



SPECIAL FEATURE:

RESULTS FROM THE SECOND ROUND OF WORLDWIDE CONSULTATION ON THE REVISION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS (IMTS)

The second round of worldwide consultation on the provisional draft of the revised recommendations on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS2010) was conducted in August and September 2009. The provisional draft has also been made available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>.

Results:

A total of 99 countries replied to the consultation paper within the available time, 31 developed and 68 developing and transitional countries. Overall, countries are satisfied with the draft of the revised recommendation for IMTS2010 which is viewed as comprehensive, balanced and useful and as a significant improvement and update of the previous text. The combination of theoretical concepts and practical considerations is especially appreciated. Concerning the implementation of the revised recommendations the need for the immediate update of the *International Merchandise Trade Statistics Compilers Manual (IMTS Compilers Manual)* is stressed. The need for training/ technical assistance/ capacity building and the need to have the translation into the official UN languages available as soon as possible are also emphasized.

Extracts from the UNSD report:

Chapter 1 - Scope and time of recording: Overall, countries agree with the general guideline presented in the chapter. The estimation of trade below customs and statistical threshold is an important issue for compilers and it is suggested to present it separately with additional detail. The suggested text on time of recording appears not to fully reflect the complexity of the issue and the different practices in

countries. The application of the criterion of change of ownership should be further clarified. Countries are also overwhelmingly in favor of most of the recommendations contained in the specific guidelines.

Chapter 2 - Trade system: Countries share their national practices in the application of their trade system and describe the difficulties encountered, in particular, in the case of some countries, when moving to the general trade system.

Chapter 3 - Commodity Classifications: Countries find the contents of this chapter useful. Several countries explicitly welcome the new paragraph on the use of HS chapters 98 and 99. Several countries also express their interest to be informed about correlation tables between the different classifications.

Chapter 4 - Valuation: Overall, there is wide agreement that countries should be encouraged to compile imports on a FOB basis in addition to imports valued CIF. It is also pointed out that this compilation (or estimation) should be coordinated with the balance of payment compilers. It is requested that clear guidance or a standardized approach for the compilation or estimation of imports valued FOB is provided in the *IMTS Compilers Manual*.

Chapter 5 - Quantity measurement: Countries do not always follow the units of quantity recommended by WCO. Also, quality problems with quantity data are pointed out. Countries request to provide detailed guidance on the recommended estimation of quantity information in the *IMTS Compilers Manual*.

Chapter 6 - Partner country: Countries describe their national practices, which

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<http://data.un.org/>

The full report on the 2nd world wide consultation on IMTS revision is available at:

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

for some countries diverge from the existing recommendation to record the country of origin for imports and country of final destination for exports. Most countries agree on the usefulness of the additional collection of country of consignment not only for imports but also for exports. Yet, many countries also point out the difficulty of compiling this information and it is suggested to only encourage but not to recommend the compilation of country of consignment for exports.

Chapter 7 - Mode of transport: The overwhelming majority of countries welcome this new chapter and the suggested classification for mode of transport categories as an important and good addition to the recommendations.

Chapter 8 - Data compilation strategies: Overall, countries explicitly welcome and agree to this new chapter and its contents as it provides important and necessary guidance.

Chapter 9 - Data quality and metadata: Countries welcome this chapter as a very important addition to the recommendations. Countries describe their national practices and plans in this area. Several countries pointed out the need for re-

sources, training and practical guidance in order to implement the recommendations.

Chapter 10 - Dissemination: Countries inform about their national practices. It is suggested that IMTS2010 better reflects the role of passive confidentiality as the leading principle for IMTS.

Chapter 11 - Supplementary topics: Countries request to provide further guidance and best practices on the calculation of trade indices and seasonal adjustment in the *IMTS Compilers Manual*.

Annex A, B, C, D, E and F: The Annexes are considered as important and useful. It is suggested to add additional annexes either to this recommendation or to the *Compilers Manual* concerning the rules for adjustments to the invoice value to obtain CIF/FOB value, quantity conversion factors and classification conversion tables.

The comments provide an excellent basis for the review of the provisional draft. In addition, the comments provide important input for the update of *IMTS Compilers Manual*. The report will be discussed at the second meeting of the Expert Group on IMTS from 3-6 November in New York.

DATABASES AND PUBLICATIONS: UN COMTRADE DATA AVAILABILITY

UN Comtrade contains 45 years of detailed annual trade data for over 170 countries (or areas). As of 28 September 2009, there were 133 countries for the most recent reporting year 2008 available on UN Comtrade which is nine less than at the end of 2008, but is equal or more than released in any previous year.

The maximum number of reporters per reporting year is 175 for the year 2004 and is reached in 2009, which is four years after the first year of the release of 2004 data (2005). This number can be considered as a benchmark for the maximum number of countries per reporting year. Even though only 133 countries have so far reported data for the most recent reporting year 2008, this data

accounts for around 90 percent of world trade.

Any new/revised data update will be available at <http://comtrade.un.org/db/mr/daYearsNewResults.aspx?px=ori>

Table 1: Number of country periods (datasets)

		Year*					
		2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Reporting year	2003	173	169	163	159	151	112
	2004	175	168	160	146	126	
	2005	172	163	150	120		
	2006	167	162	133			
	2007	160	142				
	2008	133					

* For 2009, data available as of 28 September 2009. For 2004-2008, data as of 31 December of each year.



ANALYTICAL TABLES ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section (IMTSS) produces analytical trade tables containing trade values and indices for countries (areas) and regions. These tables are published in the UN Monthly Bulletin of Statistics which is also available online (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mbs/default.aspx>). These tables are provided on our web-page in order to give easy and immediate access to this data in their original table format. The latest tables become available and are posted in the last week of every month.

Analytical tables on IMTS:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltrade-tables.htm>

Monthly tables of imports and exports (t+3 months)

- * **Imports and exports for countries and regions in U.S. dollars:** Imports C.I.F., exports F.O.B. and balance in million U.S. dollars, updated monthly. Published as table 34 in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics (MBS).
- * **Imports and exports and indices for countries in national currency:** Imports CIF, exports FOB - value (million), volume and unit value/price: 2000=100, updated monthly. Published as table 35 in the MBS.

Quarterly table of external trade conversion factors (t+3 months)

- * **External trade conversion factors by countries :** Imports, exports: US dollars per national currency, updated in March, June, September, December. Published as table 37 in the MBS.

Quarterly tables of import and export indices

- * **Trade indices for countries in U.S. dollars (t+4 months) :** Volume, unit value/price, terms of trade and purchasing power of exports, in US dollars (2000 = 100), updated in January, April, July, October. Published as table 36 in the MBS.
- * **Trade indices for regions in U.S. dollars (t+5 months) :** Volume and unit value indices and terms of trade in US dollars (2000 = 100), updated in February, May, August, November. Published as table 38 of the MBS.
- * **Values and indices for manufactured goods exports (t+3 months) :** Unit value indices (US dollars, SDR's and national currency), volume indices (2000=100) and value (thousand millions US dollars). Updated in March, June, September, December. Published as table 39 of the MBS.
- * **Values and indices for fuel imports (t+3 months) :** Unit value indices (US dollars and national currency), volume indices (2000=100) and value (thousand millions US dollars), published in March, June, September, December as table 18 of the MBS.
- * **Indicators for fuel imports (t+3 months) :** 2000=100, published in March, June, September, December as table 19 of the MBS.

Annual tables of exports by provenance and destination

- * **World exports by provenance and destination, totals in U.S. dollars (t+7 months) :** Exports f.o.b.: million US dollars, updated in July. Published as table 40 of the MBS.
- * **Exports by provenance and destination, developed economies by commodity in U.S. dollars (t+9 months) :** Exports f.o.b.: million US dollars, updated in September. Published as table 41 of the MBS.
- * **World exports by provenance and destination, by commodity in U.S. dollars (t+11 months) :** Exports f.o.b.: million US dollars, updated in November. Published as table 42 of the MBS.

All of the above tables are also published on an annual basis in the International Trade Statistics Yearbook and are available on our website at: <http://comtrade.un.org/pb/>.

UN Monthly Bulletin
of Statistics



YOU HAVE ASKED US:

THE AGGREGATION OF DETAILED LEVEL DATA DOES NOT ALWAYS MATCH HIGHER LEVEL DATA. WHY IS IT SO?

We have noticed that, in the Comtrade database, total values for a particular HS chapter (2 digit level) do not always correspond to the sum of values at 6 or 4 digit level within that chapter. Could you explain the reason for the observed differences? Does this situation also occur with SITC data?

Countries often provide non-standard codes which are assigned during processing to so called memorandum items on the 2-digit level (to the respective HS chapter if possible or to chapter 99). As an example, some countries suppress data at the 6-digit level. Instead of code 271011, code 270000 is used. In processing the data, we remove the value of code 270000 from the detailed 6-digit data but retain it at 2 digit level. Hence, the sum of detailed data, including the 4-digit data which is aggregated from 6-digit data, will be lower than the value for chapter 27. In order to allow the

detailed data to sum up to the overall total we create item 999999=Total-(Sum of 6 digit data).

For SITC data, this situation also occurs but for a different reason. Data in SITC classification are for recent years converted from the detailed HS data provided by countries. However, not all HS sub-headings are converted to the most detailed level of SITC because of the lack of correspondence. Hence, some 3-digit SITC groups might not have any or only partial 4 or 5-digit data.

Visit our Knowledge Base at:
<http://comtrade.un.org/kb/>

UPCOMING EVENTS:

**SECOND MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS
3-6 NOVEMBER 2009, NEW YORK**

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) is organizing the second meeting of the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics from 3 to 6 November 2009 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The main purpose of the meeting is to review and endorse the provisional draft of the revised recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics which has to be submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission for adoption at its 41st Session (23-26 February 2010). Also, the Expert Group

will discuss a number of issues relevant to the development of the implementation program of the revised recommendations. Experts from different countries and regions as well as from international and regional organizations active in the area of international merchandise trade statistics will be participating in this meeting.

Please click on the following link for more details: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20Nov%202009.html>

Follow the IMTS revision process at:
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>

EDITORIAL NOTE

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