and **Suriname** were missing two fields while the datasets of the remaining countries were missing four fields. The missing fields namely, *reporting country, year, period, country of origin, unit of supplementary quantity and value of supplementary quantity* should be available in Member States and therefore countries need to review the module used to generate data in accordance with the Protocol to ensure that these fields are included in the data being generated.

During the recently concluded Project – *Enhancement of the Trade Information System in Member States –Phase II*, emphasis was placed on the module used to generate data in accordance with the Protocol ensuring that countries understand how to use the module and also how to amend it as the need arises. It is anticipated that with the full implementation of the New Eurotrace Software, countries would be able to easily adhere to the Protocol.

### **2.3 Challenges Encountered in Processing 2009 Data**

In processing the data received from countries, some of the challenges which arose were *incorrect and unknown country codes for trading partners, the European Union (EU) as a trading partner as opposed to the particular country within the EU; the full names of countries as opposed to the codes of the respective countries, null values, member state trading with itself, and aggregation of selected commodities into product codes that does not match the commodities aggregated*. These errors were submitted to the trade persons and copied to the Directors of Statistics of the respective countries and some countries have re-submitted revised data files.

It is anticipated that in 2012, given the continuous improvement in this area, countries would be able to submit to the Secretariat datasets which are “clean” and fully comply with the Data Submission Protocol by the timeline.

### **3. STATUS OF SUBMISSION OF 2011 QUARTERLY TRADE DATA TO THE SECRETARIAT**

At the last meeting of SCCS, it was *agreed that countries would submit quarterly trade data to the Secretariat within two (2) months following the end of the quarter*. This implies that first and second quarter data should have already been submitted to the Secretariat.

As at September 2011, first quarter data for 2011 were received from **four (4)** countries (*Antigua and Barbuda St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the*

*Grenadines*) while second quarter data were received from **two (2)** countries, *Antigua and Barbuda* and *Saint Lucia*. The Secretariat urges Member States to make every effort to submit these data by the timeline given its significance in monitoring and guiding the decision-making process in the short term.

A summary of the trade data submitted to the Secretariat is included in the Attachment to this paper.

#### **4. STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORRELATION TABLE BASED ON HS2007 COMMON EXTERNAL TARIFF (CET)**

Feedback received at the recently concluded meeting of the Customs Committee of the Council for Trade and Economic Development held in September 2011 revealed that **two (2)** Member States are yet to implement the HS2007 based CET. The National Statistical Offices of these two countries should urgently follow up with their Customs Departments and other relevant agencies relative to the implementation of the HS2007 based CET. Given this status, it implies that the Correlation Table has been implemented in at least eleven countries. It should be noted that work has already commenced on the preparation of a new CET based on HS2012.

#### **5. ONLINE ACCESS TO THE REGIONAL TRADE INFORMATION SYSTEM**

Member States would recall that the regional trade database can be accessed through its online facility at <http://www.tradsysonline.caricomstats.info>. This facility which currently provides users with summary reports only is being updated to include detailed reports. The Secretariat is pleased to report that it has completed the Correlation Tables required to facilitate the conversion of data classified according to the previous versions of the CET to the HS2007 based CET. All data are required to be classified according to HS2007 since the facility was designed to use one harmonised CET for detailed reports. Work has commenced on the conversion of the data and the facility is being adjusted to activate these reports.

## **6. ENHANCEMENT OF THE TRADE INFORMATION SYSTEM IN MEMBER STATES – PHASE II FUNDED UNDER CISP – 9<sup>TH</sup> EDF**

The Secretariat is pleased to report that Phase II of the project, “*Enhancement of the Trade Information System in Member States*” which commenced in October 2010 was completed in August 2011. The project which focused on improving the *quality and range* of trade data being produced in Member States has been executed through several workshops and visits to selected countries and to the Secretariat. The major achievements under the Project were:

1. The implementation of a data quality module in the trade information systems of Member States and at the Secretariat;
2. Implementation of the Trade Indices Module (TIM) to enable the production of trade price and volume indices;
3. Implementation of Web Comext Module to facilitate the dissemination of trade data;
4. Development of a mirror statistics framework for analysis and reconciliation. Mirror statistics can be used at the regional level to further improve the data on intra-regional trade and also at the national level to facilitate analysis and reconciliation of data between countries;
5. Training in the use of the above mentioned modules and in areas identified by participants which included amending the Eurotrace Domain to include new tariff values, creating derived datasets, modification of the module for the Data Submission Protocol, amending forms in the Eurotrace editor to manage errors and generating reports using Comext.

Member States are encouraged to fully utilise these modules and to provide feedback to the Secretariat relative to challenges/benefits in using the modules. Countries are also urged to provide feedback that would further enhance the software. It is anticipated that some of the challenges outlined under Section 2.3 will be alleviated through the use of the data quality module and relevant validation rules.

## **7. THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG) FOR MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS**

Following the Second Meeting of the TWG for Merchandise Trade Statistics held in December 2010, the Group has used the Discussion Forum on the Statistics Helpdesk facility as the main mechanism to execute its work. However, this has not been quite successful due to the lack of participation of some members and also the timeliness of feedback from those who participate.

However, the Group has finalized and despatched to Member States a questionnaire to obtain feedback from countries with respect to the new recommendations for the compilation of Merchandise Trade Statistics. Countries were expected to return the completed questionnaires to the Secretariat by 30 September, 2011. To date, two countries have submitted the completed questionnaire. Countries are urged to submit the completed questionnaires by the end of November 2011.

In order to advance the work of the Group, the Secretariat urges its members to actively participate in the discussion forum and to post their contributions in a timely manner.

## **8. REGIONAL WORK PLAN FOR MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS – 2012/2013**

For 2012/2013, the Secretariat would continue its thrust in improving the production and timely dissemination of Merchandise Trade Statistics in the Region. The following are some of the major activities the Secretariat proposes to undertake:

- Continue to collect, compile, validate and disseminate annual and quarterly trade statistics at the regional level in a timely manner;
- Monitor the production and dissemination of data in Member States and their adherence to the Data Submission Protocol;
- Monitor the use of the New Eurotrace Software, inclusive of the modules implemented;

- Maintain the Regional Online Facility. Explore expansion of this facility as required;
- Build capacity at the national and regional levels through follow up workshops, exchange visits subject to the availability of funding;
- Continue use of the Help Desk Facility to enable information exchange; discussion on technical issue on the Forum; and the use of the Question and Answer facility in problem solving;
- Facilitate the work of Technical Working Group (TWG) on Merchandise Trade Statistics.

## **ACTION REQUIRED**

The **Meeting** is **invited** to:

- (i) **consider** the status of Merchandise Trade data submissions by Member States, the challenges encountered, and the progress of the developmental work being undertaken in this area including:
  - (a) Feedback on the submission of annual data and on the adherence to the Data Submission Protocol;
  - (b) Feedback on the submission of quarterly trade data;
  - (c) Feedback on the implementation of the HS2007 based CET;
  - (d) Achievements under Phase II of the Enhancement of Trade Information Systems in Member States;
  - (e) Progress made relative to the activation of detailed reports on the Online Facility of the Regional Trade Information System;
- (ii) **support** the Secretariat's Work Programme for 2012 in the area of Merchandise Trade;
- (iii) **encourage** statisticians to use the Discussion Forum for Merchandise Trade established on the Statistics Helpdesk.

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## Compilation of Merchandise Trade Statistics

MAJOR ACTIVITIES	DATA PRODUCTION	DATA DISSEMINATED	DATA GAPS	BEST PRACTICES/ CHALLENGES	RESOURCES REQUIRED Technical Assistance Training Applied or Required	REMARKS
<p><b>Status of Regional Trade Information System (Tradsys)</b> Annual Merchandise Trade Data</p>	<p><b>Database updated</b> <b>2010:</b> Trade data for 13 countries.</p>	<p><b>Web site:</b> Summary data up to 2010 for total trade and trade with major trading partners</p>	<p><b>2010:</b> Imports from 1 Member State outstanding.</p>	<p><b>Best Practices</b> 6 Member States adhered to the April timeline.  Data from 2 Member States were fully compliant with the Data Submission Protocol</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b>  Member States are still experiencing difficulties with the Data Submission Protocol.</p> <p>Country trading with itself;</p>		

MAJOR ACTIVITIES	DATA PRODUCTION	DATA DISSEMINATED	DATA GAPS	BEST PRACTICES/ CHALLENGES	RESOURCES REQUIRED Technical Assistance Training Applied or Required	REMARKS
				Incorrect or unknown country codes (EU used as a country code);  Full names of trading partners as opposed to codes;  Null values;  Data too aggregated		
<b>Quarterly Merchandise Trade Data</b>	Q1-2011: 4 Member State  Q2 -2011 – 2 Member State.	<b>Web site:</b> Summary data for 2008-2011 for Member States submitting data	Q1-2010: 9 Member States  Q2-2010: 11 Member States			

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