Survey on Country Practices in the Compilation of External Trade Indices

United Nations Statistics Division

Trade Statistics Branch

Objectives

- **To present the 2014 (second) round of the "Survey on Country Practices in the Compilation of External Trade Indices"**

- **To receive feedback on the questionnaire**

Background

- **At its 29th session in 1997, the Statistical Commission decided that collecting information on national practices about trade indices was a priority**

- **In response, UNSD collected information from member states and validated them in the next few years**

- **The results were published in a technical report entitled "National Practices in the Compilation and Dissemination of External Trade Index Numbers" in 2005**

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradekb/Knowledgebase/National-Practices-in-Compilation-and-Dissemination-of-External-Trade-Index-Numbers

ALBANIA

1. Index number series produced

Quarterly and annual unit value indices and volume index numbers of imports and exports:

- By section and chapter of HS
- By total

2. Source of information

Customs records

3. Index calculation methods

Unit value: Paasche

Volume: Laspeyres

4. Limitations of indices, problems encountered and other methodological observations specific to the country

Limitation:

- Indices are not seasonally adjusted. Price trends for commodities with seasonal patterns may therefore require a longer time-span for proper analysis.

Problems:

- Lack of trained personnel
- Treatment of extreme unit value relatives and definition of upper and lower limits of acceptable price relatives
- Determining whether or not a tariff number is representative

5. Release dates

Quarterly data are released on the twentieth day of the second month of the quarter following the reference quarter, except in the case of the fourth quarter. Fourth quarter and annual data are released on 15 March of the following year.

6. Revision policy

Quarterly and monthly data for the year are finalized in June of the following year.

7. Dissemination

Indices are used internally for the national accounts sector of the Institute of Statistics of Albania. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Ministry of Finance of Albania and the Bank of Albania also receive the index number data.

Objective of the second round

- **Update available knowledge with information on the current national practices**
- **Identify current issues, needs faced by NSSs in the compilation of trade indices**
- **Views of the NSSs on the future perspectives.**

Who are the respondents

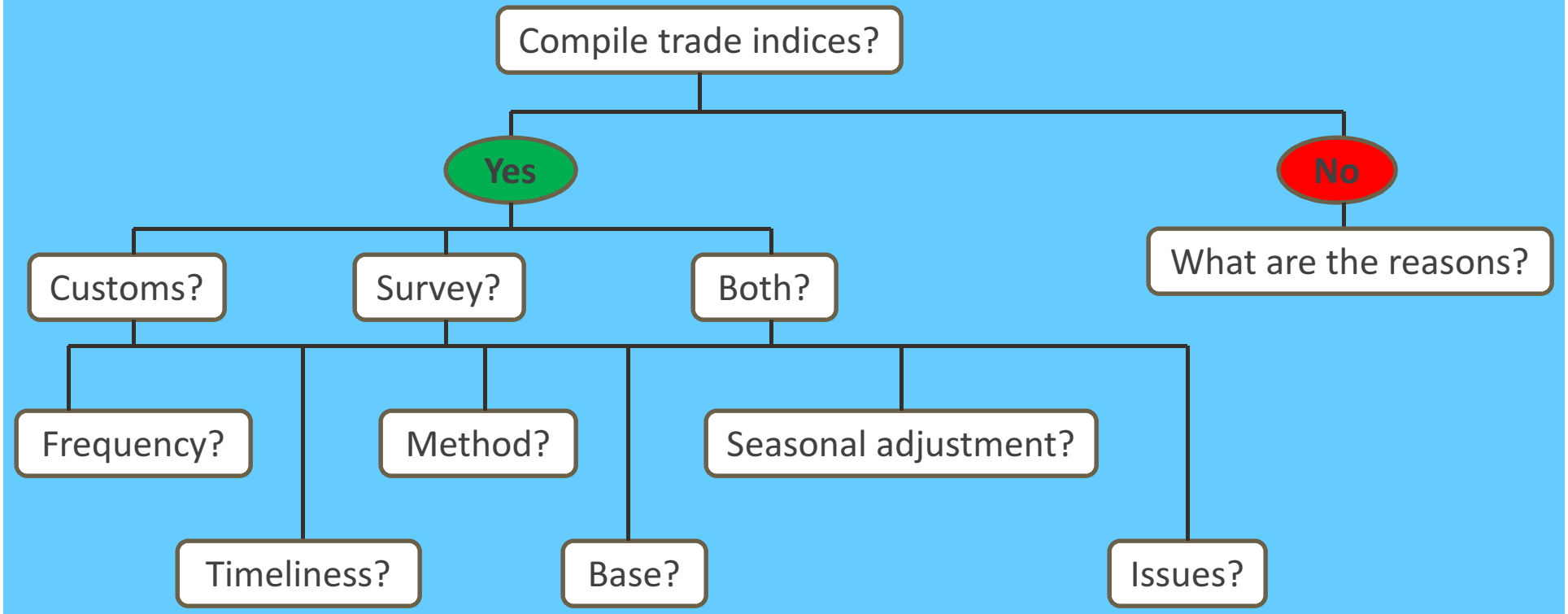
- **Questionnaire will be sent to whichever national agency is responsible for compiling Intl Merchandise Trade Statistics**

- **Responding agency is strongly encouraged to consult with other parts of the NSS if they are involved**

Overview of the Questionnaire

- **Online questionnaire using Survey Monkey**
- **39 questions in total including contact information questions**
- **34 substantive questions**
- **Depending on national practice, a respondent will have to answer between 12 (if no trade indices) to 26 questions**
- **Mix of structured (check-box) and unstructured (text-box) questions**

Structure of the Questionnaire



Overview of the Questionnaire

- **General questions:**
  - ✓ ***Main uses of trade indices***
  - ✓ ***Main users of trade indices***
  - ✓ ***Coordination***
  - ✓ ***Dissemination***
  - ✓ ***Quality reporting framework***
  - ✓ ***Software used***
  - ✓ ***Analytic product***
  - ✓ ***Needs***

Substantive question: No Indices

If your office does NOT compile international merchandise trade indices:

7. What are the major factors preventing the compilation of international merchandise trade indices? (Please choose all the applicable answers):

- [ ] No need or no priority
- [ ] Lack of the necessary basic data
- [ ] Lack of access to the necessary basic data
- [ ] Human resources constraints
- [ ] IT resources constraints
- [ ] Other (please specify):

Substantive question: Frequency

9. Please specify the kind and frequency of the international merchandise trade indices that are compiled by your office (Please select all the answers applicable):

	Monthly series	Quarterly series	Annual series	Not applicable
Volume indices	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unit-value indices	☐	☐	☐	☐
Price indices	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hybrid unit-value/price indices	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional comments and remarks:

Substantive question: Timeliness

10. Regarding the timeliness in the dissemination of trade indices: Please indicate the number of days elapsed between the end of the reference period and the date of publication:

Monthly trade indices:	
Quarterly trade indices:	
Annual trade indices:	

Substantive question: Method

11. What types of index formulas are used in the compilation of international merchandise trade indices that are compiled by your office? (Please select all the answers applicable):

	Fischer	Laspeyres	Paasche	Other*	Not applicable
Volume indices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unit-value indices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Price indices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hybrid unit-value/price indices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

* Please specify:

Substantive question: Base year

12. What kind of base-year approach is used for the compilation of time series of international merchandise trade indices? (Please select all the answers applicable):

	Fixed base year*	Chained base year	Both	Not applicable
Volume indices	○	○	○	○
Unit-value indices	○	○	○	○
Price indices	○	○	○	○
Hybrid unit-value/price indices	○	○	○	○

* Please specify the base year(s) currently in use, and how often the base year is usually updated

Substantive question: Seasonality

13. In respect to seasonality, what type of time series of international merchandise trade indices do you compile? (Please select all the answers applicable):

	Not seasonally adjusted	Seasonally adjusted*	Both	Not applicable
Volume indices	○	○	○	○
Unit-value indices	○	○	○	○
Price indices	○	○	○	○
Hybrid unit-value/price indices	○	○	○	○

* Please specify the method(s) used for seasonal adjustment

Substantive question: Survey

19. In your view, how important/difficult are the following issues regarding the compilation of price indices of based on survey data? (Please choose all the applicable answers):

	Very important / difficult	Important / difficult	Somewhat important / difficult	Not important / difficult	Not applicable
Lack of a representative survey frame	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of a representative basket of products	○	○	○	○	○
Low response rate	○	○	○	○	○
Breaks in time series due to replacement of products	○	○	○	○	○
High cost of survey operation	○	○	○	○	○

Please specify any other issues deemed to be very important / difficult in the compilation of price indices of international merchandise trade:

Substantive question: Customs

25. In your view, how important/difficult are the following issues regarding the compilation of unit value indices of based on customs records? (Please choose all the applicable answers):

	Very important / difficult	Important / difficult	Somewhat important / difficult	Not important / difficult	Not applicable
Limited availability and/or reliability of quantity data	○	○	○	○	○
Heterogeneity of products classified under the same commodity description	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of timeliness of customs data	○	○	○	○	○
High volatility in time series of unit values	○	○	○	○	○

Please specify any other issues deemed to be very important / difficult in the compilation of unit value indices of international merchandise trade:

Substantive question: Uses

28. What are the main uses of trade indices in your country? (Please choose all the applicable answers):

- [ ] For the production of national accounts (estimation of macro-economic aggregates in constant prices)
- [ ] For the compilation of other prices indices (CPI, PPI etc..)
- [ ] Calculation of terms of trade indices
- [ ] Informing policy makers for monetary and fiscal policy
- [ ] Input in macro-economic research (obtaining SUTs in constant prices, general macro-economic forecasting and model-building, analyses of balance of payments)
- [ ] Input in micro-economic research (transmission of inflation, studies that serve tariff-policy discussions)

Other (please explain)

Substantive question: Users

29. Who are the main users of trade indices? (Please choose all the applicable answers):

- [ ] Public policy economists
- [ ] Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Finance/Economy, Central Bank etc...
- [ ] Market analysts
- [ ] Business people adjusting contract payments
- [ ] Research institutions and academia
- [ ] International organizations

Other (please specify)

Substantive question: TA needs

36. How useful is for your country the provision of the following types of support for the compilation of international merchandise trade indices? Please rate from "Very useful" to "Not useful".

	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful
Description of compilation practices in other countries	○	○	○	○
Description of additional best practices	○	○	○	○
Provision of IT tools (e.g., software packages) for index calculation	○	○	○	○
Practical compilation guidelines (in addition to what is available)	○	○	○	○
Training courses and workshops	○	○	○	○
eLearning materials	○	○	○	○
Technical assistance missions	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify):

Substantive questions

- **Questions on future developments:**
  - **Do you see any developments that could influence the calculation of trade indices in your country?**
  - **Do you think micro-data linking of trade and business statistics will become relevant for the calculation of external trade indices?**
  - **Do you expect any changes regarding the calculation of trade indices in your country?**

Discussion points

- **Is the questionnaire adequately designed to achieve its purpose?**
- **Should we broaden/modify the scope of the survey?**
- **Should we rather make it more focused?**
- **Do we need to include more questions?**
- **Do we need to exclude any question?**
- **Are the categories/potential responses adequate?**
- **Other ideas?**

Thank you

Questions are welcome