

Directions: *There are 2 passages in this section. Each passage is followed by some questions or unfinished statements. For each of them there are four choices marked A), B), C) and D). You should decide on the best choice and mark the corresponding letter on Answer Sheet 2 with a single line through the centre.*

Passage One

Questions 46 to 50 are based on the following passage.

Some of the world's most significant problems never hit headlines. One example comes from agriculture. Food riots and hunger make news. But the trend lying behind these matters is rarely talked about. This is the decline in the growth in yields of some of the world's major crops. A new study by the University of Minnesota and McGill University in Montreal looks at where, and how far, this decline is occurring.

The authors take a vast number of data points for the four most important crops: rice, wheat, corn and soybeans(大豆). They find that in between 24% and 39% of all harvested areas, the improvement in yields that took place before the 1980s slowed down in the 1990s and 2000s.

There are two worrying features of the slowdown. One is that it has been particularly sharp in the world's most populous(人口多的) countries, India and China. Their ability to feed themselves has been an important source of relative stability both within the countries and on world food markets. That self-sufficiency cannot be taken for granted if yields continue to slow down or reverse.

Second, yield growth has been lower in wheat and rice than in corn and soybeans. This is problematic because wheat and rice are more important as foods, accounting for around half of all calories consumed. Corn and soybeans are more important as feed grains. The authors note that "we have preferentially focused our crop improvement efforts on feeding animals and cars rather than on crops that feed people and are the basis of food security in much of the world."

The report qualifies the more optimistic findings of another new paper which suggests that the world will not have to dig up a lot more land for farming in order to feed 9 billion people in 2050, as the Food and Agriculture Organisation has argued.

Instead, it says, thanks to slowing population growth, land currently ploughed up for crops might be able to revert(回返) to forest or wilderness. This could happen. The trouble is that the forecast assumes continued improvements in yields, which may not actually happen.

46. What does the author try to draw attention to?

- A) Food riots and hunger in the world.
- B) News headlines in the leading media.
- C) The decline of the grain yield growth.
- D) The food supply in populous countries.

47. Why does the author mention India and China in particular?
- A) Their self-sufficiency is vital to the stability of world food markets.
 - B) Their food yields have begun to decrease sharply in recent years.
 - C) Their big populations are causing worldwide concerns.
 - D) Their food self-sufficiency has been taken for granted.
48. What does the new study by the two universities say about recent crop improvement efforts?
- A) They fail to produce the same remarkable results as before the 1980s.
 - B) They contribute a lot to the improvement of human food production.
 - C) They play a major role in guaranteeing the food security of the world.
 - D) They focus more on the increase of animal feed than human food grains.
49. What does the Food and Agriculture Organisation say about world food production in the coming decades?
- A) The growing population will greatly increase the pressure on world food supplies.
 - B) The optimistic prediction about food production should be viewed with caution.
 - C) The slowdown of the growth in yields of major food crops will be reversed.
 - D) The world will be able to feed its population without increasing farmland.
50. How does the author view the argument of the Food and Agriculture Organisation?
- A) It is built on the findings of a new study.
 - B) It is based on a doubtful assumption.
 - C) It is backed by strong evidence.
 - D) It is open to further discussion.