Country Experience: Uganda: Informal Cross Border Trade Surveys (ch. 4)

Background. Uganda conducts monthly Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) Surveys to collect information on unrecorded trade transactions in goods with its neighbours. The baseline study carried out in 2003 revealed that informal trade was significant and involved both agricultural and industrial products. Therefore, the exclusion of informal trade in the compilation of merchandise trade statistics had understated the levels of intra-Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)/East African Community (EAC) trade and the overall international merchandise trade statistics in the balance-of-payments goods account.

Scope of the survey. Currently, 20 customs stations and 4 bus terminals where informal trade flows were found to be significant are being monitored on a regular basis. The selection of these stations was based on the volume of informal trade being transacted, availability of supporting Government institutions (e.g. customs offices, immigration and police), security and availability of good infrastructure among others. In conducting the Informal Cross Border Trade Survey (ICBT), the general trade system approach is used. During data collection, the following transactions are recorded as informal trade in merchandise: (a) goods not declared to customs authorities and, whether in small or large quantities, carried on vehicles, bicycles, the head, and wheelchairs; (b) goods partially declared to customs authorities, which could be identified and quantified by traders and data collectors. The goods excluded in the Survey recording are those in transit, and goods properly declared to customs authorities.

Data compilation. The direct observation technique used in collecting data entails the strategic positioning of enumerators at border posts to record all merchandise entering or leaving the country by observation. All traded goods that are not recorded by customs authorities are captured, at a point of the crossing of the customs stations in the counter books. Prices of these commodities are collected at the border on a daily basis to provide estimates for FOB and CIF values for exports and imports respectively. The data-collection instruments used include the following: the field instruction manual, counter books, summary form A, calculators, lists of units of measures and a weighing scale among others. The information collected is summarized in summary form A on the following variables: customs station, commodity name, quantity, price, unit of measure, country of origin/destination, mode of transport, date and day of the week. The data are processed and identified by international commodity codes and nomenclature before they are merged with customs data. Since the data-collection activities cover a period of two weeks in a month, estimates for entire months are derived using an uprating model.