

REGIONAL SOURCES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INFORMATION ON CENTRAL AMERICA

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The following survey assesses the major periodical publications originating in Central America that contain data and information on the economic and social conditions of the countries of the region. The publications are categorized as statistics, newsletters, economic and political reports, journals, and bibliography. The number following each title refers to the publishing organization listed at the end of the text.

Statistics

The most comprehensive statistical work on Central America is the *VII Compendio Estadístico Centroamericano* (11). Published in Guatemala, the *Compendio* is divided into three parts dealing with demographic, social and cultural, and economic aspects. The section on demography includes data from the population censuses of the 1970s (the only data available), with data extrapolated in some cases as far as the year 2000. The social and cultural section is basically public health and education, while the economic section includes agriculture, industry, foreign trade, transportation, communications, national accounts, balance of payments, public finance, money and banking, and prices. The data presented on Panama have been expanded so as to facilitate comparison with other countries in the area. For many of the fields covered in the *Compendio*, the data go back as far as sixteen years. The *Compendio* is published only sporadically, with the last issue appearing in 1981 and a new one scheduled for late 1984. Much of the data that appears in the *Compendio* is kept up-to-date in the annual *Serie Estadísticas Seleccionadas de Centroamérica*, whose number 18 appeared in December of 1983 (11). This publication is divided into two sections: the section on demographic and sociocultural aspects covers population, public health, and education; the economic section covers agriculture, industry, foreign trade, national accounts, balance of payments, public finance, money and banking, and prices. As with the *Compendio*, data are also included for Panama.

Estadísticas Macroeconómicas de Centroamérica has been published annually in Guatemala since 1980, with the latest number appearing in June 1984 (11). It contains five years of statistical information on national accounts, balance of payments, foreign trade, transactions of the Cámara de Compensación Centroamericana, public finance, the monetary scene, and consumer price indexes. A quarterly Guatemalan publication, *Integración en Cifras* (11), presents up-to-date information with differing degrees of disaggregation for the following topics: internal Central American trade, total imports and exports, basic grain prices, consumer price indexes, transactions of the central banks through the Cámara de Compensación Centroamericana, and Central American trade with Panama.

Each of the aforementioned publications gives statistical coverage in many different fields. The *Anuario Estadístico Centroamericano de Comercio Exterior*, published in Guatemala (11), covers in great detail the single field of regional and foreign trade of the Central American countries. The trade categories are arranged by the Nomenclatura Arancelaria Uniforme Centroamericana, and the publication is divided into two parts, exports and imports. Although intended to be annual, the publication of the *Anuario* was interrupted from 1974 to 1978. Publication resumed in 1982 with the volumes for 1979 and 1980. The volume covering 1981 was published in December 1983. This publication is essential for Central American trade statistics. The *Anuario* for 1971 is of particular interest because it is the only volume that includes an alphabetical product index to the Nomenclatura Arancelaria Uniforme Centroamericana, by which each number of the *Anuario* is organized.

There are two annual Costa Rican publications concerned specifically with national finances. One is *Centroamérica: Balanza de Pagos* (5), an analysis of the balance of payments situation presented in five sections: summary and conclusions; regional balance of payments; intra-regional trade; balance of payments by countries; and the statistical appendix. The other publication is *Boletín Estadístico* (5), which presents financial and economic data supplied by the central banks. In addition to its coverage of individual Central American countries is the section on Central America as a region, with the data arranged to facilitate comparisons among the countries.

Newsletters

The most recent newsletter from Central America is *Cable Centroamericano*, a semimonthly Costa Rican publication (2). Each issue consists of a lead article (the *Despacho Económico*) providing information and analysis on a single topic of current importance to the region, followed by a shorter section of *Notas Económicas* covering important

events in each Central American country. Some of the topics covered by the *Despacho Económico* in recent issues are coffee, sugar, bananas, tax reform in Guatemala, inflation, and devaluation. *Correo Económico*, which has been published since 1974 in Guatemala (4), is a weekly analytical synthesis of economic and financial developments arranged by topics such as agriculture, energy, foreign trade, money and banking, and economic integration. A related weekly publication, *Correo Político* (4), attempts to provide objective information on the observable political realities of Central America as a region and of the individual countries.

Inforpress Centroamericana, published weekly in Guatemala since 1972, is the oldest of the Central American newsletters (6). Arranged with a regional section followed by country sections, its purpose is to inform and to analyze internal and external events in order to comprehend the economic and political environment of each Central American country and the region as a whole. The weekly *Central American Report* is a synthesis in English of *Inforpress* (6).

Two newsletters of narrower focus that are nonetheless useful for news of the region are the *Carta Informativa*, published irregularly in Honduras by the Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica (1), and the *Carta Informativa* published monthly in Guatemala by the Secretaría Permanente del Tratado General de Integración Económica Centroamericana (11). While the basic purpose of each of these newsletters is to publicize the activities of their organizations, they occasionally also present information or data related to the economic conditions of the area. A similar combination of information is found in the annual reports of these two organizations: the bank's *Memoria* (1) and the Permanent Secretariat's *Actividades* (11).

Economic and Political Reports

Centroamérica was published consecutively for three years in 1981, 1982, and 1983 (6). It analyzes extensively Central America as a whole as well as each of the countries, including Panama and Belize. Its objectives are fourfold: to present the key economic indicators in order to understand the present situation and the future; to compare present economic activity with that of the past; to examine the most relevant current sociopolitical factors and their relation to the economic situation; and to provide a basis for determining the political and economic tendencies of the near future.

Another significant annual economic and political report is *Centroamérica*. Published in Guatemala, its most recent issue was subtitled *El drama de 1981 y la incertidumbre de 1982* (4). Its surveys of each country are divided into political and economic analysis. It also includes sec-

tions on the Central American economy as a whole and on the process of economic integration, concluding with a statistical appendix and a chronology of the main political events of the year. This number was also published in English.

Journals

Estudios Sociales Centroamericanos has been published in Costa Rica three times a year since 1972 (10). Its articles are usually written by Central American social scientists and are required reading for those seeking a global vision of the problems and concerns of the region. Each issue contains articles on several Central American countries, and occasional issues focus on specific themes. For example, recent numbers have been dedicated to analyzing historical problems, the role of religion in the process of social change in Central America, and agrarian problems. The journal at times offers information on current research projects.

The *Revista Centroamericana de Administración Pública* is a substantial new Costa Rican journal that has been published since 1981 (8). It is divided into sections on administrative theory, sociopolitical aspects of public administration, and a third containing essays, projects, and research reports. Some articles deal with problems in specific Central American countries, and others deal more generally with the field of public administration.

Since 1975 the Costa Rican journal *Revista Centroamericana de Ciencias de la Salud* has published three issues a year of scholarly articles on various aspects of health in Central America (9). Issues include sections on basic and clinical research, social sciences and health, health education, systems of health attention, theoretical and methodological debates, as well as information and bibliographical commentaries. Typical articles discuss such topics as mortality perspectives in Central America, technology transfer in the pharmaceutical industry in Costa Rica, and public health services in Nicaragua since the Revolution.

A substantial Honduran journal concerned with the themes of economic integration and development in Central America is the *Revista de la Integración y el Desarrollo de Centroamérica*, which has published some thirty issues since 1971 (1). Recent issues have included articles on international financing for Central American development, analyses of Central American financial development, instability of monetary demand in Central America, and savings and industrialization in Central America.

The newest scholarly journal to appear in Central America is *Revista INCAE*, whose first number was published in Nicaragua in the summer of 1982 (7). Published by a graduate school of business admin-

istration that was established with the technical assistance of Harvard University, this journal attempts to offer a pragmatic, scientific approach to problems that Central American managers in the private and public sectors face daily in a complex, rapidly changing environment. Articles published in *Revista INCAE* so far have covered such topics as banking and finance in Central America, the art of bargaining in negotiations, and rural development in Central America. The journal also features a strong bibliographical section that lists current articles on Central America appearing in journals received by the library of the business school.

Bibliography

An important milestone in the bibliographical control of Central American publications was the inauguration of the *Documentación Socioeconómica Centroamericana* (3) in Costa Rica in 1978 (number 5 appeared in 1980). This publication is a computer-produced annotated bibliography of documents that are difficult to obtain because of their limited distribution. These documents are maintained in the Centro de Documentación Económica y Social in San José, Costa Rica. The Centro can supply photocopies of the materials listed in the *Documentación* at a nominal cost. Number 5 of the *Documentación* is a cumulative index to the first four numbers and provides five different indexes as well as a complete list (without annotations) of the twelve hundred documents described in the previous four numbers. This bibliographical publication is useful because it provides current information on elusive publications in a field where bibliographical control is often hard to achieve.

Organizations

1. Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica (BCIE)
Apartado Postal 772
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
2. *Cable Centroamericano*
Apartado 235
1005 San José, Costa Rica
3. Centro de Documentación Económica y Social (CEDESC)
Apartado 37
Ciudad Universitaria "Rodrigo Facio"
San José, Costa Rica

4. Centro de Información Económica
1a Av. 9-83, Zona 9
Guatemala, Guatemala
5. Consejo Monetario Centroamericano
Apartado Postal 5438
San José, Costa Rica
6. *Inforpress Centroamericana*
9a Calle "A" 3-56, Zona 1
Guatemala, Guatemala
7. Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas
(INCAE)
Apartado Postal 2485
Managua, Nicaragua
and
Apartado 960
4050 Alajuela, Costa Rica
8. Instituto Centroamericano de Administración Pública (ICAP)
Apartado 10.025
San José, Costa Rica
9. Programa Centroamericano de Ciencias de la Salud
Apartado 37
Ciudad Universitaria "Rodrigo Facio"
San José, Costa Rica
10. Programa Centroamericano de Ciencias Sociales
Apartado 37
Ciudad Universitaria "Rodrigo Facio"
San José, Costa Rica
11. Secretaría Permanente del Tratado General de Integración
Económica Centroamericana (SIECA)
Apartado Postal 1237
Guatemala, Guatemala