
Opportunities and Challenges at the turn of the Century - An Official Statistician's Perspective

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Summary. The turn of the century ushers in a host of opportunities as well as challenges to Hong Kong. Externally there are globalisation of the economy, China's accession to the WTO and the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangements (CEPA) with the Mainland. Internally the territory has to tackle issues arising from economic re-structuring and to make preparations for the ageing of the population. In tapping potentials while confronting issues arising in the years ahead, public policy formulation needs to be supported with sound and quality official statistics. As the principal producer of official statistics in the territory, the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) has been furnishing the Government and the community a comprehensive range of statistical products and services for informed decision making.

This paper outlines the official statistical programme administered by the Department with highlights on a number of recent developments in addressing the latest statistical information needs of the community. In particular, they include new statistics on growth sectors targeted in the government agenda such as the four pillar industries (financial services, logistics, tourism and professional producer services) and creative industries; in-depth statistics on trade in goods and trade in services to monitor the structural change of Hong Kong's trading sector; statistical inputs for the formulation and updating of the Population Policy; Financial Soundness Indicators for assessing the health of the financial system of the economy; statistical database on the Pearl River Delta to facilitate study on Hong Kong's economic relationship with its close Mainland neighbours; and treatment of classification issues arising from the re-location of Hong Kong's economic activities to the Mainland.

To meet the challenges of providing a world class statistical service in the midst of changing environments, the C&SD dedicates immense efforts to sustain its solid position in a number of important areas. They include maintaining a high standard of integrity and professionalism through legislative provisions and adoption of scientific methods and international standards; developing and upgrading the application of statistical techniques; data quality management; maintaining the flexibility to respond to changes by the adoption of a sound corporate planning system and a progressive human resources development policy; adoption of technology applications to improve efficiency and productivity; strengthening knowledge management to enhance the Department's ability as a learning and responsive organisation; improving

relationships with raw data suppliers and users of published data; and promoting statistical literacy so as to bring about more informed debates in the community. The paper gives a succinct account of the Department's work in these areas.

