

UNIVERSITE DE OUAGADOUGOU
Office du Baccalauréat

Bureautique Secrétariat (B.S)

Année 2013
Session normale
Epreuve du 2^{ème} tour
Durée : 2 heures
Coefficient : 2

EPREUVE ECRITE D'ANGLAIS

Cette épreuve comporte deux (2) pages

A Delicate Balance Between Food Crops and Cash Crops

The production of cash crops by family farmers is an integral part of the development strategy of many developing nations. The commercialization of agriculture is encouraged by many institutions including the World Bank and experts. However, some critics contend that the production of cash crops takes resources away from food production for local consumption. Given the experience with recurrent famine in Sub-Saharan Africa, these observers argue that the production of cash crops ought to be discouraged, promoting instead the planting of food crops to ensure food security through self sufficiency. Yet the adoption of such a strategy as the main objective of agricultural policy ignores both empirical evidence and economic theory.

As the term implies, food crops are raised for the consumption of the farmer and their family. While cash crops can include food crop surpluses that are sold in local markets, they are generally understood to be crops produced exclusively for sale and, in many instances, crops produced for export. Examples of cash crops include sugar cane, oil seeds, fiber crops, vegetables, coffee, cocoa, tea, tobacco, fruit and rubber trees..Food crops, on the other hand, generally involve basic staples such as cereals, roots and tubers.

Most experts subscribe to the "theory of comparative advantage" in favor of growing cash crops.

According to this theory, welfare is maximized if nations specialize in the production of those goods and services which they can produce at relatively low cost. They can then export these goods in the world market and use the foreign exchange earnings to import those goods which they do not produce as efficiently. Thus, if a country can grow tobacco or tea more effectively than it can produce wheat or corn, it should allocate its resources towards the production of these cash / export crops.

Adapted from Orville FREEMAN

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Année 2013
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Epreuve du 1^{er} tour
Durée : 2 heures
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EPREUVE ECRITE D'ANGLAIS

Cette épreuve comporte deux (02) pages

Innovating Mobile Technologies in Africa

Visitors to Kenya's capital are often horrified by the homicidal minibuses called matatu. They go around post-holes, seldom signal and use their uncertain brakes only at the last second. They are therefore an ideal subject for a video game, which is why Planet Rackus, a Nairobi start-up, released "Ma3Racer" last year. Each player uses his mobile phone to steer a matatu down the street. The (unrealistic) goal is to avoid pedestrians. Within a month, a quarter of a million people in 169 countries had downloaded the game.

Planet Rackus is one of hundreds of start-ups that have sprung up in Nairobi over the past couple of years. They are part of a quiet tech boom in Kenya, a country better known for coffee and safaris. In 2002 Kenya's exports of technology-related services were a surprising \$16 million. By 2010 that had exploded to \$ 360 million. To its boosters, Nairobi is the "Silicon Savannah".

However, it differs from its silicon sisters in one crucial regard. From the start, its tech firms have designed their products for mobile phones rather than computers. Kenya is still a poor country; few of its people own laptops. But there are 74 mobile phones for every 100 Kenyans, well above the African average of 65. And nearly 99% of internet subscriptions in Kenya are on mobile phones.

Investors are piling in Nailab, a working space for technology professionals, opened on Nairobi's Ngong Road in 2011. Down the street is 88mph, a seed fund and incubator that launched earlier this year. Innovation 4 Africa, a similar outfit, shares the space. Two others, Savannah Fund and Growth Hub, started operations in May. Kenya's biggest bank, Equity Bank, wants a piece of the action. It will also open an "innovation centre" by the end of the year. Most of these funds focus on mobile technology. GSMA, a global association of mobile operators, is about to open an Africa office, also on Ngong Road.

Three factors helped Nairobi to become an African tech center. The first is a supportive government which brought the first of four undersea internet cables to the Kenyan coast. Prices decreased and bandwidth exploded. Just under 12 of the country's roughly 40 million people now use the internet, a number that has trebled since 2009.

Second, Kenya has undergone a revolution since 2007, when M-PESA, a mobile-payments system operated by Safaricom, a phone company, was launched.