

**THIRTY-NINTH MEETING OF
THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF
CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS****SCCS/2014/39/3****Georgetown, Guyana
27-29 October 2014****20 October 2014**

**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 2013 annual and 2014 quarterly trade data to the Secretariat; an update on the Correlation Table linking the 2012 Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding system (HS2012) based Common External Tariff (CET) and the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4 (SITC Rev4); an update on the Consultancy on Merchandise Trade Statistics which is currently being undertaken in the Region and the status of work being undertaken by the Technical Working Group (TWG). An overview of the regional work plan for 2014/2015 is also provided.

2. STATUS OF SUBMISSION OF 2013 ANNUAL AND 2014 QUARTERLY TRADE DATA TO THE SECRETARIAT AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

2.1 Annual Trade Data - 2013

This year, the Secretariat expanded its collection of merchandise trade data to formally include The Bahamas and the Associate Members. At the Thirty-Eighth Meeting of the SCCS, these countries agreed to submit trade data to the Secretariat on a routine basis.

Annual trade data for 2013 were therefore requested from 19 countries (14 Member States and 5 Associate Members). A review of the submissions revealed that nine countries (8 Member States and 1 Associate Member) submitted their data by the April timeline (2013 data) as compared to 7 Member States in 2013 (2012 data). As at September 2014, sixteen (16) countries (13 Member States and 3 Associate Members) have submitted their annual 2013 data. The regional trade information system currently contains information for thirteen (13) Member States and one Associate Member but with a couple of exceptions. However, it does not contain complete information from the thirteen (13) Member States that share the CET due to missing data from Trinidad and Tobago.

The Secretariat would like to congratulate **St. Kitts and Nevis** for being the first country to submit its 2013 trade data to the Secretariat. This is the **third consecutive year** that St. Kitts and Nevis has been the first to submit trade data. This country seems to be following closely the pattern of Dominica that was the first to submit trade data for four consecutive years. The data for St. Kitts and Nevis was received in **January 2014**. In addition, the Secretariat commends *Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat, Suriname and Turks and Caicos Islands* for adhering to the timeline and would like to urge the other countries to continue in their efforts to meet this timeline.

2.2 Challenges Encountered in Processing 2013 Data

In processing the 2013 data, the errors which were flagged included **incorrect HS codes; missing/incorrect codes of trading partner, missing codes for the trade flow (i.e. code to identify whether the commodity is an import or an export);** and **missing net mass and values** for some of the commodities traded.

The **majority** of the errors were related to the **HS codes**. A review of these errors showed that there were inaccurate breakouts of codes at the national level whereby countries with CET based tariffs used the eighth digit instead of the ninth to start coding national breakouts. There were also HS codes which were no longer applicable to the tariff being used and cases where the codes used referred to the HS headings instead of the code at the item/product level.

Another error which was common across a few countries related to the country codes used for **Curacao and Sint Maarten**. It should be noted that following the dissolution of The Netherlands Antilles in 2010, the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) have assigned Alpha 2 codes - "CW" and "SX" for Curacao and Sint Maarten respectively.

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. It should be noted that the Consultancy on Merchandise Trade Statistics which is currently being executed in the Region would be addressing the inconsistencies/errors which are highlighted above.

There were submissions from two countries which could not be included in the regional database. The export data submitted by one of the countries was too aggregated to be included in the database while the tariff used by the other country could not be easily correlated to the current international classification

(i.e. the Harmonised System). The Secretariat would be consulting with these two countries to see how best the information can be included in the regional database.

2.3 Adherence to the Data Submission Protocol

The Thirty-Eighth Meeting of the SCCS endorsed the expansion of the Data Submission Protocol to include **eight (8) additional fields** and recommended that the expanded Protocol should be sent to countries for the 2014 round of data collection. The revised Protocol now requires countries to submit nineteen (19) mandatory fields to the Secretariat. The table included in **Attachment I** details the fields submitted by each country in 2014. It shows that no country has submitted all the required fields from the expanded Protocol.

The feedback received from those Member States which routinely submit data to the Secretariat revealed that countries needed assistance to amend the Data Submission Protocol module in order to generate data as per the expanded Protocol. Grenada has attempted to adjust the Protocol module to incorporate some of the additional fields but experienced some challenges and submitted the data in accordance with the old Protocol.

Under the current Consultancy on Merchandise Trade Statistics, the Data Submission Protocol module would be adjusted to include the additional fields and the relevant training would be provided to countries. However, in cases where there are missing fields in the data obtained from Customs, countries are encouraged to consult with their Customs Departments and other agencies to see what steps can be taken to obtain these fields.

2.4 Quarterly trade data for 2014

Three countries, **Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis and Suriname** have adhered to the May and August timelines respectively for the submission of first and second quarter data for 2014. As at October 2014, ten (10) countries, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname) have submitted 2014 trade data for the first and second quarters of 2014 to the Secretariat.

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

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

The Secretariat is pleased to report that the updated Correlation Table linking the HS2012 based CET with the SITC Rev 4 was submitted to countries in September 2014. The Draft Correlation Table which was prepared by the Statistics Department of St. Kitts and Nevis was shared with the Secretariat and circulated to countries for feedback.

The Secretariat reviewed the Table and incorporated changes as required. Some of the changes which were made included *the removal of duplicate records; the addition of new SITC numbers to cater for the new HS codes included in the revised HS; and the revision of the commodity descriptions as required*. Checks were also made to ensure there were no missing codes and that the codes conformed to the UN HS2012-SITC Rev 4 Correlation Table.

The Secretariat wishes to **acknowledge the efforts made by the Statistics Department of St. Kitts and Nevis**, in particular **Mr. Melroy Henry**, for

preparing the Draft Correlation Table which formed the basis of the updated Table that has now been shared with countries.

4. CONSULTANCY ON MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

The Secretariat is currently executing a **Consultancy on Merchandise Trade Statistics** which is being funded by the European Union under the Tenth European Development Fund (EDF), CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and Economic Integration Program.

This project seeks to build upon the work executed under the Ninth EDF by reinforcing the capacity of the national statistical offices and the regional office to produce and disseminate high quality Merchandise Trade Statistics.

The key areas of focus include:

- enhancing the trade data processing in Member States and at the regional office;
- improving the quality of trade data in Member States and at the regional office;
- enhancing the dissemination and analysis of trade data;
- enhancing capacity in the use of the New Eurotrace and Comext software, and the Mirror Statistics and Trade Indices Modules; and
- reinforcing the capabilities of key staff in through the conduct of a training of trainers workshop.

The Briefing Meeting of the Project was held at the CARICOM Secretariat Headquarters, Georgetown, Guyana on 31 March, 2014. To date, there were missions to the Secretariat, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Montserrat, The Bahamas, and Jamaica. Technical assistance visits to the remaining countries are scheduled for 2014/2015.

Two workshops would also be convened under the project – the first workshop would focus on providing training relative to problems that still exists in the Eurotrace software and would also focus on the Trade Indices, Web Comext and Mirror Statistics modules. The second workshop will focus on the training of trainers to provide support as required to countries post the project. These workshops are tentatively planned for January and February 2015 respectively and are scheduled to be held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Kitts and Nevis respectively.

5. ACTIVITIES OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG) FOR MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS

Countries would recall that the TWG had circulated a questionnaire to countries to obtain feedback with respect to the 2010 recommendations for the compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS).

Completed questionnaires have so far been received from 14 countries (12 Member States and 2 Associate Members). These questionnaires along with a summary matrix of responses were shared with the members of the TWG to commence the analysis of the responses. The TWG members are required to analyse their assigned chapter(s) and submit the findings and recommendations to the Secretariat. It is anticipated that the group would complete this exercise by the end of 2014. The Secretariat would also be following up with those countries that have not yet submitted completed questionnaires. The Secretariat would like to express its appreciation to the respective National Statistical Offices (NSOs) for allowing their representatives to participate in the TWG.

6. 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.

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 expanded Data Submission Protocol;
- Monitor and provide support to countries in the use of the New Eurotrace Software, inclusive of the modules implemented;
- Assist in incorporating the HS2012-SITC Rev4 Correlation Table in the Trade Information Systems;
- Continue to strengthen 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;
- Continue to provide support under the Tenth EDF relative to enhancing the quality of trade data in Member States and at the Secretariat through workshops, technical assistance and attachments.

ACTION REQUIRED

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

- (i) **consider** the status of Merchandise Trade data submissions by Member States and Associate Members, the challenges encountered and the progress of the developmental work being undertaken in this area;
- (ii) **commend** St. Kitts and Nevis for being the first Member State to submit 2013 data for the third consecutive year to the Secretariat and the other eight countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat, Suriname and Turks and Caicos Islands for adhering to the April timeline;
- (iii) **express appreciation** to the European Union for the funding provided under the Tenth EDF in the area of Merchandise Trade and to the Statistics Department of St. Kitts and Nevis for their initiative in preparing the Draft HS2012-SITC Rev4 Correlation Table;
- (iv) **urge** countries with outstanding IMTS2010 questionnaires to submit their completed questionnaires as soon as possible and to support the analysis of these questionnaires;
- (v) **support** the Secretariat's Work Programme for 2014/2015 in the area of Merchandise Trade.

ANNUAL 2013 DATA - FIELDS SUBMITTED BY COUNTRIES

NO.	FIELDS	AG	BB	BZ	DM	GD	GY	JM	MS	KN	LC	VC	SR	TT	BS	AI	BM	VG	KY	TC
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	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	...	*	...		...	*
12	CET Rate	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	...	...	...	n/a	...	n/a	n/a
13	Actual Rate Applied	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	...	...	...		...
14	Total Duty paid	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	...	...	...		...	*
15	Freight charges	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	...	...	...	*	...	*
16	Mode of transport at the frontier	*	*	*	*	*		*	*		*	*	*	...	...	...	*	...	*
17	Nationality of the means of transport	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	...	...	...	*	...	*	*
18	Trading Agreement	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	...	...	...	n/a	...	n/a	n/a
19	Suspension of the CET	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	...	...	...	n/a	...	n/a	n/a

Notes: * means missing field

* Net mass was not available for all tariff lines. Only one field for quantity was available.

... means no data submitted

n/a not applicable

Data for Suriname and Cayman Islands were submitted by quarters.

Fields 12 -19 are the new fields included in the expanded Data Submission Protocol

THIRTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS (39th 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 2013: Trade data for 16 countries (13MS and 3 AM).	Online Trade Facility – updated with available data up to 2013	2013 data for 1 MS and 2 AM outstanding.	Best Practices 9 countries have (8MS and 1 AM) adhered to the April timeline. Challenges: Incorrect HS codes due to inaccurate breakout at the national level; Missing code for partner country, missing flow; null values; Data too aggregated for exports in one case and tariff used could not be easily correlated to the international HS.		The Bahamas and Associate Members have agreed to submit data to the Secretariat on a routine basis from 2014.
Quarterly Merchandise Trade Data	Q1 and Q2 2014: 10 MS		Q1 and Q2 2014: 3 MS	Best Practices 3 Member States adhered to the May and August timelines.		