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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
SECOND CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN STATISTICIANS  
26 JUNE, 1961, TUNIS

Item 7(c) of the Provisional Agenda

ECA PROGRAMME OF EXTERNAL TRADE STATISTICS

(Note by the Secretariat)

Introduction

1. On several occasions the need for an improvement of external trade statistics in Africa has been directly or indirectly expressed by the Economic Commission for Africa. The importance attached by the Commission to such matters as the terms of trade of African countries, the impact of European groupings on African trade, et cetera, is reflected in a number of resolutions adopted at the last two sessions (see in particular resolutions Nos. 25, 28, 29 and 30 in document E/CN.14/STAT/L.9). In consequence, the following recommendation was made at the Commission's third session:

"In view of the importance of the subject of international and intra-African trade, the Commission urged that the attention of the Second Conference of African Statisticians and of the statistical offices of all African countries should be directed to improving the standards of comparability of African trade statistics and organizing an improved service of trade statistics to the Secretariat."

2. It may also be recalled that the first Conference of African Statisticians gave due recognition to the importance of trade statistics in the statistical survey of Africa by incorporating a list of tables on external trade in the basic list attached to the report (see basic list, paragraph j).

Statistical appendix to the Economic Bulletin for Africa

3. In order to meet, on a provisional basis, the needs of the

Commission's economic analysts and other potential users of statistics, the Secretariat has published a number of trade tables in the statistical appendix to the first Economic Bulletin for Africa, January 1961. More up to date trade statistics are presented to the Conference in the statistical appendix intended for the June issue of the Bulletin.

4. The main sources for the trade statistics that have hitherto been compiled by the Secretariat, are the United Nations' publications: Statistical Yearbook, Yearbook of International Trade Statistics and Monthly Bulletin of Statistics; but some figures have also been taken from national publications.

#### Problems of comparability

5. It appears from the international and national publications and from reports submitted to the Secretariat by statistical advisers who have visited a number of African countries, that the concepts and definitions used by the African countries and territories in their external trade statistics, vary considerably from one group of countries to another. This also applies to the coverage of the statistics, the commodity classification and the geographical classification. In the present situation, therefore, complete and comparable statistics for all the African countries and territories are not available. It should, however, be the aim of the countries and territories, in collaboration with the Secretariat, to improve the accuracy and comparability of their statistics. This could be attained inter alia by adopting international standards.

6. The Secretariat is of the opinion that the ways and means for improving and standardizing of African trade statistics, on account of the many technical problems involved, should not be discussed at the Conference. It is proposed that these questions be submitted in the very near future to a working group of experts to be appointed by the Conference. A special paper (E/CN.14/STAT/L.22) is submitted to the Conference in this respect.

ECA programme of processing and publication

7. The Secretariat is aware that the improvement of the accuracy and comparability of African trade statistics is a long-term process which will require considerable energy and attention over a number of years. At the same time, great pressure is being exerted by the Commission on the research workers of the Secretariat, especially, as can be seen from the above mentioned resolutions, in the field of intra-African trade and trade relations of Africa with European countries.

8. In order to comply with these pressing requests, the Executive Secretary proposes to initiate immediately a wide programme of processing and publication of African trade statistics for which the full cooperation of members of the Conference will be sought. This, it is realised, will impose a great burden on the statisticians of the Secretariat who, in cooperation with countries, will have to convert the data as expressed in national nomenclatures and units, into uniform nomenclatures and units. This will be done by means of the mechanical IBM-unit which is to be established at ECA Headquarters. Present plans imply that around 30% of the capacity of these machines will be used for the processing of trade data, it being understood that 70% of the capacity should be left for assistance and demonstration purposes.

9. Annex I to this paper outlines the proposed programme of processing and publication. This would include two current series and one retrospective handbook.

10. Series A would be published every two months and would mainly attempt to give as quickly as possible an indication of the trends of the main intra-African trade flows and trade between African countries and the rest of the world. This series would be based on monthly country reports showing the breakdowns of total value of imports and exports by origin and destination.

11. Series B would eventually be published on a quarterly basis and is intended to throw light upon the structural changes in African trade. It will basically contain a breakdown of imports by sections, divisions

and groups of the SITC, Revised, and a breakdown of exports by sections of the SITC, Revised, and by important commodities. At the same time imports and exports will be broken down by areas of origin/destination. The series will also contain quantum and price indexes for exports computed on the basis of data for the most important African export products. The much more complicated problem of computing indexes for imports will be considered later. Each issue of the series will comprise a number of booklets, each of which will contain data for a group of three or four African countries.

12. The handbook on retrospective data will aim at giving as complete data as possible for the period 1950-1959.

#### Collection of basic data

13. Most of the data required for the handbook will be derived from existing publications. Precise requirements for current statistics are given in annex II to this paper and can be summarized as follows:

14. For Series A, countries will be requested to submit on a monthly basis a breakdown of the total value of imports and exports by countries of origin/destination. This, it is hoped, can be produced by all reporting countries within 60 days after the end of the reference period.

15. For Series B, countries will be requested to submit on a quarterly basis detailed breakdowns of imports and exports by commodities and by origin/destination. Since most African countries have not yet adopted the SITC, Revised, the breakdown by commodities will have to be as detailed as possible so as to enable the Secretariat to convert the data to the SITC, Revised. In practice, what will be required from countries equipped with mechanical units, should mainly be data in the form of machine runs (lists) giving cumulative figures for 3, 6, 9 and 12 months. This, it is believed, can be produced by the reporting countries within four months after the end of each reference period.

1962 programme of processing

16. According to present plans the first issue of Series A would be published around June 1962 and would contain monthly figures for 1961 and for January and February 1962.

17. The first issue of Series B, on the other hand, will relate to the whole year 1960 and will be followed by one or two issues relating to 1961. Detailed indications as to data required and suggested deadlines are contained in annex II.

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ANNEX I

ECA PROGRAMME OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS

Part I

Current Statistics

1. The Secretariat intends to publish current statistics on external trade on a uniform basis for all African countries and territories from which data are available.

2. The Secretariat proposes to publish two statistical series: one giving data for total trade by origin and destination, and another showing at the same time the breakdowns by commodities or groups of commodities and origin/destination. The last series will also contain indices of quantity and unit value for exports.

Series A. Total trade by origin/destination

3. This series is intended to give as quickly as possible an indication of the main current changes in intra-African trade and the trade between African countries and the rest of the world.

4. The statistics covered by the series will be worked out for each month, but it may be preferable to publish data every two months to start with.

5. For each reporting country and territory the total value of imports/exports in thousand US dollars will be specified by area and country of origin/destination. A draft list of areas and countries will be discussed by the working group of experts on external trade statistics (See document E/CN.14/STAT/L.22).

Series B. Trade by commodities and origin/destination

6. This series is intended to throw light upon the structural changes in African trade.

7. As it is impossible to evaluate correctly in advance the amount of work which this series will represent, it seems premature at this stage to fix the periodicity of the series. In order to take account of the seasonal variations, the series should be worked out on a quarterly basis. It seems, however, impossible to start quarterly series before those relating to the year 1962. It is, therefore, the Secretariat's proposal that for the year 1960 only total annual figures should be worked out. On the basis of experience it could then be decided whether statistics for 1961 should be worked out for each quarter, for each half of the year or for the whole year.

8. In view of the time lag which must be expected between the arrivals of data from the reporting countries, the best way to present the data might be to publish a series of booklets each containing statistics for a group of three or four countries.

9. For each reporting country or territory the series will contain a breakdown of the value of imports and exports in thousands of US dollars by commodities or groups of commodities cross-classified with areas of origin for imports and areas of destination for exports.

10. In order to rationalize the processing and at the same time to facilitate the representation of the results, the number of areas should not exceed 13. The breakdown by areas could then be obtained by a single run of the cards.

11. On account of the great difference in structure of imports and exports of the African countries, different commodity breakdowns should be used for imports and exports.

12. For imports trade will be analysed successively by sections, divisions and groups of the Standard International Trade Classification, Revised (SITC, Rev.).

13. For exports the breakdowns will be sections according to the SITC, Rev., supplemented by a list of important commodities. For these commodities data will be given both in value and quantity.

Series B. Supplementary tables

14. The main table for imports will be supplemented by a table showing the imports of certain indicative commodities. This type of information might be useful for the analysts in appreciating the degree of economic development. Figures will be given both in value and quantity, but without geographical breakdown.

15. The value of the series would increase if the capacity of the mechanical unit should prove sufficient to allow a regrouping of the data after the tables for the individual countries have been worked out. This regrouping could result in a synoptic table covering all reporting countries. The geographical breakdown in the columns ought to be the same as in the country tables, while the lines could give totals for each commodity or group of commodities subdivided by reporting countries.

16. To allow for a more detailed analysis of intra-African trade the Secretariat will try to work out once a year special tables based on import data. By means of the cards for SITC-groups by country of origin, matrix tables could be worked out giving for each group a cross-classification by reporting countries and countries of origin.

17. In paragraph 13 it is mentioned that the export statistics will comprise data on value and quantity for important commodities. On the basis of these data quantum and unit value indices could be computed for those commodities. For many countries the value of the commodities included will cover most of the total export value. The indices should, therefore, give a fairly good indication of the volume and price changes in the total export trade of these countries.



Part II

Handbook on external trade statistics

18. The capacity of the mechanical unit of the ECA will probably not permit of elaboration of statistics for previous years parallel to current statistics. The Secretariat is of the opinion that current statistics should be given highest priority and that statistics for past years should be worked out on a limited scale, mainly without use of mechanical equipment.

Total trade by origin/destination

19. ECA has already published, in the Economic Bulletin for Africa, statistics for the years 1950-1959 showing the total imports and exports of African countries by areas of origin/destination. This work should be repeated in order to present more detailed breakdowns in as close correspondence as possible with current statistics. Data for each year should be given.

Indices and trade by commodities

20. In some African countries the SITC has been used as a classification system since 1954. For these countries comparable data are thus available for the latest years. For other countries it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to regroup the data manually in accordance with the SITC, even on the section level. The Secretariat is, however, of the opinion that even a rather rough grouping of commodities for some countries for some of the years in the period 1950-1959 would be of interest.

21. As regards exports of the principal African commodities, ECA has already published quantity and value figures for a series of years. This work should be pursued and enlarged. If possible, data should be given for the same commodities that are comprised by the current statistics, and for each of the years 1950-1959.

22. If sufficient data are available, the Secretariat will try to compute quantum and unit value indices for the main exported commodities for some countries or group of countries for the years 1950-1959.

ANNEX IIData to be furnished by the reporting countriesQuestionnaire A (monthly): Total trade by origin/destination.

1. Coverage: Full detail of overall imports and exports by country of origin/destination, according to national classification of countries on the most detailed level (values only).

Note: Like the original SITC, the SITC, revised, only applies to merchandise trade. Countries which include gold (in all forms), in their trade statistics, are therefore asked to supply separate figures for merchandise trade and for gold.

2. Reporting period: Calendar month and cumulative year-to-date period, the first month of reference being January 1961.
3. Time lapse for replies: Within 60 days after the end of the reference period. Already available data from January 1961 and onwards should be supplied before 1 September 1961.
4. Additional information requested: National classification of countries, indicating code numbers used and coverage of statistical territories as defined by the reporting country.
5. Form of reply: Machine lists, documents that are typed or written by hand, or eventually proof prints if the national publication contains all information requested.

Questionnaire B (quarterly): Trade by commodities and by origin/destination.

6. Coverage: Imports and exports broken down by commodities and by countries of origin/destination according to national classification of countries on the most detailed level (quantities and values). As regards the classification of commodities, three modes of reporting may be used:

a) Data according to the SITC, Revised:

- i) Imports: Breakdown by groups (3 digits) and by country of origin.
- ii) Exports: Breakdown by sub-groups (4 digits) and by country of destination.

b) Data according to the original SITC:

Breakdown by items (5 digits) for imports as well as exports, and by country of origin/destination.

c) Data according to national nomenclature:

Imports and exports by the most detailed breakdowns and by country of origin/destination.

7. Reporting period: Quarterly cumulative. The first replies should cover the period January - December 1960.

8. Time-lapse for replies: Within 120 days after the end of the reference period. Data for January-December 1960 and for January-March 1961 should be sent before 1 September 1961.

9. Additional information requested:

a) For all countries: National commodity nomenclature with definition of items and indication of code numbers used.

b) For countries supplying data according to the SITC, Revised:

i) Annually: Table showing the correspondence between the national classification of commodities and the SITC, Revised,

ii) For each reference period: Total imports in quantity and value for a list of selected commodities established by the Secretariat.

c) For countries supplying data according to the original SITC: Table showing the correspondence between the national commodity classification and the original SITC.

10. Form of reply: Machine lists, eventually accompanied by corresponding punched cards or tape. The lists should comprise totals for commodities and for the whole trade, and indication of quantity unit. If different quantity units are used, the unit should be indicated for each commodity. Replies may also be sent in the form of typed lists or documents written by hand.

Sending of documents.

11. Documents and all other material relating to external trade statistics should be sent by air mail to: Chief Statistician  
Economic Commission for Africa  
P.O. Box 3001  
Addis Ababa

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12 June 1961

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
COMMISSION ECONOMIQUE POUR L'AFRIQUE

ECA PROGRAMME OF EXTERNAL TRADE STATISTICS  
PROGRAMME DE STATISTIQUE DU COMMERCE EXTERIEUR DE LA CEA

SPECIAL LIST OF IMPORTED COMMODITIES  
LISTE SPECIALE DE PRODUITS IMPORTES

Series B. Supplementary data to be furnished by countries using the SITC, Revised : Quantity and value (total without country breakdown) for imports of the following commodities :

Série B. Données supplémentaires à fournir par les pays utilisant la CTCI Révisée : Quantité et valeur (total, sans ventilation géographique) pour l'importation des produits suivants :

SITC Revised CTCI Révisée	BTN	Commodity	Produit
112-1	22.04, 22.05, 22.06	Wine	Vin
112-3	22.03	Beer	Bière
263-1	55.01 )	Raw cotton and	Coton en masse
263-2	55.02 )	cotton linters	et linters de coton
263-4	55.04	Cotton, carded or combed	Coton cardé ou peigné
332-1	27.10 B	Motor spirit	Essence pour moteurs
332-2	27.10 C	Lamp oil and white spirit	Pétrole lampant, white spirit
332-3	27.10 D)	Distillate fuel	Huiles distillées
332-4	27.10 E)	Residual fuel oil	Huiles lourde
332-5	27.10 F) 34.03 )	Lubricating oils and greases	Huiles de graissage
421-4	15.07 C	Groundnut (peanut) oil	Huile d'arachide

421-5	15.07 D	Olive oil	Huile d'olive
422-2	15.07 H	Palm oil	Huile de palme
422-4	15.07 L	Palm kernel oil	Huile de palmiste
513-6(2)	28.17 A	Caustic soda	Soude caustique
514-9(1)	28.53	Liquide air	Air liquide
554-1	34.01 )	Soaps, surface-acting	Savons, produits
554-2	34.02 )	agents and washing	organique tensio-
		preparations	actifs et prépara-
			tions pour lessives
561-1	31.02 B	Nitrogenous fertilizers	Engrais azotés
561-2	31.03 A )	Phosphatic fertilizers	Engrais phosphatés
	31.03 B )		
561-3	31.04 B	Potassic fertilizers	Engrais potassiques
632-1	44.21	Boxes, cases, crates	Caisses, caissettes, cageots
632-2	44.22	Cooperage products	Ouvrages de tonnellerie
651-3	55.05 A	Cotton yarn and thread, grey (unbleached), not mercerized	Fils de coton écrus, non mercerisés
651-4	55.05 B )	Cotton yarn and thread,	Fils de coton blanchis,
	55.06 )	bleached, dyed or mer- cerized	teints, mercerisés
656-6	62.01	Blankets, travelling rugs and coverlets	Couvertures et couvrepiéds
661-2	25-23	Cement	Ciment
732-1	87.02 A	Passenger road motor vehicles other than buses or motorcycles	Automobiles pour transport de personnes sauf autobus
732-2 )	87.01 B )	Other road motor	Véhicules
732-3 )	87.02 B )	vehicles except	utilitaires
732-4 )	87.02 C )	motorcycles	
732-5 )	87.03 )		