

**THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF
THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF
CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS****SCCS/2013/38/4****Frigate Bay, St. Kitts and Nevis****28-30 October 2013****17 October 2013**

**STATUS REPORT ON MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS AND THE
PROGRAMME OF WORK 2014/2015****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 2012 annual and 2013 quarterly trade data to the Secretariat; the feedback received on the expansion of the Data Submission Protocol, an update on the preparation of the Correlation Table from the 2012 Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding system (HS2012) based Common External Tariff (CET) and the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev4), and information on an exchange visit facilitated during the year. The paper also provides an update on the Technical Working Group (TWG) activities and an overview of the regional work plan for 2014/2015.

**2. STATUS OF SUBMISSION OF 2012 ANNUAL TRADE DATA TO THE
SECRETARIAT AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED****2.1 Annual Trade Data - 2012**

The CARICOM Secretariat continues to update the regional trade database with data received from Member States. This year, seven (7) countries adhered to the April timeline (2012 data) as compared to six (6) countries in 2012 (2011 data).

As at June 2013, eleven (11) Member States had submitted their annual 2012 data and by September, data were received from twelve (12) Member States.

The Secretariat would like to congratulate **St. Kitts and Nevis** for being the first Member State to submit its 2012 trade data to the Secretariat. This is the second consecutive year that St. Kitts and Nevis has been the first to submit trade data. The data for this country was received in January 2013. In addition, the Secretariat commends Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines for adhering to the timeline and would like to urge the other countries to continue their efforts to meet this timeline.

2.2 Challenges Encountered in Processing 2012 Data

The Secretariat is pleased to report that the data files received from ten (10) countries were free of queries. For the two remaining countries the errors which included *null values, negative values and “country trading with itself”*, were addressed through consultations with the relevant persons of the respective National Statistical Offices (NSOs). These countries are urged to incorporate the relevant validation rules in their databases to capture and correct these errors. There was also the submission of data that was too aggregated to be included in the regional database. The Secretariat would be consulting with this country to see how best its information can be disaggregated for incorporation in the database.

2.3 Adherence to the Existing Data Submission Protocol

In accordance with the Data Submission Protocol, countries are required to submit data files consisting of eleven (11) fields to the Secretariat. The table included in **Attachment I** details the fields received from each Member State.

The table shows that no country submitted all of the required fields. Two countries, **Guyana** and **St. Kitts and Nevis** submitted ten (10) fields with the missing fields being

“country of origin” for Guyana and “unit of supplementary quantity” for St. Kitts and Nevis. In general, these two fields were the ones that were missing in most countries.

It was recommended at the Thirty-Seventh Meeting of the SCCS that the *country of origin* and the *unit of supplementary quantity* fields should remain in the Protocol. Countries are therefore encouraged to put systems in place to capture this information.

3 FEEDBACK RECEIVED ON EXPANSION OF THE DATA SUBMISSION PROTOCOL

At the Thirty-Seventh Meeting of the SCCS, countries would recall that the Secretariat had requested feedback from countries on the proposed expansion of the Data Submission Protocol to include the following additional fields: -

- *data on the CET rates at the commodity level;*
- *the actual rate of duty applied;*
- *the 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 is pleased to report that responses were received from all countries. Ten (10) countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago) have stated that all of the additional fields can be provided. The other countries have indicated that there may be some issues regarding a few of the fields. The issues mentioned relate to:

- **the rate of duty and the total duty paid** – It was noted that these fields are available at the Statistics Department but may have some potential quality

problems since updates made by Customs Department are not routinely shared with the Statistics Department;

- **freight charges** – disaggregating these charges at the tariff level for bulk shipments of multiple products would be a challenge since the freight charged is based on the entire shipment;
- **nationality of transport** – one country mentioned that this was available in the Customs database but was not currently collected by the Statistics Department; and
- the lack of or limited data **on commodities traded under the different agreements**; and on **trade of commodities where suspension of CET** was applied;

The Secretariat would like to urge these countries to interact with their Customs Departments to see what steps can be taken to obtain the information relative to the expanded Protocol. The Secretariat would be submitting the new Protocol for the next round of data collection.

4. STATUS OF SUBMISSION OF 2013 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.*

Two countries, **Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis** adhered to the May timeline for first quarter 2013 data while two Member States, **Barbados and Guyana** adhered to the August timeline for second quarter 2013 data.

As at September 2013, six (6) countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis and Suriname) have submitted their first quarter data (Q1 2013) as compared to five (5) countries submitting similar data last year (Q1 2012).

Further, four (4) countries (Barbados, Guyana, Suriname and St. Kitts and Nevis) have submitted second quarter data (Q2 2013) as compared to three (3) countries submitting similar data last year (Q2 2012). The Secretariat intends to pay more attention to the submission of quarterly trade data by Member States in the future.

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

5. REQUEST FOR TRADE DATA FROM THE BAHAMAS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

The Secretariat would like to expand the regional trade database to include data from The Bahamas and the Associate Members. In the past, trade data were received from some of these countries. However, the Secretariat would now like to collect this information on a regular basis. The intention is to collect both quarterly and annual trade data as per the Data Submission Protocol and by the respective timelines. These countries are therefore requested to indicate the feasibility of supplying these data to the Secretariat on a routine basis relative to the existing timelines.

6. CORRELATION TABLE BASED ON THE 2012 EDITION OF THE HARMONISED COMMODITY DESCRIPTION AND CODING SYSTEM (HS2012) BASED COMMON EXTERNAL TARIFF (CET)

The Secretariat wishes to inform Member States that efforts are being made to develop a Correlation Table linking the codes of the HS2012 based CET with the codes of the SITC Rev4. One Member State has indicated that they have commenced work on the development of this table. The Secretariat would continue to liaise with this country to review the table and to make it available to the rest of the Region.

7. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO MONTSERRAT FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

The Statistics Department of Montserrat had been experiencing some challenges with its Trade Information System, particularly as it relates to the compilation of its exports.

In this regard, the Secretariat firstly provided assistance remotely and then facilitated the attachment of Mr. Melroy Henry, Statistician, Department of Statistics, St. Kitts and Nevis to the Statistics Department of Montserrat for two days to provide assistance in addressing the problems being faced. Funding for this visit was provided under the Tenth European Development Fund (10th EDF).

The Secretariat wishes to express its appreciation to the Statistics Department of St. Kitts and Nevis for allowing their staff to undertake this mission.

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 thirteen (13) countries (11 Member States and 2 Associate Members). Those countries which are yet to submit their completed questionnaires are urged to do so as soon as possible. The Secretariat would be sharing the completed questionnaires with the members of the TWG to commence the analysis.

In addition, countries are urged to prepare or revise (if necessary) their respective methodologies and to submit these to the Secretariat. Countries would recall that guidelines to assist countries with the documentation of their methodology was prepared by the TWG and was previously dispatched to countries.

9. REGIONAL WORK PLAN FOR MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS – 2014/2015

For 2014/2015, the Secretariat would continue its thrust in improving the production and timely dissemination of Merchandise Trade Statistics in the Region. It is anticipated that support would be provided under the Tenth EDF to advance work in this area.

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.
- Prepare and submit to countries the HS2012-SITC Rev4 Correlation Table and assist in incorporating it in their Trade Information Systems;
- 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 the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Merchandise Trade Statistics;
- Provide support under the 10th EDF relative to enhancing the quality of trade data in Member States and at the Secretariat.

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 the following:
 - (a) The submission of annual and quarterly trade data to the Secretariat;
 - (b) The missing data for the existing Data Submission Protocol;

- (c) The expansion of the Data Submission Protocol based on the challenges highlighted;
 - (d) The submission of data by The Bahamas and the Associate Members to the Secretariat on a routine basis in accordance with the timelines.
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- (ii) **commend** St. Kitts and Nevis for being the first Member State to submit 2012 data for the second consecutive year to the Secretariat and the other six countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines for adhering to the April timeline;
 - (iii) **express appreciation** to the Statistics Department of St. Kitts and Nevis for providing technical support to the Statistics Department of Montserrat;
 - (iv) **also note** that the Correlation Table linking the HS2012 based Common External Tariff (CET) with the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev4) is being developed;
 - (v) **urge** countries with outstanding IMTS2010 questionnaires to submit their completed questionnaires by 30 November 2013 and to support the analysis of these questionnaires;
 - (vi) **support** the Secretariat's Work Programme for 2014/2015 in the area of Merchandise Trade
 - (vii) **also express appreciation** to the European Union for the funding provided under the 10th EDF in the area of Merchandise Trade;

ANNUAL 2012 DATA – FIELDS SUBMITTED BY MEMBER STATES

NO.	FIELDS	AG	BB	BZ	DM	GD	GY	JM	MS	LC	KN	VC	SR	TT
1	Reporting Country	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	*	√	...
2	Flow	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	...
3	Year	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	*	√	...
4	Period	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	...
5	Partner Country	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	...
6	Country of Origin	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	√	*	√	...
7	Product Code	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	...
8	Value	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	...
9	Net Mass /Qty A	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	...
10	Sup. Quantity/ Qty B	√	√	√	*	√	√	*	√	√	√	√	*	...
11	Sup. Quantity Unit / Unit B	*	*	*	*	*	√	*	*	*	*	*	*	...

Notes: * missing field

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS (38th 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 2012: Trade data for 12 countries.	Online Trade Facility – updated with available data up to 2012	2012 data for 1 Member State outstanding.	Best Practices 7 Member States adhered to the April timeline. Challenges: Country trading with itself; Null and negative values; Data too aggregated in one case		
Quarterly Merchandise Trade Data	Q1-2013: 6 Member States Q2 -2013 – 4 Member States.		Q1-2013: 7 Member States Q2-2013: 9 Member States	Best Practices 2 Member States adhered to the May timeline 2 Member States adhered to the August timeline		