Input-Output Analysis in Contemporary Official Statistics

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The world's economic, social and environmental systems are increasingly complex. Official statisticians are being asked to inform on new and interesting phenomena, the measurement of which does not neatly come from censuses and surveys. Some of these phenomena are not even recognised in our traditional statistical classifications. Input-output modelling can greatly assist in understanding some of these phenomena. Moreover, the accounting identities inherent in the input-output schema can be of great assistance in shaping a country's economic statistics programme, and in ensuring coherence in these statistics. But input-output analysis, with its focus on real economic activity, is not particularly useful in informing on a raft of other economic, social, and environmental phenomena of interest to official statisticians.

Herein lies the dilemma for national statistics offices: how to develop a balanced statistical programme that meets the contemporary needs of the key users. In reality, input-output statistics are relatively under-developed or non-existent in many countries. The source data demands for producing such datasets are extensive and many countries lack the skilled resources to devote to this work.

The paper explores these issues and articulates how the United Nations Statistics Division, as the central focus of the global statistical community, might best assist national statistics offices in progressing input-output work in conjunction with their core national accounts work. In this regard, the framework for the revision of the 1999 Handbook of Input-Output Compilation and Analysis will be discussed.