



DISTRIBUTIVE TRADE

1951

Developing Distributive Trade Statistics Methodology

Distributive Trade Statistics program of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) has evolved over more than fifty years, changing and responding to different data needs and the changing economic environments.

1956

9th session

The first Recommendations for the Statistics of the Distributive and Related Service Trades

The early days from 1946 to 1956

Growing importance to statistics on distribution has been attached since the very first meetings of the Statistical Commission (SC), at which the Commission requested continued work on the subject of distribution censuses and on statistics on wholesale and retail trade, giving particular attention to the development of basic concepts and definitions suitable for use internationally. The first *Recommendations for the Statistics of the Distributive and Related Service Trades* establishing a uniform pattern for their measurement on a comparable basis were adopted at the 9th session of the SC held in 1956.

The next five decades from 1956 to 2005

The first international recommendations on distributive and related service trades have served as a useful guide to countries which had undertaken surveys on distributive trade. However, there were a number of problems which were not adequately dealt with in the recommendations and they needed to be reviewed and updated in the light of the most recent national and international requirements and practices. The decision for preparation of a revised version of the international recommendations was taken at the 16th session of SC in 1970. The SC at its next 17th session adopted the updated *International Recommendations on Statistics of the Distributive Trades and Services* (IRSDTS).

1974

17th session

Updated IRSDTS Manual on the Organization and Conduct of Distributive Trade Surveys

In the same year 1974, the UNSD issued a manual on the *Organization and Conduct of Distributive Trade Surveys* as a supplementary publication to the international recommendations. This manual is a practical guide to the planning and management of censuses and surveys of distributive trades and services, with particular attention to the problems faced by countries at an early stage of statistical development.

As of today, both documents represent the current international recommendations and guidelines issued by the United Nations for the collection, compilation and dissemination of distributive trade statistics.

Since 1974, the statistics of distributive trades has not been included independently in the agenda of SC. However, the Commission had considered a number of issues having direct impact on it:

- Revisions of the *United Nations System of National Accounts* which has implications on the concepts, definitions, classifications and terminology used in statistics of the distributive trades and services
- Revisions of the *International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC)* and *Central Product Classification (CPC)* particularly with respect to the boundaries of the service trades and classification of wholesale trade according to the type of goods sold

During that period, the development of service statistics in general received an increased attention. A number of working groups deliberating on service statistics issues, including distributive trade have been established. Their work has made a significant methodological contribution to the development of the distributive trade statistics.

2005

UNSD launched a revision of IRTDS First meeting of the EG on DTS



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Distributive Trade Statistics as one of the UNSD priority activities of work

The appearance of new economic phenomena in distributive trade sector and the significant developments that have taken place since 1974 have necessitated a new revision and update of international recommendations on distributive trade to ensure and maintain their relevance.

Recognizing the growing economic importance of distributive trade, the UNSD has made the work on bringing the methodological and operational foundation of distributive trade statistics into line with the new economic developments, advances in statistical approaches and methodologies, and needs of users as one of its priority activities for the next years.

Towards Revised International Recommendations on Distributive Trade Statistics

In 2005 the UNSD launched a revision of the existing recommendations on distributive trade statistics with the objective to provide updated guidance to countries on the compilation and dissemination of data on wholesale and retail trade.

This initiative was broadly endorsed by the SC at its 37th session in 2006. The Commission particularly recommended that the revision process should be carried out in close consultation with national statistical offices and other international organizations in order to reflect fully the specific needs and circumstances of various groups of countries.

The Expert Group on Distributive Trade Statistics



The Expert Group on Distributive Trade Statistics (EG-DTS) is organized by the UNSD to assist in the revision of the existing UN recommendations on distributive trade statistics. The EG-DTS conducted its first meeting at the UN headquarters in New York on 22-25 August 2005. UNSD in consultation with members of the EG has prepared an annotated outline of the future IRDTS. The outline has been sent for a worldwide review. The responses received so far indicated overwhelming support to UNSD initiative and broad approval of the content and coverage of the future recommendations.

More information about the work of the EG can be found at:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Distributive_trade/distributive_trade.htm

Looking ahead

Following the advice of the SC, UNSD is planning to produce two follow-up publications providing practical guidance on compilation of distributive trade statistics, including description of good practices:

- *Distributive Trade Statistics: Compilers Manual*
- *Indices of Distributive Trade: A Handbook of Good Practices*

UNSD will develop a database which will store and disseminate data and metadata on distributive trade statistics in accordance with the IRDTS.

2005

2006

37th session

Statistical Commission broadly endorsed the revision of IRDTS

2007

Second meeting of the EG on DTS

2008

39th session

UNSD will submit for approval the draft of the IRDTS