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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CHINESE STATISTICAL SYSTEM AND ITS
MICRO-DATA FOUNDATION

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ABSTRACT

This survey article briefly reviews the important changes and developments of the Chinese modern statistical system since its establishment in the early 1930s. However, its main focus is the period of the People's Republic covering the major transformations of the Chinese system of national accounts (CSNA) and changes of its micro data foundations against the background of institutional changes and policy regime shifts over time. It first reviews the statistical regulations and laws that govern 1) data classification, coverage, collection and report, 2) the design of economic survey and census as well as their implementation and data collection, and 3) the use of the statistics that are generated by the system. It then discusses the system that produces the basic statistics using the micro-data collected from regular reports, surveys and censuses. Finally, it discusses the main problems of the system and likely channels through which academics and researchers may access to the Chinese micro data.

Since the Chinese statistical system has been tightly controlled by the state and closed to the public, and its legal development has been very slow, the information available for our survey is rather limited and perhaps inaccurate. The main purpose of this study is to invite ideas and comments from researchers, academics, as well as the statisticians and officials of the Chinese statistical authority in order to improve our understanding of the micro-data foundation of the Chinese statistical system.