**Linking Trade Statistics and Business Registers in a Developing Country Context**

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Traditionally, international trade statistics and business registers have been treated as separate statistical domains, reflecting the viewpoint of both data compilers and data users. Different data sources, methodologies and classifications complicate data linking. Despite the obvious differences, trade and business statistics have common features, starting of course with the fact that in the end it is businesses that make decisions on international trading and on other kinds of international business arrangements, such as FDI, establishing foreign affiliates and outsourcing business functions. This paper shows that linking trade and business statistics offers new insights relevant for policy making and analysis, in particular about the micro-economic foundations of competitiveness and performance of businesses, industries, and national economies in the context of globalization. While such linking exercises are currently mostly done by national statistical systems of developed countries, they can equally well be done in developing countries. Over the last year, the national statistical office of Costa Rica (INEC) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) linked Costa Rica's existing Customs-based trade statistics and its business register, which is maintained from administrative data sources, specific projects and follow-up telephone interviews. As this experience shows, new micro-level data, new statistical indicators and new insights (for instance about the international orientation of businesses and about trade by enterprise characteristics) can be gained on a continuing and routine basis through this linking procedure, which can be applied in its methods and outcomes in other developing countries.

Key words: International trade statistics, business registers, basic economic statistics, developing countries