

FORWARD

Industrialization and the economy have become more interdependent in the Asian Pacific region since 1980. Trade transactions have accordingly become diversified and active, and the importance of commodity trade statistics as one set of basic data revealing current conditions has continued to increase. As commodity trade statistics are general customs clearance statistics and are figures recorded as exports in one country and as imports by the trading partner, these two set of statistics should essentially be consistent in the sense that the export value, incorporating international transportation and insurance fees, should conform to the corresponding import value. There are, however, many questionable statistics within trade negotiations as well, which although they should be consistent, include frequent cases in which both trading partners claim deficits. Although certain explanations for these differences have been offered, especially with regard to recent differences between Japan and the United States and Japan and Canada, concrete examinations of the realities behind these figures by direct comparison of discrepant figures from a number of countries have not been conducted. For this reason, research examining the consistency of commodity trade statistics in the APEC region was conducted by the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) in 1995, seeking an understanding of the realities of consistency and reasons for discrepancy. This report represents a portion of the results of this research. Multiple interrelated elements are involved in the factors causing inconsistency in commodity trade statistics, but the most dominant of these reasons is the issue of who is declared as the trading partner for cargo delivered via a third country. In order to clarify this, this research committee used Hong Kong

re-export trade statistical data differentiating the country of origin and destination, as Hong Kong plays an important role as an entrepot port in the APEC region, to examine its influence on consistency. This report illustrates consistency clearly through the comparison of data from exporting and importing countries, creating a matrix table which includes consistency ratios of importing country data divided by exporting country data, as well as values and ratios of re-export via Hong Kong evaluated and distributed by exports from the country of origin. This matrix table is comprised from tables of total amounts and tables of 28 commodity groups for the years from 1988 to 1993. We hope that this report offers suggestions and areas for consideration to those who use trade statistics.

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