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I.C.C. STUDY ON DISTRIBUTION CENSUSES

(Memorandum prepared by the International Chamber of Commerce)

1. On the occasion of its Lisbon Congress (June 1951), the International Chamber of Commerce published a descriptive analysis in Brochure 154,
 - on the work carried out in thirteen countries on distribution censuses;
 - on the value of the data thus compiled for public authorities and business men from the point of view of a precise knowledge of the machinery of distribution.
2. This publication, which was the first of its kind, aroused keen interest. Thus, in January 1952, the Statistical Office of the United Nations requested the I.C.C. to take a further step in this field and to undertake a critical study
 - of the technics adopted nationally for the organization of censuses and of the reasons why they varied from one country to another;
 - of the definitions assigned to the terms used in censuses in the different countries;
 - of the extent of international comparability of distribution census results.
3. As the scope of this research exceeded the possibilities of its Committee on Distribution Statistics, the I.C.C. decided to assign it to an ad hoc rapporteur and, on the proposal of the Canadian Council, appointed to this function in November 1952 Mr. L.G. Nicolopoulos.
4. During 1953, the rapporteur undertook a detailed study of the documentation so far collected by the I.C.C. on this question, and listed the distribution censuses carried out in a certain number of countries since 1951.

5. On the basis of this examination, the rapporteur has decided that the new publication will cover instead of thirteen countries eighteen nations (Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ceylon, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Irish Republic, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Union of South Africa), and follow the framework given hereafter, which has been approved by the Committee on Distribution Statistics of the I.C.C.:

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- A. The general need for reliable statistics of marketing distribution.
- B. The need for Distribution Censuses: their value to particular groups in the community and to the public in general.
- C. A review of private and government efforts over the years for the development and improvement of Distribution Censuses in the countries contacted.
- D. Actual position regarding Distribution Censuses in the countries contacted.

II. Public relations

Action to be undertaken by government authorities and trade associations before and after a census for promoting and stressing the necessity and importance of a Distribution Census.

III. METHODS FOR CARRYING OUT DISTRIBUTION CENSUSES

- A. Procedures and methods used:
 - 1. Questionnaires and their usefulness;
 - 2. Sampling methods and problems of accuracy.
- B. Time intervals and other administrative problems involved in carrying out a Census.
- C. Costs involved in carrying out a Census.

IV. INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM A DISTRIBUTION CENSUS

Activities covered by the Census in different countries:

- A. Types of enterprises
- B. Geographical areas
- C. Data on employment and its relation to the total labour force and other economic factors.

- D. Data on stocks.
- E. Data on turnover.
- F. Data on "outlet" for product groups.
- G. Data on Distribution costs.
- H. Methods of Distribution.
- I. Other data obtained.

V. INTERNATIONAL COMPARABILITY OF RESULTS

- A. Differences of coverage tabulated and analysed:
possible explanations for differences in coverage:
political, economic and sociological reasons.
Facilities available in each country.
- B. Variations of definitions; homogeneity desirable.
Progress made towards standardization of terms used.
Contribution of United Nations Statistical Definitions.
- C. General and particular problems of interpretation of certain
facts obtained.
- D. Value of international comparisons.

VI. USE OF DATA OBTAINED FROM DISTRIBUTION CENSUSES

- A. Value to businessmen: Direct -Indirect
- B. International trade
- C. International bodies
- D. General internal economic benefits
- E. By-products

VII. THE PROBLEM OF SMALL COUNTRIES

- A. General picture
- B. Suggestions for improvement.
Example of other countries more progressed in the field.

VIII. STUDY OF THE IDEAL CENSUS

- A. Best method: national and international point of view.
- B. Recommendations, if any.

IX. APPENDICES

- A. A systematic list of all censuses so far carried out or pending.
An orderly treatment of the facts regarding scope, coverage, dates, methods and contents.
 - B. Lists of terms used, definitions, a noting of the differences and as much practical advice regarding methods of closing the gaps by estimation or by adding or subtracting sub-groups.
 - C. Actual tables of interesting statistics such as the numbers of shops or outlets, but given with all qualifications and reserves.
 - D. Figures of the distribution of shops in suitable turnover size ranges, for food and non-food trades, or any other suitable divisions.
6. It should be observed that the Rapporteur has decided to launch an inquiry amongst National Committees of the I.C.C. of the countries concerned, with a view to obtaining certain information which is at present lacking, and the collection of which is indispensable in order to ensure that the study of the I.C.C. be as up-to-date as possible.
7. The Questionnaire drafted for that purpose by Mr. Nicolopoulos is appended to the present report.

DISTRIBUTION CENSUSES QUESTIONNAIRE

1. (a) Has your Government ever conducted a Distribution Census?
(b) When was the first Distribution Census conducted?
(c) What are the time intervals at which the Distribution Census is conducted?
(d) Is the Distribution Census conducted the same year as the Population Census?
(e) If not, how much later?
(f) Have any efforts been made in your country to undertake a census of distribution within the scope of a general census of population and (or) of economic activities? What methods have been used (indicate sections of the general census questionnaire which were used to collect data on distribution)? Mention the results obtained.
2. (a) When was the last Distribution Census conducted?
(b) When is the next Distribution Census going to be conducted?
3. (a) What is the agency that conducts the Distribution Census?
(b) Are the data and statistical information obtained analysed and compiled by the same agency or are they referred to another government body?
(c) What is the normal lapse of time between the start of the Census and the publication of the final results?
4. (a) Does your Government make any effort to impress upon the public the importance of the Distribution Census, prior to undertaking such a Census?
If so please describe the campaign briefly.
(b) Is the government assisted by any other group or agency in this effort?
If so, which and to what extent?
5. Do business organizations and trade associations in your country take a direct interest in the Distribution Census? If so please describe in detail the extent of their interest and assistance.

6. Is the interest of these business organizations and trade associations limited to the actual period before the Census begins or does it extend to all periods as a form of continuous education of the public for stressing the necessity and importance of such a Census?
If the latter is the case, please describe the process:
7. (a) Do you find that those canvassed for information respond gladly and give accurate information or do you find a growing resentment against the procedure?
(b) Does the national press assist the authorities in conducting the Census?
(c) What positive steps are taken to overcome the public's resistance?
8. Please give an outline of the procedure and methods used in securing the statistical data and information for the Census. (For answering this question please see table of contents attached at the end, under Part III). (I)
9. Please give in the following space any information that may be available regarding the costs involved in carrying out a Census?
10. Please give a brief outline of the activities covered by the last Distribution Census. In cases where copies of the last Distribution Census results are available please forward with the answer to this questionnaire. In cases where no such results are as yet available please give details on the information that the Distribution Census is designed to collect:
11. Apart from the general benefits derived from a Distribution Census are there any indirect benefits or by-products received by using the collected data?
12. Are there any points or particular aspects of the Distribution Census in your country that this questionnaire or the table of contents does not take into consideration? If so, will you please outline them?
13. In case additional information is required who is the appropriate person or persons to contact in your country?
(I) Please attach to your answer copies of forms or questionnaires circulated or any other information that may be of assistance.