

淡江大學 99 學年度碩士班招生考試試題

系別：美洲研究所(美國研究組)

科目：英文寫作

本試題共 2 頁，2 大題

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he says, that makes profitable farming in Vidarbha practically impossible. "The input prices are set by someone else while the purchase prices are set by someone else," Tiwari says. "That's why the farmers are killing themselves." He wants the Indian government to better defend its own farmers by providing heavier subsidies for cotton production, protection from imports, easier access to finance and price supports. "If the government forces the farmers to have better productivity, it should have an integrated approach that is devised to have more profitability," he says.

Yet Tiwari's protectionist approach could actually hurt farmers. The World Bank's Delgado says that most projections show trade liberalization in agriculture would create significant increases in prices—as much as 20% for cotton and 7% for food grains. Not only would those gains increase the incentive for farmers to grow greater quantities of food, but they would also put more money in farmers' pockets, creating a new source of global demand. But with World Trade Organization negotiations on agricultural trade stalled on the issue of subsidies, it seems unlikely that farmers in Vidarbha and elsewhere will see these benefits anytime soon.

Policy makers can't afford to wait. The FAO forecasts that food production will need to double by 2050 in order to keep up with rising demand, a task that will require \$30 billion of investment annually. "Governments are scrambling to fix some of the problems, but it will take time," says Akmal Siddiq, a natural-resources economist at the Asian Development Bank in Manila. Farmers like Namdeo Sidam, 48, know that all too well. He, his wife and three sons live in a mud-walled shack in the fly-infested village of Marathwakadi in Vidarbha, and aside from a free plow, the government's ample funds have yet to trickle his way. Sidam gets no subsidies for his seeds, no guaranteed rural work has been available in the area and no new water resources have been developed near his farm, nor did he get state help with his \$350 debt. Government agricultural officials hardly ever visit the village, he says, and he appears uninformed about the new initiatives that might help him. He is still dependent on the cotton crop he grows on his small farm, supplemented by the wages his sons can earn in part-time jobs. "Not much has changed," he laments. To make the new Green Revolution a reality, the global community still has much backbreaking farm work to do. —WITH REPORTING BY NILANJANA BHOWMICK/NEW DELHI, CHENGCHENG JIANG/BEIJING, YUKI ODA/TOKYO, SHASHIKANT SAWANT/NAGPUR AND JOOST VAN EGMOND/DAKAR ■

Nature vs. Nurture

TULASIDAS MANDASE OF BIVARA BARSIA village in Vidarbha couldn't agree more. Though he has received aid from the government, Mandase, 38, complains that it hasn't been the right kind. The state donated a metal plow and a pesticide sprayer, but neither worked. To get subsidized soybean seeds, he spends a full day traveling by bus to a nearby town. It often takes two or three trips, and, with bus fares costing him 60¢ per roundtrip, he wonders if the cheaper seeds are worth the effort. What he really requires, he says, is better infrastructure to make him less dependent on the monsoon. Mandase believes that he might need a deeper well and electricity to run a pump—investments he could never afford on his own. In lieu of that, Mandase, with the local monsoon spotty, can only pin his hopes on divine intervention. In late July, Mandase visited a Hindu temple near his village and offered a coconut to the gods. He then split it, left half on the altar and took the other home to eat. The *puja*, or religious rite, is meant to bring rain. "All I need is water," Mandase says.

Kishor Tiwari believes the farmers require much more than that. The Nagpur-based activist, whose organization, the Vidarbha People's Protest Forum, has championed the region's cotton growers, says that the package has alleviated some of the farmers' distress. But Tiwari says that more government intervention is needed to solve the real underlying problem: a global agricultural market rigged against the small tiller. While the costs of crucial inputs, like fertilizer, have been rising, global prices for cotton are being depressed to an artificially low level by U.S. government subsidies for its cotton farmers—a one-two punch,

I. Please write a summary of the main points in this short essay and give your comments or response too. (60%)

◀ 注意背面尚有試題 ▶

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II. Do you agree to the arguments put forward by economist Steven Levitt in *Freakonomics*? Why or why not? (40%)

For the past couple of years, though, economics hasn't been fun. It's been scary. The quirky topics in which Levitt specializes have been pushed aside by the big questions of how to halt a financial crisis and fix an ailing global economy. Macroeconomics has overwhelmed microeconomics. Not that the macroeconomists have exactly covered themselves with glory. Queen Elizabeth II wondered aloud late last year how economists had missed the problems that brought on the financial crisis. This September, economist Paul Krugman lamented "the profession's blindness to the very possibility of catastrophic failures in a market economy," unleashing a bitter debate over what the heck economics is good for.

Now Levitt and Dubner are about to land in the middle of this maelstrom with a new book, *Superfreakonomics*. It's very good—jauntier and more assured than their first. But is the world ready for freakonomics again? Or, to put it another way, can the freakonomists restore our shaken faith in economics?

Levitt likes his timing, since he sees macro as something of a dead end. "The problems of the macroeconomy are just so hard and the degree of complexity so immense that it's almost hopeless to think that we would have really good models of those systems," he says, chatting at his house a few blocks from the University of Chicago, where he teaches. (A video of the interview is at time.com/levitt.) Aside from the complexity, there's a crucial data limitation. "We have one macroeconomy," Levitt explains. "We get to watch the world unfold once." That means we have no way of knowing for sure whether the bank bailouts, to name one topical example, helped the economy or hurt it.

So Levitt has spent his career looking for narrow subjects that lend themselves to empirical testing. His standard line is that he's not smart enough for macro. But

he's been smart enough to avoid it—and to win, in 2003, the John Bates Clark Medal, an award for the top under-40 American economist that is often the precursor to a Nobel (no, he's not really a "rogue economist"). His work also caught writer Dubner's attention, which led to the 2003 article in the *New York Times Magazine* that spawned *Freakonomics*.