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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON CLASSIFICATION
OF MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS

(Santiago, Chile, 4 - 15 November 1963)

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America, a Working Group on Classification of Manufactured Products, composed of experts from seven countries, met at Santiago, Chile, from 4 to 15 November. The Statistical Division of ECLA was responsible for the organization of the proceedings, and in addition, one staff member from the United Nations Statistical Office, one from the Inter-American Statistical Institute, and several in turn from the Industrial Development Division of ECLA, co-operated with the Group in an advisory capacity. A list of participants is given in Annex I.

The primary object of the Working Group was to review a list of manufactured products drawn up by the Statistical Division of ECLA for use in the industrial censuses and surveys which the countries of the region are preparing in connexion with the World Programme sponsored by the United Nations and IASI.

The present document contains only a brief summary of the discussion and conclusions; the complete report will be submitted later, and will include the working papers considered at the meetings of the Group.

At its inaugural meeting, the Group elected as Chairman, Mr. Jorge Rubén Morinelli (Argentina), and agreed that each participant should act as Rapporteur in respect of specific chapters of the list which had been assigned to him prior to the meeting.

I. STANDARD LIST OF MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS

The Working Group considered the document entitled Proyecto de lista uniforme de productos manufacturados (E/CN.12/648: Working Paper No. 1), which enumerates, within the frame of reference of Groups 201 to 399 of the International Standard Industrial Classification, 2,800 individual products deemed to be representative of the countries of the region.

In the course of eighteen meetings, the Group conducted an exhaustive review of every product included in the list, eliminating those that were not particularly representative and adding others whose importance or production prospects made them of special interest.

The Group discussed the desirability of using, in the collection and presentation of physical output data, appropriate units for each product which should correspond as far as possible to those of the decimal metric system, and, in particular, for generators, prime movers and other specific machinery, units of power and capacity, or a combination of the number of units with power steps, as the case might be.

Although it transpired that some products were known by different names in different countries, the Group felt it preferable to keep to the Spanish name in most common use, and suggested that in such cases a list of equivalent terms might subsequently be drawn up for internal use in statistical offices.

While considering the products included on the list, the Group at the same time indicated those that could constitute a "minimum" list, taking as a basis Working Paper No. 2; from this analysis, a list of about 550 individual products resulted, representing some two-thirds of the value of the region's manufacturing output.

When the classification of the products by activities was studied, it was sometimes found necessary to place in a single group products that appeared in two ISIC groups; a case in point, for instance, was that of the processing of vegetable oils and fats, where it is difficult in practice to break down output by its use for food or in industry. In other instances, the Group suggested the desirability of switching a product from the ISIC group in which it was classified to another where it seemed more logically to belong.

Particular attention was devoted to the chapters of the list that related to machinery; in this context, stress was laid on the need to establish special categories, and within each of these to indicate the machinery and appliances that were most representative. To this end, the participants engaged to send the secretariat a detailed list of the relevant products manufactured in their respective countries.

II. PROPOSAL FOR A SUB-CLASSIFICATION WITHIN ISIC

At two of its meetings, the Group considered Working Paper No. 3, entitled Propuesta de Subclasificación de los Grupos 201 y 399 de la Clasificación Industrial Internacional Uniforme de todas las Actividades Económicas. While all the participants were agreed as to the urgent necessity of a more detailed classification than ISIC, it was recognized that recent national production data would have to be available if a useful classification was to be formulated and comparable statistics obtained for the region.

In this connexion, the members of the Working Group discussed the criteria that should be established for a more detailed classification, and those agreed upon included the principle that the goods produced by the establishments classified in one of the proposed sub-groups would have to represent at least 75 per cent of total output of the items concerned for the sub-group to be meaningful.

The Group unanimously decided to submit the following requests to the ECLA secretariat:

1. That it should obtain from the largest possible number of Latin American countries tabulations of physical output broken down in detail by activities;
2. That on the basis of the material received it should prepare a new draft sub-classification within ISIC; and
3. That it should convene, if possible in 1964, another Working Group to study:
 - (i) Experience in the use of the List of Products during the preparation and execution of industrial surveys and censuses;
 - (ii) Experience in the use of ISIC and national classifications of activities; and
 - (iii) The new draft sub-classification within ISIC indicated under point (2) above.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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