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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND  
SOUTHERN AFRICA



**Workshop on the updated and new recommendations  
for International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS 2010)  
and their implementation in countries of the Sub-Saharan region,  
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Country Note

**Uganda**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) is responsible for collection, compiling, analyzing and publishing official statistics in Uganda. The External Trade Statistics Unit under the Directorate of Macroeconomic Statistics compiles analyses and publishes external trade statistics. Until recently, coverage has been limited to trade in goods. The Bureau will soon commence on compiling trade in service statistics.

Disaggregated data on international flows serves a variety of needs. Therefore, reliable and timely data on external trade are vital for national and regional policy formulation, planning and regional integration among states. International trade statistics is an important component of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) a key indicator of the economy. More so, trade data provides an input to Balance of Payments, which measure production of goods and services in the country.

## **2.0 NATIONAL PRACTICES OF COMPILING INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS IN UGANDA**

### **2.1 Data sources**

The Customs Department of the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) is the principle source of trade data as over 90% of external trade data are obtained from this source. The data collected is mainly on visible trade. This is collected using the Single Administrative Document (SAD) through the Direct Trade Input (DTI) Centres using the ASYCUDA++ system by clearing agents on behalf of the importers and exporters. Also Form88 (F88) is used to capture imports of small goods.

However, supplementary sources are used to ensure complete coverage. This is because not all transactions are subject to customs surveillance and control.

In Uganda, a number of Authorities and Organizations were established to promote the production and sales of traditional cash crops. These organizations provide reliable and timely data, which are sometimes not collected by the Customs department. These include Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), Uganda Tea Authority (UTA), Cotton Development Organization (CDO) , British American Tobacco Uganda Limited (BATU), Kasese Cobalt Company Limited (KCCL) and Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UETCL).

In addition, the Informal Cross Border Survey (ICBT) has since 2004 been used as an addition source of external trade statistics that is not recorded by customs. It is worth noting that a lot of data flows have been observed and data collected through this survey approach.

All the data collected from the above merged into one national file for imports and exports.

## **2.2 Uganda's Trade System of compiling International Trade Statistics**

Of the two types of trade systems used in compiling international trade statistics, the general trade system is used in Uganda.

## **2.3 Commodity Classification**

The Uganda Revenue Authority uses the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System Harmonized System (HS) is to collection external trade data. In the same way the Bureau uses the HS (2007) as well as the SITC for data compilation and dissemination of external trade statistics. In additions national classification of exports is used to disseminate export statistics categorized as Traditional and Non-Traditional exports.

## **2.4 Valuation**

The Uganda Revenue Authority records Imports at CIF prices whereas, exports at FOB prices. Therefore, all the import and export statistics disseminated are based on the two valuation types respectively.

## **3.0 DATA PROCESSING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION**

Data processing is done using a number of soft wares that exist at UBOS like, Dbase, Access, Excel and Eurotrace.

Traditionally, data analysis for trade statistics has been in form of growth rates, aggregates by SITC classifications and geographical aggregates presented in tabular form.

The dissemination of International Merchandise Trade Statistics is done quarterly And annually in the following publications: Trade Bulletin, Statistical Abstract, Key Economic Indicators, Background to the Budget and UBOS Web Site

However, data on monthly basis is available at the various detailed levels and analysis.

## **4.0 Challenges Associated with external trade data**

### **4.1 Inaccurate recording**

The fact that exports are non-revenue generating, little emphasis is placed on the accurate and complete recording. Therefore, exports in most case are under recorded leaving a lot of data gaps. Also, Compilation of trade statistics from the DTIs suffers from incompleteness, incorrect quantity, and enormous value which give rise to errors in unit prices as committed by the clearing agents on behalf of importers and exports. This consumes a lot of time during data validation and analysis before production of final figures.

#### **4.2 Unrecorded cross border trade**

There is a lot of informal cross border transactions that take place between Uganda and her neighbours which are largely unrecorded. This is evidenced by the huge volumes recorded through the Informal Cross Border Survey that has been carried out by UBOS and BOU since 2004.

#### **4.3 Wrong classification**

Erroneous classification of commodities by clearing agents during declaration. This has been aggravated by the variation in tax regimes across countries and regions hence some items attracting more taxes than others and automation of customs systems.

With the automation of data captured, this is like to customs officials for purposes of tax evasion or may be done for restricted commodities. Despite these deficiencies, the series for International flow of merchandise have been extensively used in the estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), revision of tariffs, and trade negotiations in Uganda.

#### **4.4 Less detailed administrative data**

Administrative records from Authorities and organizations that produce data used to enrich external trade statistics are a good source of statistic. However, these produce data according to their needs and in many cases leave out some required information to fully integrate this data into the national data system.

#### **4.5 Incomplete correlations between Hscode and SITC**

This has always been a problem when ever new commodity nomenclatures are produced. It takes time to harmonize these relationship yet countries are required to produce statistics basing on them as new versions are release.