



SPECIAL FEATURE:

RESULTS FROM THE SECOND AND THIRD VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS (EG-IMTS) CONCERNING THE REVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMTS

The second virtual meeting of the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-IMTS) on the revision of current recommendations for IMTS was conducted between 25 March and 21 April 2009 on the electronic expert forum for IMTS. The third meeting was conducted between 27 May and 30 June 2009. The second virtual meeting discussed the first drafts for the introduction, chapter 1 and 2 of the revised international recommendations on IMTS (IMTS, Rev.3) and the third virtual meeting the first drafts of the remaining chapters (chapters 3 to 11).

The EG-IMTS is composed of national experts from developed and developing countries of different regions and experts of international/ supranational organizations and is assisting UNSD in the revision of the current recommendations for IMTS. A total of 24 experts participated in these two meetings and provided over 300 comments.

Extract from the conclusions of the meetings:

Introduction - The experts welcomed the revised and restructured introduction, proposed some amendments and endorsed the proposed list of chapters provided in it.

Chapter 1 - Scope and time of recording: The experts made numerous comments and suggestions for amendments. Regarding the suggested new paragraph on change of ownership the experts proposed to clearly explain the role of the criteria of change of ownership in the case of goods crossing the border

(conceptually and practically) while stressing the supplementary character of this criteria. The important new paragraphs on goods simply being transported through a country and goods temporarily admitted and dispatched were mostly accepted although with amendments.

Chapter 2 - Trade System: The experts welcomed the definition of basic terms at the beginning of the chapter, overall considered this chapter as comprehensive and sufficiently clear and detailed and agreed with the definition of 'general imports' and 'general exports'. Yet, on some items a need for further clarification was pointed out.

Chapter 3 - Commodity Classification: Overall the experts welcomed this updated chapter on classification, requested some streamlining of the text and also requested to provide clear guidance on the use of the unused chapters in the Harmonized System.

Chapter 4 - Valuation: Overall the experts welcomed the updated chapter on valuation, suggested some streamlining of certain paragraphs and to explain more explicitly the statistical valuation; the experts mostly agreed to recommend to compile the statistical value of imported goods as CIF-type value and to encourage countries to compile FOB-type value of imported goods as supplementary information.

Chapter 5 - Quantity measurement: Overall the experts agreed with the updated chapter on quantity measurement and stressed the importance of quantity infor-

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On Valuation:

...the experts mostly agreed to recommend to compile the statistical value of imported goods as CIF-type value and to encourage countries to compile FOB-type value of imported goods as supplementary information...

mation for the calculation of index numbers and transportation statistics; yet, there was also a discussion of problems in obtaining high quality, comparable quantity information.

Chapter 6 - Partner country: The experts in majority agreed or were supportive of the recommendation to compile country of consignment for exports in addition to country of last known destination and highlighted the analytical usefulness of this information; yet some experts have doubts about the quality and usefulness of this information and many are concerned about the additional burden on declarants; the experts suggested to add an additional paragraph which would deal with specific goods such as aircraft and ships.

Chapter 7 - Mode of transport: The experts strongly supported this new chapter but suggested not to recommend a minimum requirement of categories according to which mode of transport should be compiled and reported but nevertheless mostly agreed to recommend a detailed classification for modes of transport in order to ensure international comparability to the best possible extent.

Chapter 8 - Data compilation strategies: In general the experts endorsed this chapter but suggested to make it shorter and less prescriptive and advised that the revised Compilers Manual is more appropriate to provide details on good practices in institu-

tional arrangements; also several changes to the contents and text were proposed.

Chapter 9 - Data quality and metadata: The experts endorsed this chapter, suggested numerous amendments and advised to provide details on good country practices in the revised Compilers Manual; in particular the experts suggested that countries should be encouraged to make use of existing quality frameworks; the experts proposed to encourage countries to explore the release of provisional estimates.

Chapter 10 – Dissemination: The experts endorsed this chapter, suggested some amendments/ changes and advised to provide more details on good country practices in the revised Compilers Manual; the experts suggested to recommend the use of passive confidentiality provided that it is in compliance with the national laws and regulations.

Chapter 11 - Supplementary topics: The experts supported both indices and seasonal adjustment as (new) topics, suggested to make explicit reference to the Compilers Manual for best practices and examples and to make reference to internationally available recommendations on seasonal adjustment.

The full reports of the meetings are available on the website of the EG-IMTS at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>

DATABASES AND PUBLICATIONS:

NOW AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET: ANALYTICAL TABLES ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS

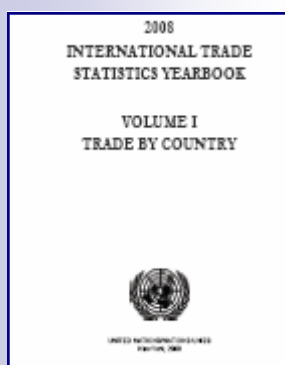
The International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section (IMTSS) of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs produces analytical trade tables containing trade values and indices for countries (areas) and regions. These tables are published in the United Nations Monthly Bulletin of Statistics which is also available

online (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mbs/default.aspx>). In order to give easy and immediate access to this data in their original table format, these tables are now provided on the IMTSS web-pages at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm>. The latest tables become available and are posted in the last week of every month.

Analytical tables on International Merchandise Trade Statistics:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm>

2008 INTERNATIONAL
TRADE STATISTICS YEAR-
BOOK



AVAILABLE AT:
[http://comtrade.un.org/
pb/](http://comtrade.un.org/pb/)

2008 INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS YEARBOOK, VOLUME I - TRADE BY COUNTRY NOW AVAILABLE

Volume I of the 2008 International Trade Statistics Yearbook provides an overview of international merchandise trade in 2008 and detailed data for a total of 173 countries (or areas). It covers imports and exports by commodity and trading partners with 2008 data for 77 countries (or areas), representing approximately 61% of world trade of 2008.

Background: The 2008 International Trade Statistics Yearbook (2008 ITSY) is new and different from previous editions as it has been re-designed and its two volumes will be published separately. The 2008 ITSY 2008, Volume I - Trade by country has been completed in mid of June 2009 (instead of December) in order to allow for an early release of an overview of international merchandise trade in 2008 and for a much earlier publication of the 2008 country (area) data available on UN Comtrade.

The presentation of the information on individual countries (or areas) in Volume I has been re-designed. Instead of detailed tables, now so called country trade profiles

show an analytical and condensed view of a country's trade performance by using graphs, overview tables and descriptive text. For more detailed data, users are requested to go directly to UN Comtrade (<http://comtrade.un.org/db/default.aspx>) which is the source of the information presented in the country trade profiles.

The 2008 ITSY, Volume II - Trade by commodity will be, as previously, completed end of December as more complete data is required for showing detailed information of trade by commodity.

The 2008 ITSY, Volume I has been made available in its parts at <http://comtrade.un.org/pb/>. The full electronic (pdf) version of this publication is expected to become available in early July 2009; the printed publication might become available by end of 2009. For more information, please contact the United Nations Sales and Marketing Section at publications@un.org or check on the internet at: <http://unp.un.org>.

COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: UNSD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS (IMTS)

The UNSD mission visited the UAE on 18-30 April 2009 at the request of the Central Department of Statistics (CDS) of the Ministry of Economy. The objective was to assist the UAE in strengthening their national statistical system in general and the UAE international merchandise trade statistics (IMTS) program in particular by assisting CDS in the preparation of an action plan to modernize the trade data compilation and to improve the trade data flow.

The mission conducted a series of meetings with the Central Department of Statistics and other federal agencies such as the Federal Customs Authority, the Central Bank, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Energy which are either involved in the compilation of the UAE IMTS or are im-

portant users of these statistics. The mission visited also Customs Authorities of all Emirates and the Statistical Centre of Abu Dhabi and reviewed their data collection activities as well as the arrangements for data submission to CDS. The mission briefed all visited institutions on the international recommendations for IMTS and provided copies of the relevant documents (hard copies and on CD-ROM) on concepts and definitions, classifications etc. for use in data collection and processing. In addition, the mission trained the staff of the section of the CDS responsible for IMTS in using UN Comtrade and discussed with the CDS Statistical Information System Section the organization of statistical data processing in general and merchandise trade data in particular.

For our activities on
technical cooperation,
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[http://
unstats.un.org/
unsd/trade/
work-
shops_imts.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/workshops_imts.htm)

YOU HAVE ASKED US:

HOW CAN I OBTAIN AGGREGATE DATA FOR A SPECIFIC GROUP OF COUNTRIES, AMERICA FOR EXAMPLE?

For the convenience of users we have created important country groupings under "My Country Groups" which can be found under "Reporters" (and "Partner") at *Data Query / Basic Selection* or under "Lookup" (in "Enter Reporters Codes / Text") at *Data Query / Express Selection*. Subscribers have the option to create own country groupings under *My Account / Favorites / Country Groups* but can also copy

existing country groupings from under *My Account / Predefined Favorites / Country Groups*, review and modify them. The composition of the existing country groupings can most easily be viewed when clicking at "Detail view" at *My Account / Predefined Favorites / Country Groups*. Users should always review the composition of available country groupings before using them as their composition can change over time.

Find out more on our Knowledge Base at:

<http://comtrade.un.org/kb/>

HOW CAN I OBTAIN DATA FOR A GROUP OF COUNTRIES (NOT AGGREGATED)?

Important groups of reporters are available at "My Favorites Reporters" which can be found under "Reporters" at *Data Query / Basic Selection* or under "Lookup" (in "Enter Reporters Codes / Text") at *Data Query / Express Selection*. Subscribers

have the option to create own groups of reporters under *My Account / Favorites / Reporters*. Users should always review the composition of available reporter groupings before using them as their composition can change over time.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

SECOND ROUND OF WORLDWIDE CONSULTATION ON THE REVISION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS (IMTS) IS STARTING END OF JULY 2009

The key element of the revision strategy towards IMTS, Rev.3 is the consultation with national IMTS compilers. The second round of worldwide consultation on the full text of the provisional draft of the revised recommendations is scheduled to take place between end of July and mid of September 2009. The first round of worldwide

consultation on issues most relevant for setting the scope of the future recommendations in which 115 countries participated was conducted between May and July 2008.

For detailed information see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>.

Find out more about the IMTS revision process at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>

EDITORIAL NOTE

The Trade Statistics Newsletter is a quarterly publication prepared by the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division – Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This Newsletter is not an official document of the United Nations nor does it express the official position of the United Nations. Editorial team: Nelnan Koumtingué, Matthias Reister, Markie Muryawan and Bizugenet Kassa.

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