

SERVICING AD HOC REQUESTS FOR DATA

Report prepared by the International Monetary Fund

The Statistics Department of the IMF receives many ad hoc requests for its data from outside the Fund, by telephone, letters, cable, and memoranda. These requests are made by regular subscribers to the Fund's statistical publications and computer tapes<sup>1/</sup>, as well as nonsubscribers. The latter include nonsubscribing government agencies, universities, research institutes, commercial banks, other private businesses, and individuals. More than 300 such requests may be received in any given year.

The Fund's Statistics Department has strived over the years to respond positively to all reasonable ad hoc requests for data from both subscribers and nonsubscribers. Requests for a few additional observations and updates have been attended immediately. More complex requests have been serviced in a few days or weeks depending on the priority accorded to the requesting party and the availability of resources to satisfy the request. On occasion ad hoc requests have been received for data on PC diskette and they have been met as soon as possible.

Requests for IMF data are received in all statistical areas in which the Fund collects and distributes such data, including statistics on money and banking, government finance, balance of payments, national accounts, prices, production, employment, and international trade. Only data that are in the public domain can be supplied, of course, as some of the more disaggregated data are considered confidential. Requests involving special calculations are served by supplying the input data necessary for the user to carry out the necessary computation. Requests for data not compiled or published by the Fund are received occasionally and in such a case a reply is prepared directing the user to the most likely source of data.

As a result of resource constraints in recent years a policy is now in effect that gives clear priority to subscribers over nonsubscribers and that attempts to minimize the costs to the Fund of servicing requests. For instance, in some cases where the request involves data already contained in the IMF's statistical publications the response may now involve directing

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<sup>1/</sup> Free subscriptions are given one each to the central bank or similar monetary authority, the ministry of finance, and the statistical office for each country. Additional subscriptions are made available to official users at an especially reduced price.

the requesting party to the appropriate publication rather than providing the data if this would involve use of the Fund's computer time and/or staff resources.

It is hoped that in the future the proposed licensing of subscribers for secondary dissemination of the IMF's statistical products, e.g., through PC diskettes, will reduce the amount of ad hoc requests made on the Fund, particularly those that appear to be of a recurrent nature. Equally important, the Fund's Statistics Department is planning to reconsider its policy of not charging for its services, in order to move into line with other national and international statistical agencies. (X)