



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

COOK ISLANDS

Mission on National Accounts Statistics

AUGUST 2025

PREPARED BY

Donna Grcman

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International Monetary Fund, IMF Publications
P.O. Box 92780, Washington, DC 20090, U.S.A.
T. +(1) 202.623.7430 • F. +(1) 202.623.7201
publications@IMF.org
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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| CPI | Consumer Price Index |
| CISO | Cook Islands Statistics Office |
| COICOP | Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GDP(E) | Gross Domestic Product by expenditure |
| GDP(P) | Gross Domestic Product by production |
| HIES | Household Income and Expenditure Survey |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| MFEM | Ministry of Finance & Economic Management |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| PFTAC | Pacific Financial & Technical Assistance Centre |
| RMD | Revenue Management Division |
| SUT | Supply and Use Tables |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| VAT | Value Added Tax |

Summary of Mission Outcomes and Priority Recommendations

1. At the request of the Cook Islands Statistics Office (CISO), the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) conducted a technical assistance (TA) mission during August 11 – 22, 2025.

The aim of the mission was to assess the current GDP compilation system and identify any gaps or areas that may need improvement along with progress made on previous mission recommendations. The mission was to review the plans for rebasing the national accounts as well as the status of the latest year GDP by production (GDP(P)) and GDP by expenditure (GDP(E)) estimates.

2. The mission assisted the CISO in compiling the quarterly GDP(P) from Q3 2024 to Q2 2025 as well as the 2024 annual GDP(P) estimates.

A new Director for the Revenue Management Division (RMD) was appointed in the second half of 2024. Consequently, the delivery of the Value Added Tax (VAT), used to compile the quarterly and annual GDP(P) estimates, ceased due to concerns regarding confidentiality. The CISO had several meetings with the RMD to assure them that the data sharing arrangement was legal, and the data was treated securely but to no avail. The mission along with CISO and the Economic Planning Division within the Ministry of Finance & Economic Management (MFEM) met with the Director of RMD to discuss the issue. As a result, there was an agreement to provide the data without business names and only the tax identification number known as the Revenue Management Division (RMD) number. CISO will now publish these on their website along with the annual GDP estimates from 2020 which had not been published.

3. Previous missions had assisted CISO in developing GDP by expenditure (GDP(E)) estimates.

However, due to the national accounts compiler position being vacant as well as the lack of GDP(P) estimates no progress has been made in producing the latest set of estimates. This is likely to continue until the position is filled.

4. The mission discussed the plans for the rebase of the national accounts. The 2025/26 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) will commence field work in September 2025, and the Population Census will be undertaken in December 2026. The mission recommended consideration be given to undertaking Supply and Use Tables (SUTs) but this will require additional data and resources. The mission worked through what is involved in rebasing the national so that they can develop a plan.

Recommended Actions

5. Table 1 below summarizes the main recommendations to be actioned by the CISO with timings to be completed.

TABLE 1. Detailed Recommendations

| 1.1 | CISO to obtain the outstanding government data used as input for the compilation of GDP. | August 2025 |
|-----|--|----------------|
| 1.2 | CISO to finalize quarterly GDP(P) estimates from Q3 2024 to Q2 2025 and publish on their website | September 2025 |
| 1.3 | CISO and RMD to develop an MOU. | December 2025 |

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------|
| 2. Annual GDP(P) | | |
| 2.1 | CISO to publish annual GDP(P) estimates for 2020 to 2024. | October 2025 |
| 3. GDP(E) | | |
| 3.1 | CISO to work with the Macro-Fiscal mission to produce 2024 GDP(E) estimates. | September 2025 |
| 4. Rebasing GDP | | |
| 4.1 | CISO consider producing Supply and Use Tables when undertaking the rebase. | August 2026 |
| 4.2 | CISO develop a rebase strategy document and discuss with key stakeholders. | August 2026 |
| 4.3 | CISO to conduct the HIES over the full 12 months and implement COICOP 2018 in the questionnaire. | September 2026 |
| 4.4 | CISO to update the data sources and methods document at the conclusion of the rebase exercise as well as include a revisions policy. | August 2028 |
| 4.5 | CISO to establish a technical working group to oversee the rebase exercise. | June 2026 |
| 5. Resources | | |
| 5.1 | CISO to secure additional resources in order to compile the national accounts and undertake the rebasing exercise. | June 2026 |

I. Annual National Accounts

A. QUARTERLY GDP(P)

6. The mission assisted CISO in compiling the quarterly GDP(P) from Q3 2024 to Q2 2025. VAT is the main data source for compiling the private sector estimates of value added in current prices. The current price estimates are deflated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

7. Due to a change in management in the RMD, VAT data was not provided to the CISO from late 2024. Consequently, the quarterly GDP(P) was not able to be compiled. The new management was concerned that the delivery of the VAT data to the CISO was breaching the confidentiality clause in their tax legislation. The CISO had several meetings with the RMD to assure them that the data sharing arrangement was legal, and the data was treated securely but to no avail.

8. The mission along with CISO and the Economic Planning Division within the Ministry of Finance met with the Director of RMD to discuss the issue. Subsequently there was an agreement to provide the data without business names and only the RMD number. The mission agreed with the outcome as it still enabled the CISO to analyze the data at the unit record level and to raise queries where necessary. This is especially important with VAT data as there is usually missing data which needs to be inputted until the actual data is received.

9. The VAT data was received immediately after the meeting and loaded into the CISO national accounts workbook. The loading and linking to the business register to obtain the industry

code takes a considerable amount of time to process. It is typically done overnight. This should be reviewed during the rebase exercise to improve the timeliness because every time this work sheet is opened it takes a lot of time.

10. The value-added worksheets were updated to Q2 2025. There was an issue with Q3 and Q4 for 2024 in that the data was not computing correctly and resulted in some large negative value-added figures. It was due to the reference period not being correctly inputted in a couple of sheets. Once this was corrected the value added was no longer negative. There was also an issue with the summary sheets not populating correctly. It took a couple of days to resolve as it was not obvious what had happened to corrupt the worksheets. In the end the source data was entered into the workbook again and this resolved the issue. The mission stressed the importance of checking formulas and headings when compiling GDP. A simple mistake can make a big difference to the estimates and may not be noticed.

11. There is still some outstanding government data to be included before the quarterly GDP(P) estimates are finalized. The CISO will obtain these data and input them when received. The mission and CISO were able to look at the estimates as they currently stand and they appear to be sound. Once all data is finalized the CISO will publish them on their website.

12. There is no Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the RMD and CISO. Up until now there hasn't been any issue in receiving the VAT data. However, there needs to be a formal agreement between both parties to ensure data delivery on an ongoing basis. A MOU is the typical approach. However, it is not guaranteed as it still depends on trust and ensuring the conditions of the MOU are met. CISO agreed that a MOU should be developed as soon as possible to avoid interruptions to data delivery.

Recommended Actions

- CISO to obtain outstanding government data and input into the worksheet.
- CISO to finalize quarterly GDP(P) estimates from Q3 2024 to Q2 2025 and publish them on their website.
- CISO and RMD to develop an MOU.

B. ANNUAL GDP(P)

13. Annual GDP(P) estimates are the sum of the four quarters. Consequently, there has been a delay in developing the 2024 GDP(P) estimates due to the lack of VAT data as discussed in the previous section. Now that GDP(P) for all quarters of 2024 have been estimated the annual 2024 GDP(P) has been compiled. The CISO will now publish these on their website.

14. Publication of the annual GDP(P) estimates on the CISO website was put on hold in 2020. There was concern that the change in methodology for the annual estimates being the sum of the quarters may not be the best. However, over time and looking at the results the CISO are now comfortable in publishing the annual estimates. It is also noted that the key users are summing up the quarters to obtain an annual estimate. The rebase exercise will provide an opportunity to review the annual methodology.

Recommended Actions

- CISO to publish annual GDP(P) estimates for 2020 to 2024.

C. GDP(E)

15. There is demand for GDP(E) estimates by government for macro-economic modeling and forecasting government revenue. The MFEM has requested the CISO to compile and disseminate annual GDP(E) estimates for use in the macro-economic and forecasting model.

16. The July 2024 mission produced an annual GDP(E) series from 2010 to 2023. However, due to the lack of a national accounts compiler and the issues related to the compilation of the GDP(P) estimates the CISO have not been able to produce any further GDP(E) estimates. There will be a Macro-Fiscal mission undertaken by PFTAC in September 2025 and CISO will work with them to produce GDP(E) estimates for 2024.

17. The GDP(E) estimates are still under development so they will not be published. Recent Government Finance Statistics and National Accounts missions have indicated some classificatory issues related to government expenditures which are still being worked on.

Recommended Action

- CISO to work with the Macro-Fiscal mission to produce 2024 GDP(E) estimates.

D. REBASING GDP

18. The CISO are planning to rebase the national accounts. The current base year is 2016. The recommended time period for rebasing is five years. The data requirements for a rebase include a Population Census (to be conducted in December 2026), a HIES (conducted from September 2025 to September 2026) and ideally an economic survey. CISO doesn't conduct annual economic surveys so resources would be needed if they decided to do an economic survey. A Labour Force Survey was conducted in 2023/24, and an Agriculture Survey is currently in the field. Data from these surveys will also be used in the rebase exercise.

19. It is recommended the CISO consider producing SUTs. The SUT is the best way to ensure the highest quality level of GDP as all components are confronted and balanced within the one framework. It also provides ratios to be used in the ongoing GDP(P). An economic survey would need to be undertaken in order to meet the requirements for populating a SUT, in particular, the collection of product level data. Constructing a SUT will, therefore, require additional resources of both people and IT.

20. The CISO needs to finalize a strategy and workplan for the rebasing exercise. The mission and CISO reviewed the workplan developed in the previous mission. It didn't include consideration of the SUT which this mission recommended. This mission provided a list of tasks to be undertaken as part of the rebase which had been developed by other countries. It also provided some sample economic survey questionnaires. It is recommended that CISO discuss with key stakeholders whether or not a SUT should be produced as part of the rebase exercise.

21. The CISO will be conducting the HIES over a period of twelve months commencing in September 2025 using both recall methodology and a diary. Initially the plan was to conduct the HIES over a period of eight months. There is seasonality which affects the expenditure patterns. Therefore, the mission strongly recommended that it be done over the full year, otherwise it would be difficult to estimate the missing four months, and the quality of the results would be compromised. Further, if the HIES didn't cover the full year, then it is not likely that the CPI could be updated which is needed for the rebase exercise.

22. The HIES questionnaire is currently not classified using the 2018 Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP). The mission recommended that the HIES questionnaire be updated according to 2018. There are some significant differences between the 1999 and 2018 COICOP which, if implemented, will improve the CPI as well as the deflators for the national accounts.

23. The data sources and methods document will need to be updated at the conclusion of the rebasing exercise. The mission stressed the importance of this as users will need the information when analyzing the results. It is recommended that notes are kept during the rebase to assist when producing the final document. The CISO should also develop and publish a revisions policy.

24. Communication with stakeholders is essential throughout the rebasing exercise. The mission recommended a technical working group be established to discuss issues.

Recommended Actions

- CISO consider producing Supply and Use Tables when undertaking the rebase.
- CISO develop a rebase strategy document and discuss with key stakeholders.
- CISO to conduct the HIES over the full 12 months and implement COICOP 2018 in the questionnaire.
- CISO to update the data sources and methods document at the conclusion of the rebase exercise as well as include a revisions policy.
- CISO to establish a technical working group to oversee the rebase exercise.

II. Resources

25. There is currently no National Accounts compiler in CISO. The previous compiler has moved to New Zealand for study. The CISO is hoping to recruit a replacement, but it will take time to find a suitable candidate. They have approached Statistics New Zealand to assist in obtaining a short-term consultant to provide support in the meantime.

26. The rebasing exercise as well as the ongoing compilation of the GDP requires additional resources. There is a considerable workload and without an increase in the resources, the mission is concerned that the CISO will not be able to complete the rebasing exercise within a reasonable timeframe.

Recommended Action

- CISO to secure additional resources in order to compile the national accounts and undertake the rebasing exercise.

III. Officials Met During the Mission

| Name | Title and Institution |
|-------------------|--|
| Taggy Tangimetua | Government Statistician & Chief Electoral Officer, CISO |
| Tanga Morris | Senior Statistician, BoP Compiler, CISO |
| Enua Pakitoa | Senior Statistician, International Trade, CISO |
| Tearoa Iorangi | HIES Manager, CISO |
| Laurids Rasmussen | Trainee GFS Compiler, CISO |
| Tristan Metcalfe | Director, Economic Planning Division MFEM |
| Ioana Turia | Microeconomist, Economic Planning Division MFEM |
| Rachel Goodwin | Collector and Comptroller, Revenue Management Division, MFEM |
| Aisake Mafua | Crown Accountant, Treasury Division MFEM |
| Peter Graham | Secretary of Justice, Ministry of Justice |