

# **PRACTICES IN THE COLLECTION AND COMPILATION OF DISTRIBUTIVE TRADE STATISTICS IN GHANA**

## **Introduction**

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) is mandated to collect, compile, process, analyze and publish statistics in the country. This mandate is executed by the Service through censuses and surveys, as well as the use of administrative records. The work of the Service is divided among divisions and sections and the Internal Trade Statistics Unit of the Trade Statistics Section is responsible for the collection and compilation of statistics on distributive trade. Until recently, the unit existed as a section on its own (Internal Trade Statistics Section, established in 1965).

## **Scope and classification**

Ghana collects distributive trade statistics using questionnaires designed to collect basic information from distributive trade outlets through annual surveys. The first survey undertaken in 1967 covered all wholesale and retail outlets throughout the country. The follow-up annual surveys cover selected wholesale and retail establishments throughout the country. The classification of commodities has been based on the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). These annual surveys are undertaken using field personnel stationed in the regions. The data collection is done alongside the annual survey of employment and earnings by the field personnel.

## **Statistical and reporting units**

The statistical unit is the establishment to which the data to be collected are related while the reporting unit is the one supplying the data for the statistical unit. In the case of enterprises with branches in other parts of the country, the questionnaire is either completed at the establishment level or enterprise level, whichever is appropriate or feasible. It is however preferable to have the questionnaire completed at the establishment level since there have always been problems with obtaining the data at the enterprise level.

### **Data items and their definitions**

The survey collects data on the background of the establishment, including name, address and physical location. The background information also includes type of ownership, nationality of ownership and type of legal organization. The main data items collected relate to number of persons engaged, wages and salaries, fixed assets, turnover of goods sold, and cost of goods purchased.

The definitions of these data items are based on the UN Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics.

### **Data sources and data collection methods**

The sources of data are wholesale and retail trade outlets selected throughout the country. Questionnaires are sent to these outlets through the field section of the GSS (for outlets in Accra and surroundings areas) and through the regional offices of the Statistical Service in the other parts of the country. The questionnaires are left with the establishments to complete and these were collected after a given deadline. In situations where the establishments have difficulty in completing the questionnaires, the field personnel Service do a follow-up to assist in completing them.

### **Indices and performance indicators**

There is no documentation on the kind of indices and performance indicators that were calculated and these would have to be revisited.

### **Distributive trade statistics and compilation of national accounts**

Since the response to the annual surveys has been very low, it has been difficult to estimate for the sector using the results. The National Accounts Section therefore uses data on imports to estimate for the distributive trade sector (i.e wholesale and retail trade). This is supplemented with data from the Ghana Tourist Board to estimate value-added for the operation of hotels and restaurants.

**Existing problems:**

1. Outdated register leading to low response rates.
2. Field section of the GSS merged with Regional Office.
3. Shift in attention from regular field data collection to long-term surveys.
4. Difficulty in listing establishments in the distributive trade due to their number.
5. Tax records not providing any indication of the size of establishments and therefore not useful for compiling a register.
6. Records at Registrar-General's Department not informative enough for locating as well as classifying establishments.

**Recent developments:** A new questionnaire has been designed and is being finalized for the re-start of the annual survey of distributive trade. A manual is being prepared alongside, explaining the concepts and definitions based on the recommendations in the Manual on Distributive Trade Survey.

As a result of the difficulty in listing all establishments in the sector, it has being proposed that an area survey of large establishments be undertaken in major towns across the country. This would involve only establishments in the distributive trade sector. This exercise is being piloted after which efforts would be made to extend the survey to other areas.

A survey of the hospitality industry is to be undertaken by the Culture and Tourism Statistics Section of the GSS in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ghana Tourist Board. Data from this survey would be used to supplement the information collected from the survey of the distributive trade sector.

In future, there are plans to include a survey of trade in services. This would be based on the experiences gained from the survey of the distributive trade sector.