STAT participates in CARICOM’s 51st Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) and related meetings

PHILIPSBURG--The Department of Statistics (STAT) participated in CARICOM’s 51st Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) under the theme Harmonizing Data, Strengthening Resilience, which brought together representatives of statistical offices across the Caribbean to discuss developments in official statistics, exchange experiences and identify solutions to common challenges facing the region.

A notable highlight was the first-time participation of Saint-Martin's Institut Territorial de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (ITSEE), creating an opportunity for closer dialogue and cooperation between the statistical offices on both sides of the island.

Similar Challenges

Discussions revealed that many islands are experiencing similar challenges, particularly with the availability and timeliness of statistical information. Several countries continue to face delays in publishing National Accounts, with some only now reporting Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures for 2024. STAT is also strengthening its National Accounts program, with work underway on the compilation of the 2023 and 2024 accounts, supported by CARTAC, and completion targeted for March 2027.

Challenges were also highlighted regarding Population and Housing Censuses, as some countries are still working through delays in their census programs, while others did not conduct a census during the 2020 census round. STAT successfully conducted the 2022 Census, with the Department completing the analysis and publication of census results and thematic reports.

Limited staffing, financial constraints, difficulties accessing administrative data, low survey response rates and the logistical demands of fieldwork were also recurring concerns.

Similar Solutions

Despite these challenges, countries shared practical solutions, including stronger collaboration between government institutions, improved data-sharing arrangements, investment in staff development, harmonized methodologies and greater use of digital technologies. Presentations on Artificial Intelligence (AI) also explored how emerging technologies can support data processing, analysis, visualization, documentation and the dissemination of official statistics, while emphasizing the importance of data protection, accuracy and human oversight.

Where is SXM?

For Sint Maarten, the discussions provided an opportunity to demonstrate that STAT is already moving in the direction encouraged during the meeting. The Department is taking a progressive approach to digitalization, strengthening its systems and introducing technology to improve the efficiency of statistical operations. This includes exploring Geographic Information System applications, improving data management and preparing digital tools to support the upcoming Household Budget Survey (HBS), including a tool to facilitate the collection and management of household expenditure receipts. These efforts are intended to improve the collection, processing and quality of information while making survey operations more efficient.

The discussions during the meeting reinforced that access to reliable and timely administrative data through effective data-sharing arrangements is vital to the collection, compilation and dissemination of official statistics. This is an area STAT has already been actively addressing through its stakeholder consultations with ministries, government departments and other data-providing institutions. These engagements are aimed at identifying available data sources, addressing information gaps and establishing a clearer understanding of data requirements and the responsibilities of each institution. The consultations are also intended to lay the foundation for formal data-sharing agreements that will facilitate the regular exchange of information, reduce duplication in data collection and improve the efficiency and timeliness of statistical reporting.

Another important milestone was St. Maarten's ability to provide a regional update on developments in agriculture for the first time. The update highlighted progress under the Ministry of TEATT's Sustainable Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries initiatives, including the Agriculture in Schools

program, the training of approximately 25 persons, the participation of nine schools, the graduation of approximately 40 persons from the Agriculture Business Academy, micro-loan support for agricultural businesses and initiatives to strengthen local fisheries. This demonstrates progress in an area that is increasingly important to food security, local production and economic diversification.

STAT also continues to advance its core statistical programs, including the compilation and publication of the Consumer Price Index, work on labor statistics and the collection of business information to support National Accounts and GDP compilation. The Department's ongoing modernization efforts, together with preparations for the upcoming HBS, reflect its commitment to improving the availability, quality and timeliness of official statistics.

The meeting reinforced that the challenges facing St. Maarten are not unique but are shared by statistical offices throughout the Caribbean. At the same time, it demonstrated that progress is being made and that digitalization, regional cooperation and investment in statistical capacity are essential to strengthening the region's statistical systems. STAT's participation underscored St. Maarten's commitment to keeping pace with these developments and continuing to build a more modern, responsive and accessible statistical service.