

Faculty Profile: Travis J. Lybbert



Travis J. Lybbert
Assistant Professor
Agricultural and Resource Economics
UC Davis

Travis Lybbert joined the faculty of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UC Davis as an assistant professor in August 2006. Travis earned M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Applied Economics from Cornell University, where he also taught engineering economics in the Operations Research Department. Prior to coming to Davis, Travis was an assistant professor of economics at the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University.

Travis conducts research in four interrelated areas of applied economics: risk, poverty dynamics, technology, and environment. Often motivated by international economic development problems, Travis has worked on projects in Morocco, India, and East Africa

and in the Intellectual Property Division of the World Trade Organization. Using data from livestock herders in Ethiopia and Kenya, Travis and co-authors were among the first to empirically estimate wealth dynamics among the poor. In this region, cultivating crops is always inferior to migratory herding livestock, but when a herd collapses below roughly four animals the herd can no longer sustain a herder during the migration. The family then has no choice but to settle down and begin cultivation, which makes growing the herd very difficult. Travis continues to research how this type of dynamic threshold affects individual decision making under risk.

Building on his work at the World Trade Organization and on a variety of projects relating to patent policy and strategy, Travis recently launched a research initiative with the World Intellectual Property Organization to analyze firms' strategic use of patents in non-OECD countries. This project links patent application data with trade data at an unprecedented level of resolution, which will permit detailed modeling of the decision to apply for patent protection in various countries.

Travis' research interests ultimately stem from a desire to inform and influence policy. With his move to California, Travis started devising projects with direct relevance to California in order to engage policy at a local and domestic level. Travis is currently leading a project in collaboration with Doug Gubler, UC Davis plant pathologist, that aims to assess grape growers' use of disease forecasts in their treatment of powdery mildew. This project will integrate detailed pesticide use data at the grower level with spatially explicit

disease forecast data. The project will also use economic experiments to understand growers' treatment tendencies and to improve the use of disease forecasts in order to reduce aggregate pesticide applications. To conduct these experiments, Travis will use a mobile lab with handheld and laptop computers that he recently developed.

Travis lives in Davis with his wife Heather, daughter Hannah (age 6) and son Rockwell (age 4). A two-year LDS Church mission in southern France (1992–94) sparked Travis' initial interest in languages and international work. After graduating together from Utah State University, Travis and Heather moved to Morocco on a Fulbright grant (1997–99) to learn Arabic and research the conservation and development implications of bioprospecting—the search for novel and potentially valuable biological resources—in the argan forests of southwestern Morocco. He has subsequently lived and worked in Geneva, Switzerland and Tamil Nadu, India. In his sparse but jealously guarded free time, Travis loves to be outdoors, running, cycling, or hiking—and never more than when he is with Heather, Hannah, and Rockwell.

Professor Lybbert can be reached by e-mail at tlybbert@ucdavis.edu.