Methodology for compilation of Merchandise Trade Statistics

1. Concepts and definitions

External Merchandise Trade Statistics are compiled in compliance with the United Nations Statistical recommendations. All goods adding to the material resources of the country by entering the economic territory are captured as imports and all goods subtracting from the material resources of the country by leaving the economic territory are considered as exports.

Trade figures are compiled according to the **General Trade System** as recommended by the United Nations (UN). Using the national boundary as the statistical frontier, the General Trade System is a record of all goods entering (imports) and leaving the country (exports).

2. Scope

2.1 Scope of the data

External Merchandise Trade Statistics cover the following:

- **Imports** include goods brought in directly for domestic consumption plus goods imported into customs bonded warehouses.

- **Exports** cover domestic exports and re-exports which include re-exports from customs bonded warehouses. **Domestic exports** are defined as goods of national origin. **Re-exports** are goods which are exported in the same condition as imported or after undergoing minor operations which leave them essentially unchanged.

- **Ships stores and bunkers**, which consist of jet fuel and victuals supplied to foreign vessels and aircraft, are included in total exports and are shown separately.

- Trade by parcel post is also included in imports and exports.

- Activities of the Freeport are also included

- Temporary imports of equipment and machinery for a period exceeding one year are also
included in External Merchandise trade statistics.
- All goods in transit are excluded.

2.2 Exceptions to coverage

All items on bills of entries are taken into consideration with the following exception:

A. Imports

(i) Imports of a value not exceeding Rs 1,000
(ii) Transshipment
(iii) Re-warehousing
(iv) Returned goods, postage stamps, bank notes and coins
(v) Empty containers
(vi) Personal effects
(vii) Goods imported by duty free shops
(viii) Fish and other sea products landed in Mauritius from High Seas by
      Mauritian Vessels
(ix) Goods returning after repairs abroad

B. Exports

(i) All exports of a value not exceeding Rs 1,000
(ii) Returned goods
(iii) Postage stamps, bank notes and coins
(iv) Empty containers
(v) Goods sent for repairs abroad
(vi) Personal effects
(vii) Local sales and transfers

Special inbuilt programs allow the exclusion of these items before production of tables. The Customs Procedure Code (CPC) which indicates the status of a commodity with respect to the Customs and fiscal regulations help also to determine whether the transaction is to be included or not.

Customized list of CPCs allows the production of tables by the General and Special Trade for the compilation of External Merchandise External Merchandise Trade Statistics and National Accounts Statistics respectively. All goods in transit are recorded in Special Customs Procedure Code (CPC) and are excluded.
2.3 Unrecorded activity

Trade in illegal goods (drugs and narcotics) are excluded.

3. Classification/Sectorization

i) Commodity Classification

External Merchandise Trade Statistics are compiled as per U.N concepts and definitions of merchandise trade. The commodities are classified according to the Harmonised Nomenclature (HS 2017) and Standard International Trade Classifications Rev 4 (SITC Rev 4)

Tables are disseminated in SITC for economic analysis purposes.

ii) Partner country

For statistical purposes, imports are classified by country of origin, i.e. the country in which the goods have been produced or manufactured.

Exports are classified by country of destination, i.e. country known at the time of dispatch to be the final country where goods will be delivered.

4. Basis for recording

4.1 Valuation

i) Transaction valuation – Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF) and Free On Board (FOB) valuation

All imports transactions are valued at C.I.F basis which is the value in the market at the Customs frontier of a country of her imports of merchandise, including all charges for transporting and insuring the goods from the country of exports but excluding the cost of unloading from the ship, aircraft etc. unless it is borne by the carrier.

Exports transactions on the other hand are valued on a F.O.B basis which is the value in the market at the Customs frontier of exports of merchandise including all cost of transporting the goods to the Customs frontier, export duties and the cost of loading the goods on to the carrier unless the latter cost is borne by the carrier.
ii) Pricing

All imports and exports transactions are priced in Mauritian Rupees. Every week the Customs notify the Trade Unit of the effective exchange rates. The exchange rate for a fixed period of the week is used for all transactions carried out during the following week.

iii) Quantity measurement

The unit of measurement is the net weight in kilogram and the supplementary units (metre, litre, etc.) are also captured on the bills of entry and produced in the tables.

4.2 Recording basis

In Mauritius, data capture and processing of the bills of entries are under the responsibility of the Customs Department of the Mauritius Revenue Authority. Each month bills of entry are lodged electronically through the online system and are processed by the Customs & Excise department using the Customs Management System. The customs declarations are extracted from the Customs database and sent on CD three to five days after the reference month to the External Trade Statistics Unit.

5. Accuracy and reliability

5.1 Source data collection programs

The External Trade Unit of Statistics Mauritius (SM) of the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development is responsible for the compilation, processing and dissemination of External Merchandise Trade Statistics from trade declarations captured by the Customs Department and supplemented by data from other Government organisations.

5.2 Source data definitions, scope, classifications, valuation, and time of recording

i) Customs declarations

All goods entering and leaving the economic territory, including transactions of the Freeport, whether by air or by sea are subject to a customs declaration and are captured by the Customs Management System at the time of lodgment.
ii) Supplementary sources

Data captured at customs on certain commodities imported by Government controlled bodies or, on commodities which are exempted, need to be verified against supplementary data from the following organizations / parastatal bodies:

(i) The State Trading Corporation for government import of petroleum products, rice, flour and cement and for supply of jet fuel to aircraft.
(ii) The Mauritius Sugar Syndicate for provisional figures on exports of sugar.
(iii) The Mauritius Ports Authority and Air Mauritius for import and re-export of marine vessels and spare parts of aircraft.

5.3 Source data timeliness

The monthly External Merchandise Trade Statistics is released on the website within six to seven weeks after the end of the reference month. The timeliness is in conformity with that prescribed for Special Data Dissemination Standards (SDDS).

5.4 Source data assessment

Reliability of data

Data Editing

The External Trade Statistics Unit makes an elaborate exercise at editing stage to ensure the quality and reliability of trade data. There are also in-built validation checks in the computer system for e.g. customs procedure codes are checked against country, currency and mode of transport. An appropriate balance between accuracy and timeliness is targeted.

Prior to publication, the data are analyzed and if there are discrepancies in the figures, the traders are queried via phone and data corrections are made accordingly.

Unusual movements in trade are investigated. If they are genuine, explanations are given and no adjustments are made.
6. Statistical techniques

6.1 Source data statistical techniques

**Processing and Compilation**

Processing is done in-house at SM using open source software with Java Programming language. The in-house processing has improved the quality of trade data since basic consistency checks have been incorporated into the system. There has also been an improvement in the timeliness of data dissemination following the implementation of the in-house system.

6.2 Other statistical procedures

**Balance of payments and National Accounts recording**

The following records are kept for Balance of Payments purposes although they are not included in External Trade Statistics:

- Goods sent for repairs,
- Goods lost or destroyed
- Goods acquired through operational lease
- Goods imported from the Freeport into consumption are compiled for national accounts purposes.

Besides the compilation of External Merchandise Trade Statistics, the Unit also makes short term forecasts of external trade and compiles trade indices i.e. both export and import price indices on a quarterly basis.
7. Data validation

7.1 Validation of intermediate results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality assurance for External Trade Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-operation between Customs and Statistics Office</strong></td>
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</table>

To ensure the production and dissemination of reliable and timely External Merchandise Trade Statistics a very close cooperation and coordination is maintained with the Customs Department especially the IT Unit.

7.2 Assessment of intermediate data

- While working monthly figures unusual movements in the trade figures by commodity or country are investigated regularly.
- Documentations on methodology are annexed to publications.
- SM regularly participates in statistical meetings and seminars organized by international and regional organizations and by professional bodies.

8. Revision studies

8.1 Revision studies and analyses

- Provisional data are released quarterly with a time lag of 3 months and are finalized after 9 months.
- Users are informed of all revisions made to data by the use of footnotes in the tables published. Documentation on revision to methodology is annexed to publications. Preliminary and revised data are identified by the use of footnotes.
- Methodology, source data, and statistical techniques are annexed to the publications. Users are informed of major changes introduced in methodology, sources, and statistical techniques.
9. Data sharing and coordination

Data sharing and coordination among data producing agencies

Monthly data (at micro level) after first step validation are also supplied to the Ministry of Industry for producing additional reports for their internal use.

Data on External Merchandise Trade are submitted to the Bank of Mauritius (BoM) for the compilation of BoP statistics. Consequently, trade in services are compiled by BoM and submitted to SM for use in national accounts aggregates

Users of trade statistics

The main users are:

(i) Government bodies
(ii) International and Economic Organizations like African Union Commission, COMESA, SADC, etc.
(iii) Researchers
(iv) Students
(v) Private Organisations
(vi) Bank of Mauritius
(vii) Consultants
(viii) Embassies
(ix) Investors
10. Data Dissemination

10.1 Statistical presentation

A Publication Programme is available on SM website at the very beginning of the year indicating the period covered and date of release of Economic and Social Indicators.

Monthly: 7 weeks after reference month
Quarterly: 3 months after reference month
Yearly : 9 months after reference year

External Merchandise Trade Statistics are available in the following publications:

**Annual publications**

- An annual Digest of External Merchandise Trade Statistics

**Note:** The annual Digest of External Merchandise Trade Statistics will be posted on SM website and henceforth, hardcopies will not be published.

**Quarterly publications**

- A quarterly Economic and Social Indicator on External Trade which comprise of:
  (i) Imports/exports by country
  (ii) Trade with International or Regional Organisations such as ACP, SADC, COMESA etc.
  (iii) Imports/exports by commodity/section

- A quarterly Economic and Social Indicator on Import and Export Price Indices

**Other publications**

- Detailed trade data by HS/country
- Quarterly trade series including the trade balance are posted on SM website
- Monthly bulletin on External Trade

**Other requests**

Besides regular reports, there are on-going requests for ad-hoc information.
10.2 Dissemination media and format

Data are available in hard-copies, mainly upon request, as well as in electronic format. Requests for information are usually made by phone, fax, or e-mail (cso_trade@govmu.org).

External Merchandise Trade Statistics are also released through monthly and quarterly publications on SM website.

(http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/Pages/default.aspx).

Statistics Mauritius

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