

CARIBBEAN

COMMUNITY

SECRETARIAT

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

RESTRICTED

SCCS/2012/37/2

St. George's, Grenada

29-31 October 2012

16 October 2012

**STATUS REPORT ON MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS AND THE
PROGRAMME OF WORK 2013**

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). It presents the status of submission of 2011 annual and 2012 quarterly trade data to the Secretariat; follow-up activities post the Ninth European Development Fund (9th EDF) Project; an update on the Online Facility and information related to the updated Common External Tariff (CET). The paper also provides an update on the Technical Working Group (TWG) activities and an overview of the regional work plan for 2013.

**2. STATUS OF SUBMISSION OF 2011 ANNUAL TRADE DATA TO THE
SECRETARIAT AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**

2.1 Annual Trade Data - 2011

The CARICOM Secretariat continues to update the regional trade database with data received from Member States. As at the April timeline, six (6) countries had submitted their 2011 data to the Secretariat, a similar number to the 2010 submissions. However, it should be noted that there was an overall improvement in the timeliness of the

submission of data this year with twelve (12) Member States submitting their annual 2011 data by July 2012.

The Secretariat would like to congratulate St. Kitts and Nevis for being the first Member State to submit its 2011 trade data to the Secretariat. These data were received in January 2012. In addition, the Secretariat commends Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, and Jamaica for adhering to the timeline and urges the other countries to continue their efforts to meet this timeline.

2.2 Adherence to the Data Submission Protocol

In accordance with the Data Submission Protocol, countries are required to submit data files consisting of eleven fields to the Secretariat. For the 2011 submissions, except for St. Kitts and Nevis and Suriname, the “country of origin” field (required for re-exports only) was blank, unknown or not supplied. In addition, except for Barbados and Guyana, all countries which supplied data on supplementary quantity, submitted a blank field for the “unit of supplementary quantity (Unit B)”.

With the exception of these two fields, seven (7) countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat, Saint Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis) were fully compliant with the data submission protocol. Of the remaining five (5) countries, one (1) was missing the *reporting country field*, three (3) were missing the *value of supplementary quantity field*, and one (1) was missing *the reporting country and the year fields*.

Given that only a few countries are submitting information on the “country of origin” and on “Unit B”, the Secretariat would like to get feedback as to whether these two fields should remain in the Data Submission 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, null values, Member State trading with itself, commodity codes, and aggregation of selected commodities*

into product codes that does not match the commodities aggregated. These errors were addressed through consultations with the relevant persons of the respective National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and in some cases revised data files were resubmitted.

3 EXPANSION OF THE DATA SUBMISSION PROTOCOL TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL FIELDS

Users have increasingly been requesting data that are not currently included in the regional database. These include data on the CET rates at the commodity level; the actual rate of duty applied; total duty paid; freight charged; modes of transportation; nationality of transportation; data on commodities traded under the different agreements and trade of commodities where suspension of the CET was applied. The Secretariat would like to expand the Data Submission Protocol to include these additional fields and in this regard welcomes your feedback relative to the feasibility of supplying this information.

4. STATUS OF SUBMISSION OF 2012 QUARTERLY TRADE DATA TO THE SECRETARIAT

Member States would recall that 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 2012, first quarter data for 2012 were received from five (5) countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana and St. Kitts and Nevis) while second quarter data were received from three (3) countries, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis.

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

5. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITES POST THE PROJECT - “ENHANCEMENT OF TRADE INFORMATION SYSTEM IN MEMBER STATES – PHASES I AND II”

During the first quarter of 2012, the Secretariat requested countries to provide feedback relative to the work undertaken under the Project – “*Enhancement of Trade Information System in Member States – Phases I and II*” which was completed in 2011. The feedback revealed that a few countries were still having some problems with their Eurotrace Domains and required additional support. In addition, countries were yet to fully implement the Data Quality, Trade Indices, Web Comext and Mirror Statistics Modules and have requested additional support to make these operational.

In this regard, the Secretariat convened a two-day workshop funded by the 9th EDF for some countries, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat and St. Kitts and Nevis. The objective of the Workshop was to address issues related specifically to the Eurotrace Database Management System, Eurotrace Editor and the Data Submission Protocol module identified by these countries through the exchange of experiences. The Group collectively addressed the following issues:

- Implementation of Correlation Tables - Harmonised Commodity and Coding System (HS) to the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and Broad Economic Categories (BEC);
- System errors encountered when using the Eurotrace Editor;
- Error correction using the Eurotrace Database Management System (DBMS); Error Management Tab and the Editor;
- Issues relative to the compliance with the Data Submission Protocol;
- Differences between data generated with Eurotrace DOS and Eurotrace Windows.

One of the main recommendations from the Workshop was the need to develop a *best practice manual* which would highlight areas where countries would have successfully overcome challenge(s) or may have found innovative ways of dealing with certain issues, such as, recoding data to the most recent classification, HS2007 and managing errors. Documentation of some of the areas has commenced.

The Secretariat wishes to express its appreciation to Mr. Melroy Henry, the St. Kitts and Nevis representative for the tremendous support provided during the Workshop and also to other member countries. Through the sharing of his expertise, many of the issues identified by the countries were addressed.

6. ONLINE ACCESS TO THE REGIONAL TRADE INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Online Facility which provides users with access to the Regional trade database has been updated with all available data up to 2011. The facility which is located at <http://www.tradsysonline.caricomstats.info> currently allows users to generate summary level data. Efforts are being made to activate additional reports, which would provide more detailed information to privileged users.

7. CORRELATION TABLE BASED ON THE 2012 EDITION OF THE HARMONISED COMMODITY DESCRIPTION AND CODING SYSTEM (HS2012)

Member States are advised that the Secretariat has prepared a revised Common External Tariff (CET) based on the 2012 revision of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS). The document is being reviewed by the relevant stakeholders and it is anticipated that implementation of the revised tariff would commence in January 2013.

Based on the revised CET, a Correlation Table linking the updated HS codes with the United Nations, Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev4) will have to be prepared.

8. THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG) FOR MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS

The TWG had finalized and dispatched to countries, a questionnaire to obtain feedback with respect to the 2010 recommendations for the compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS). To date, completed questionnaires were received

from eleven (11) countries (9 Member States and 2 Associate Members). Countries which are yet to submit their completed questionnaires are urged to do so by 30 November 2012.

In addition, in an effort to improve the metadata for Merchandise Trade Statistics, the TWG has prepared and dispatched guidelines to assist countries with the documentation of their methodology. Countries are urged to prepare or revise (if necessary) their respective methodologies and to submit these to the Secretariat as soon as possible.

9. REGIONAL WORK PLAN FOR MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS – 2013/2014

For 2013/2014, 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;
- Prepare and submit a revised Data Submission Protocol to Member States based on feedback received;
- 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, exploring expansion of this facility as required;
- Prepare and dispatch to Member States the Correlation Table linking the HS2012 codes with the SITC Rev4;
- 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;
- 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 and quarterly trade data to the Secretariat;
 - (b) Feedback on the composition of the Data Submission Protocol:
 - i. whether the two fields - country of origin (required for re-exports only) and the Unit B should be excluded; and
 - ii. the feasibility of expanding of the Protocol to include the additional fields identified;
- (ii) **note** the follow-up activities undertaken relative to addressing Eurotrace problems of some Member States;
- (iii) **also note** the request for further support to fully implement the Data Quality, Trade Indices, Web Comext and Mirror Statistics modules in countries;
- (iv) **further note** the need to prepare a Correlation Table linking the HS2012 based Common External Tariff (CET) with the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev4);

- (v) **request** countries with outstanding IMTS2010 questionnaires to submit their completed questionnaires by 30 November 2012;
- (vi) **support** the Secretariat's Work Programme for 2013 in the area of Merchandise Trade.

Attachment

THIRTY-SEVEN MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS (37th SCCS)

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
Status of Regional Trade Information System (Tradsys) Annual Merchandise Trade Data	Database updated 2011: Trade data for 12 countries.	Web site: Summary data up to 2011 for total trade and trade with major trading partners	2011 data for 1 Member State outstanding.	Best Practices 6 Member States adhered to the April timeline. Challenges: Commodity codes HS errors; Country trading with itself; Incorrect or unknown country codes Null values; Data too aggregated in one case		

MAJOR ACTIVITIES	DATA PRODUCTION	DATA DISSEMINATED	DATA GAPS	BEST PRACTICES/ CHALLENGES	RESOURCES REQUIRED Technical Assistance Training Applied or Required	REMARKS
Quarterly Merchandise Trade Data	Q1-2012: 5 Member States Q2 -2012 – 3 Member States.		Q1-2012: 8 Member States Q2-2012: 10 Member States			
