Use of micro-computers in statistical work

Reported by ECLAC

Since the last meeting of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, ECLAC's Division of Statistics and Projections has significantly strengthened its use of micro-computers. Presently, most of the computing tasks underway in this Division are being carried out using the hardware and software best suited to each application.

Spread-sheet-type computer applications make for easy and efficient manipulation of statistical tables in the areas of updating and computations, while the handling of headings and footnotes in a convenient format has proved relatively simple and of great usefulness.

The manipulation of statistical tables, with LOTUS or PlanPerfect, complemented with the use of WordPerfect and laser printers have provided suitable tools for preparing high-quality technical reports.

Mention may be made in this connection of the last Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean. This was produced entirely with desk-top publishing techniques and Laserprinter outputs, giving a final version ready for reproduction. This edition of the Statistical Yearbook was undertaken by the Division as a contribution to the testing of new techniques in this field, which have displayed great efficiency and ductility and compare satisfactorily with classic photocomposition methods.

Statistical tables on national accounts and balance of payments maintained by our Division have been disseminated in a LOTUS format, giving users who are equipped only with micro-computers access to valuable information in a computerized format.
The micro version of the statistical analysis software which has been incorporated has permitted the Division to test, with satisfactory results, the processing of household, income and expenditure surveys. Considering that the user-friendly features of the hardware and software make possible the fast and easy training of statistical staff in their use, this has enhanced their autonomy for carrying out their computing and statistical analysis tasks.

Our growing experience in the use of micro-computers and their applications has been transferred to several countries of the region, which are already processing their small or medium-sized surveys with these tools and methods.

The linking of micro-computers to a PABX system has created a network which facilitates the interchange of data, especially with main computers.

The installation of the SAS system micro version is scheduled for 1989 and will permit access to the SAS data bases of our Division stored in the main computers, thus allowing users to carry out their statistical analysis tasks without having to use the frequently overloaded central computers.