TSA-express: exploring the tombs of trade data

Wietse Dol and Henk Kelholt,

Nowadays, there is no lack of data on trade issues. There are many ways to get data, e.g. CD-rom and internet. This also presents us with a problem. What do we really need? How reliable is the data and is there even more/better data available? How to analyze and present this data? How, do these different data sources all work? Etc.

The TSA-express system has been developed at LEI to meet the demand for easily accessible trade data from various sources. Besides this uniform access TSA-express allows the user to extend the database with custom-made selections of various variables (e.g. we added the GTAP product classification to COMEXT and PCTAS). TSA-express combines speed with versatility, and offers the user many different ways to analyze and present the data. TSA-express is used regularly at LEI and hence we check and update the metadata we get. We add product and country groups because our users need them.

Last year we presented in a poster session the first version of TSA-express. Since then we spent a lot of time perfecting the product:

- Expanding/checking the COMEXT/PCTAS country and product classifications (and yes we discovered a lot of inconsistencies/errors in the official data)
- Making the software easier to use. For instance using color coding to make the differences visual between reporting and non-reporting countries/groups. Showing the years a country reports makes it easier to select and understand the data etc.
- Added/updated more output/analysis tools: graphics, portfolio- and trade balance plots.
- Rewritten the documentation, updated the database (for more speed)
- Etc., etc.

In this poster session we will demonstrate the product and focus on the graphic output. Using TSA-express, it becomes easier to dig into the data, walk through the tombs and discover the jewels that are hidden. Hence, TSA-express is a useful tool to stimulate researchers into data exploration and increases their knowledge on international trade.