

The roles of tax administration data in the production of official statistics in South Africa

Elizabeth Gavin*

South African Revenue Service, Pretoria, South Africa, eadam@sars.gov.za

Tax administration data has been used in South Africa for over a decade in determining the sample frame for surveys of businesses used in the production of economic statistics and ultimately for the compilation of National Accounts. There are formal agreements between the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and South Africa's agency for official statistics, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), around data flows between the institutions, enabled by changes to legislation. SARS and Stats SA discuss data requirements regularly. The modernisation of SARS's systems over the past seven years has led to significant improvements in the quality of tax administration data, as measured in terms of accuracy, completeness and the timeliness of its availability in structured, digital form, suitable for analysis. This has underpinned the annual publication since 2009 of a Tax Statistics bulletin, which is being used increasingly widely by researchers and policy makers. SARS has also in collaboration with Stats SA begun exploring the use of tax administration data to derive statistical information to complement labour market information and income statistics available from sample surveys. This is a research area of significance to policy making in South Africa, given persistently high unemployment and income inequality.

Key words: data flows, business sample frame, tax statistics, labour market statistics