

Chapter I. Brief History of the Statistical System in Japan

1. Start of the Modern Statistical Survey System

The statistical system in Japan began in 1869. That year, the Ministry of Budget and Taxation (*Minbu-sho*) was established, and on October 18, 1870, a proclamation of the pre-constitutional Meiji government made prefectures produce a "Table of Products by Prefecture" (*Fuken bussan hyo*).

The Table of Products by Prefecture provided statistics on agricultural, forestry and marine product output, as well as industrial product output, within each prefecture on an item-by-item basis. The responsibility for this statistical survey was transferred to the Ministry of Finance in 1871, and then to the Interior Ministry (*Naimu-sho*) in 1873. Although this survey was abolished in August 1877 in line with Interior Ministry pronouncement No. 72, the Interior Ministry revised the Table and transformed it into a new format in 1877 named the Table of Agricultural Products (*Nosan hyo*). In the area of mining and manufacturing, a survey of production volumes was initiated with the "Statistical Table of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce" (*Noshomusho tokei hyo*) (issued in 1887), utilizing the revised table format, and it was continued until 1926.

Thus, the Table of Products by Prefecture is the origin of today's industrial statistical surveys and is said to have provided the first modern production statistics in Japan. Statistics Day (October 18), which was established in 1973, commemorates the Table of Products by Prefecture. [See reference 1]

In 1871, the Office of Statistics (*Tokeishi*) was created within the Ministry of Finance as an organization responsible for statistics on taxation and family registration. In the same year, the Statistics Division (*Seihyo-ka*) was established within the Main Office of the pre-constitutional Meiji government (*Dajokan seiin*). The division compiled various reports by ministries and prefectures and prepared operational statistics that presented nationwide trends. Since then, a modern statistical survey system has been developed steadily and continually.

During World War II, however, the government viewed the compilation of statistics to be a non-urgent task. It slashed the budget for statistics and trimmed the statistical organization. Furthermore, statistical data began to be handled with strict caution for the sake of guarding wartime information, and information release was heavily controlled. As various organizations conducted surveys on their own without any consistency or control and gathered data secretly as needed, statistical surveys fell into disarray. As a result, both the truthfulness and reliability of statistical data were greatly impaired.

2. Reconstruction of the Statistical System after World War II

After the war, it was recognized that preparing accurate statistical data and establishing a national rehabilitation plan that was based on such statistical data should be undertaken urgently toward reconstructing war-ravaged Japan. Consequently, the reconstruction of the statistical organization progressed rapidly.

In May 1946, the Statistical Research Institute was created within the Cabinet Council. The Institute conducted theoretical studies to establish statistics and improve the statistical system. Based on its opinion, the Committee on Improvement of the Statistical System was created within the Cabinet in July of the same year.

In October 1946, the committee submitted its "Recommendation on the Statistical System Improvement" to the Prime Minister and indicated the direction that the statistical system reorganization and establishment was to take. This encompassed a number of issues, such as the establishment of a statistical organization including the creation of the Statistical Commission, improvement of the quality of staff and survey workers, release of statistical information, and the enactment of the Statistics Act.

When compiling this recommendation, the Committee on Improvement of the Statistical System examined the situation in major countries and concluded that the creation of dedicated statistical bureaus and divisions within individual ministries would be the most appropriate form for Japan's statistical organization and that the Statistical Commission should be created at the same time to take charge of system-wide coordination of statistics-related affairs. Following this recommendation, the Statistical Commission was created on December 28, 1946. Since then, the Commission undertook various works to develop the Japanese statistical system, including establishing statistical institutes and systems, and completed the foundation of the current main systems.

In July 1952, the Statistical Commission was divided into two organizations. One of them was the Department for Statistical Standards of the Administrative Management Agency (AMA), with the administrative function of planning basic matters to develop and enhance Japanese statistics, as well as coordinating statistical activities. The other organization was the new Statistical Commission, functioning as an advisory body. The commission, as the auxiliary organ for AMA, was mandated to respond to requests for consultation by the Minister of State for AMA, and then study and deliberate important matters, including examining statistical surveys, revising statistical standards, and coordinating and integrating statistical activities. Furthermore, the commission might submit a recommendation to the Minister of State on these matters when

necessary.

3. Transition of Statistical Standards organization from AMA to MIC

The Department for Statistical Standards of the Administrative Management Agency was changed into the Statistical Standards Bureau of the Agency in 1957 and Officer of Statistical Standards in the Administrative Management Bureau of the Agency in 1968.

In 1984, when the Management and Coordination Agency (MCA) was established for the purpose of creating a new administrative system, the Statistical Bureau were formulated by merging the former Statistical Standards Bureau of the Administrative Management Agency with the former Statistics Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office which conducted fundamental censuses and statistical surveys. Under this reorganization, the responsibilities for matters concerning statistical standards were undertaken by the Department for Statistical Standards of the Statistical Bureau, and the Statistical Commission remained as an advisory body for the Minister of State for MCA .

In the reform of the central government in 2001, the Department for Statistical Standards of the Statistical Bureau, MCA was transitioned to the Department for Statistical Standards of the Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). In 2005, when MIC was reorganized, the department was placed under the Director-General for Policy Planning on Statistical Standards to promote statistics responding appropriately to changes in the economy and society and to strengthen the function of planning policy for the statistical system or statistical administration.

4. Revision of the Statistics Act and Reform of the Statistical System

After World War II, the statistical system had been working under the legal framework of 1) the old Statistics Act (Act No.18 of 1947), which was the basic law concerning statistics, 2) the Statistical Reports Coordination Act (Act No.148 of 1952), which had the goal of reducing the burden on the Japanese people for preparing statistical reports, and improving the efficiency of administrative work, and 3) the cabinet and ministry ordinances issued on the basis of a delegation under laws or cabinet order.

As years go by, demands have emerged to respond to the changing industrial structure and survey environments, and to the increasing need for various advanced uses of statistical data.

After six years, the Statistical Reports Coordination Act was abolished and the Act was thoroughly revised to the new Statistics Act (Act No.53 of 2007) which was promulgated on May 23, 2007, and came into effect on April 1, 2009. The aim of the new Act is to shift the principle from “statistics for administration” to “statistics as information infrastructure for society” and the features of the Act can be summarized as follows:

(i) Specifies that official statistics form a critical information infrastructure in society

While the main aims of the old Act had been to ensure truthfulness of statistics, to protect the confidentiality of respondents, and to eliminate the overlapping of statistical surveys, the new Act specifies that official statistics, being assets for the people, are critical information for the people in their reasonable decision making.

(ii) Establishes “Master Plan Concerning the Development of Official Statistics” with an annual follow-up scheme.

The new Act provides that a Master Plan should be established by a cabinet decision to ensure the comprehensive and systematic development of statistics by the government as a whole.

(iii) Covers all official statistics, including processed statistics

Under the old Act, the coverage had been limited to statistics produced by statistical surveys. The new Act aims to promote systematic development of the statistics produced by public institutions as a whole, including processed statistics and the utilization of administrative records.

(iv) Tightens controls on confidentiality in surveys (obligation to preserve secrecy) and promotes the use of statistical data responding to the needs of academic research

The new Act applies related rules, such as proper management of questionnaire forms and entrusting the protection of secrets to statistical survey-trust private business operators. Furthermore, in response to new needs of academic research, the new Act legalizes the provision of tailor-made tabulations and anonymized data.

(v) Established the Statistics Commission

As a result of the revision of the Act, the former Statistical Commission of

MIC was reorganized into the Statistics Commission of the Cabinet Office. The new commission is charged with deliberating on the draft Master Plan and giving advice on general matters for enforcing the Act to the ministers concerned, as well as examining individual survey projects, as the former commission had done.

Moreover, the new Act incorporates the spirit of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, which were adopted by the United Nations Statistics Commission at the special meeting held in April 1994. For example, the new Act stipulates the following in Article 3:

“Official statistics shall be produced with appropriate and reasonable methodologies, so as to ensure neutrality and reliability.”

“Official Statistics shall be provided widely for the people so that they are easily accessible for their effective use.”

“Confidential matters concerning individuals or juridical persons, or other organizations that were used for producing official statistics shall be protected.”

Notes: The Statistical Commission was transferred to Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications on April 1 in 2016 based on Act for reinforcement of Government’s Function in Implementing Important Policies by partial revision of National Government Organization Act and concerning Acts.

5. Notes on International Statistical Affairs

On December 2, 1952, Japan accepted the “Protocol amending the International Convention Relating to Economic Statistics, signed at Geneva on 14 December 1928.” On December 18, 1956, Japan became a member of the United Nations, and the OECD on April 28, 1964. Since then, Japan has promoted international cooperation in close collaboration with international organizations, including the United Nations Statistics Division and the secretary of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), etc.

5.1 The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP)

The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, which was established in Japan on May 1970 upon invitation by the Government of Japan, is the only institution in the United Nations bodies to provide statistical training services. With the aim to train government statisticians from countries in the region, it has extended training programs to the global community as well as the member countries of ESCAP. Since its establishment, SIAP has provided training to more than 15,500 government statisticians from 133 countries, and they are actively working as senior statisticians of national statistics offices. The Government of

Japan, as the host government, according to an agreement with the United Nations, recognizes the importance of SIAP and continues to extend co-operation to the Institute by providing the bulk of financial resources, and administrative and infrastructure support.

5.2 Cooperation for International Statistical Organizations

Japan has been a member of the United Nations Statistical Commission since 1962 (except for during 1971 and 1972) and has contributed to the enhancement of international statistical activities, including serving as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur. As for the OECD, Japan took office as one of the bureau members for a two-year term upon the establishment of the OECD in June 2004.

Moreover, the Director-General for Policy Planning (Statistical Standards) of MIC and the Director-General of the Statistics Bureau of MIC are ex-officio members of the International Statistical Institution (ISI), which was inaugurated in 1885 and the members are composed of heads of national statistics offices and statisticians renowned globally. National statistics offices have participated in the biennial ISI session since the 7th session (1899), and hosted the 19th session (1930), the 32nd (1960), and the 46th (1987). Furthermore, members from Japan have taken important roles in ISI, for example, Dr. Yuzo MORITA and Dr. Shigeichi MORIGUCHI have both served as the President.

5.3 Participation in International Statistical Activities

The government of Japan provides statistical data and information to international organizations, foreign countries and research institutes according to their requirements as well as providing regular data to the United Nations Statistical Division, ESCAP and OECD. The government also collects statistical information provided by these international organizations and disseminates it to the public for broad use.

Furthermore, regarding the International Comparison Program (ICP), which is a project to substantially compare Gross Domestic Products (GDP) in real terms among various countries around the world by calculating the purchasing power parities of the currencies of these countries, the government of Japan has taken part in a world-wide program led by the World Bank since the first round as well as a program led by OECD since 1980.

Moreover, Japan has complied with "Special Data Dissemination Standards Plus" (SDDS Plus) since 2016. "SDDS Plus" is a data dissemination standard,

established by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2012 for timely dissemination of economic and financial data, and it enhances the former dissemination standard, "SDDS." A participating state should open a National Summary Data Page for SDDS Plus (hereinafter NSDP Plus) on its national website. In Japan, NSDP Plus has been set up and maintained on the Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan (e-Stat), presenting the data for categories prescribed by SDDS Plus, and it is available through the electronic bulletin board on the IMF website (Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB)). Websites related to the SDDS Plus are as follows:

NSDP Plus: <http://www.e-stat.go.jp/data/nsdp/>

IMF/DSBB: <http://dsbb.imf.org>

(Reference 1)

<Reference>

Statistics Day

Approved by the Cabinet on July 3, 1973

Statistics Day is hereby established for the purpose of elevating the awareness and understanding of the Japanese people about the importance of statistics and to encourage the Japanese people to cooperate further with statistical surveys.

Statistics Day is declared to be October 18 of every year. Nation-wide events shall be held on and around the date, including award ceremonies to recognize individuals who have made contributions toward the betterment of statistics, as well as lectures, exhibitions and other events that help promote knowledge about statistics.

These events shall be held in close cooperation with local governments and other related organizations.

Reason for the Establishment of Statistics Day

The need has been growing to encourage the general public to take interest in the importance of statistics, have people develop a deep understanding of statistics, and create accurate statistics over a broad range of fields. Furthermore, statistical surveys that are conducted by the central and local governments have grown increasingly complex and refined in recent years. It is necessary to win support from and understanding by the Japanese people when conducting these statistical surveys.

For this reason, October 18 every year is hereby promulgated to be Statistics Day. Various events shall be held on and around the date so as to increase Japanese people's interest in and understanding of statistics. It is hoped that these activities will help enhance statistics in Japan.

The second half of October is an appropriate time for related organizations to hold various events. In recognition of the lunar calendar-based date of September 24, 1870, when a proclamation of the pre-constitutional Meiji government was issued about the Table of Products by Prefecture, the solar calendar-equivalent date of October 18 is hereby promulgated to be Statistics Day.