

EE460: Challenges to IT Industry

Bhanupong

Lecture 18

Main themes

- Industry characteristics
- Vulnerability and competitiveness
- International product fragmentation
- Import dependency
- Challenges
- Strategic industrial policy
- Digital divided
- Impact of global recession and recovery
- The great deluge: Impact and responses

IT Salient feature

- Share in total exports 13%
- Share in total imports 14%
- Relative trade balance -3%
- Relative unit value
(world average=1) 1.3
- Per capita exports 260 USD
- Share in world market 1.8%

IT- led growth hypothesis

“Countries that invested more in Information Technology would achieve consistently higher productivity and income growth rates.”

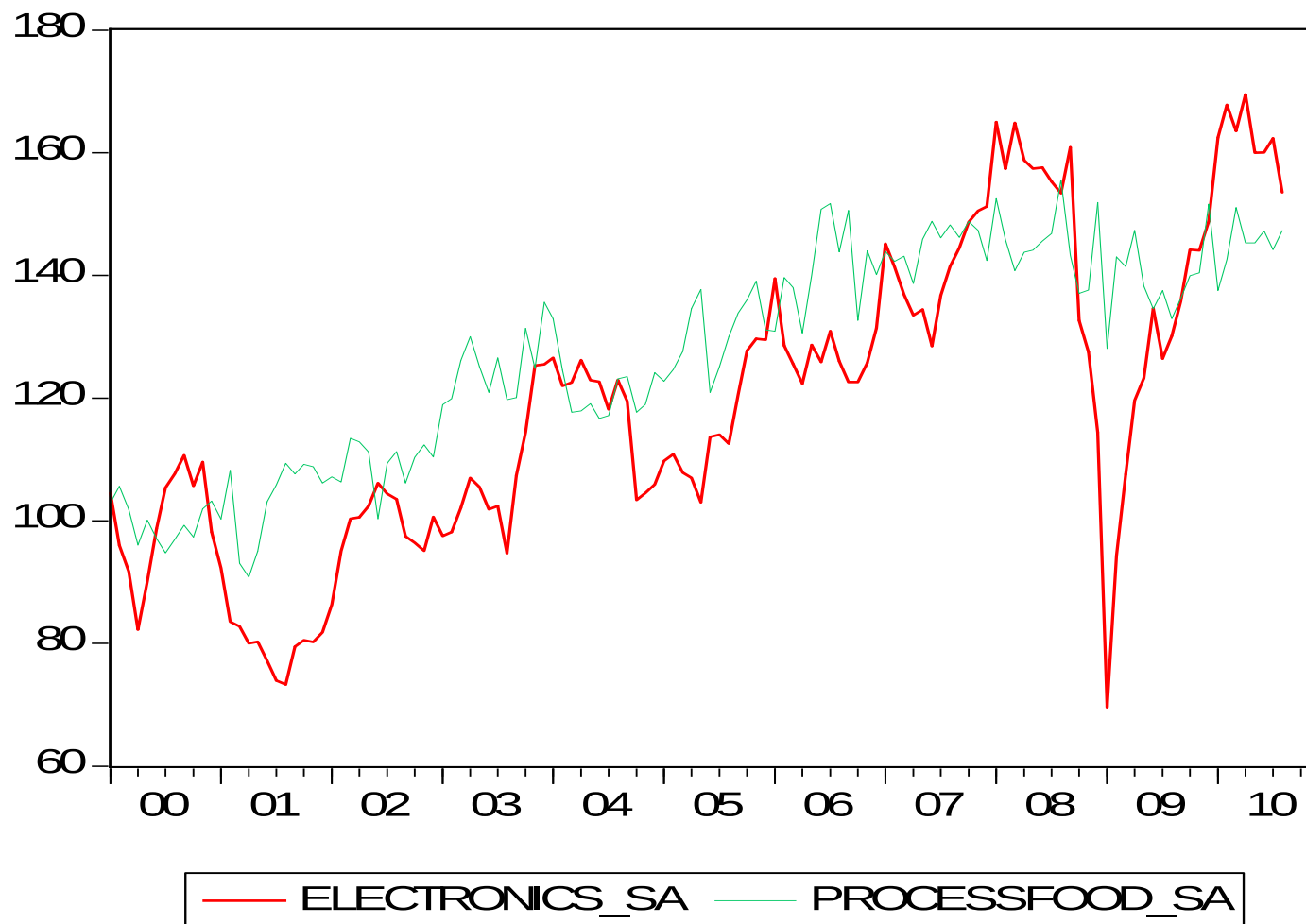
How do we verify this hypothesis?

What are the caveats of this hypothesis?

Domestic IT Market

- The domestic IT market in Thailand has been growing rapidly since the economic recovery in 1999.
- The *hardware* market is larger than the combined software and IT service sectors.
- These three sectors are complementary by nature.
- They move together closely in the same direction.

Manufacturing production index
Jan 2000-Aug 2010
Source: Office of Industrial Economics



The IT sector is extremely sensitive to business-cycle

- The year 2001 witnessed another poor performance of the Thai economy, when the GDP growth rate dropped to 2 percent.
- The IT industry suffered the same contractionary impact of slow world GDP growth.
- When the economy rebounded, the growth of the IT industry surpassed the GDP growth.
- We observed similar situation during the global recession in 2009 and the sharp rebound in 2010 of IT exports.

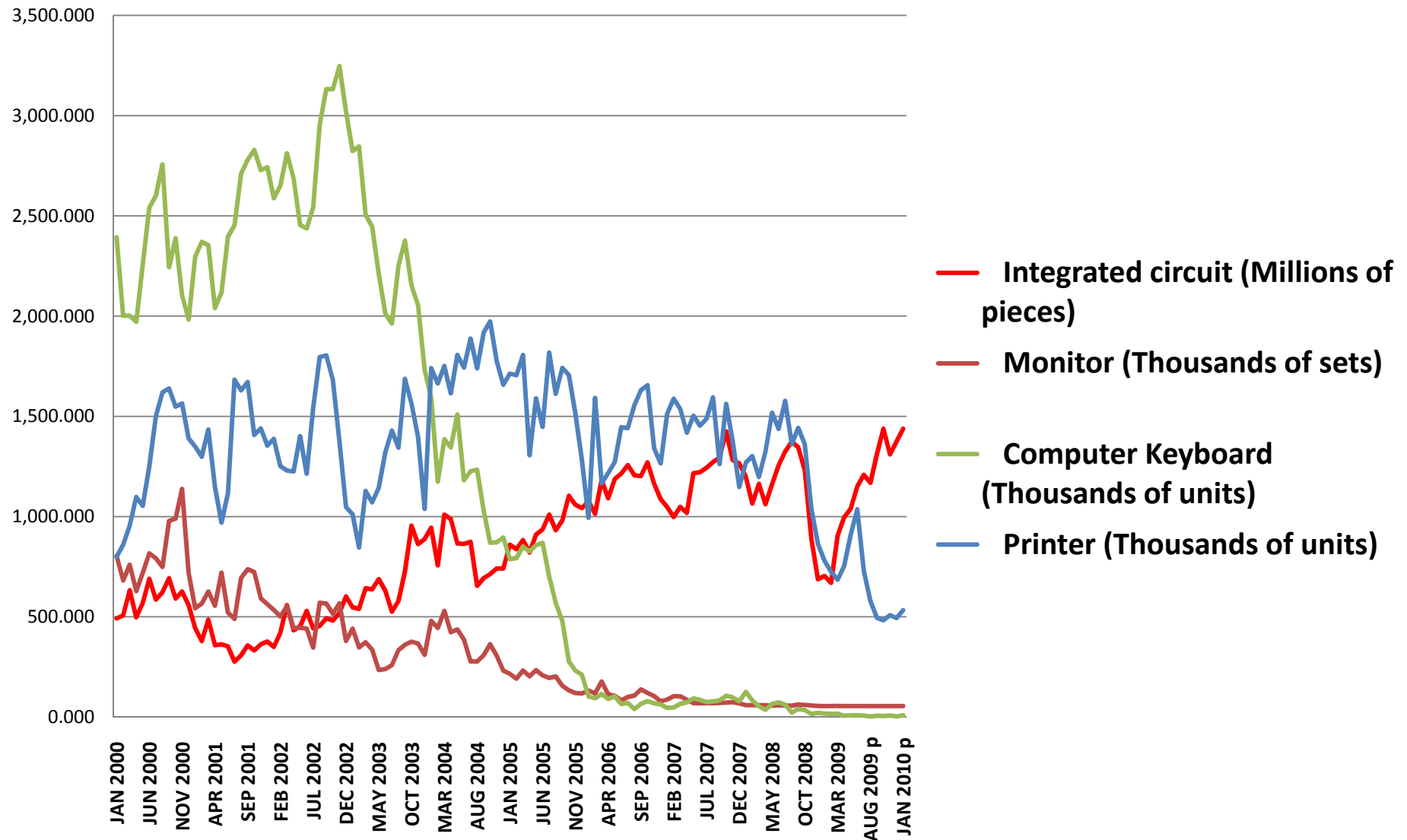
How to maintain a stable growth path

- Since shocks are random, the IT industry will still have a long-term prospect as long as the GDP can maintain its stable high growth path.
- Shocks like those in 1998, 2001, 2003, and 2009 would simply cause a *temporary deviation* from the stable growth path of the IT market.
- The IT growth is also consistently growing faster than the GDP growth during the boom and likewise it would fall faster during the GDP slump.

Changing comparative advantage

- Computer and Hard Disc Drive have the most promising trend.
- Output of computer tripled within 5 years, whereas output of HDD rose by 250 percent between 2000 and 2004.
- The output of integrated circuit and printer has a moderate growth, while computer keyboard and monitor has been declining.
- Thailand cannot compete with cheap imports from low-cost countries.

Domestic production of IT products 2000-2010



Changing comparative advantage

- **The changing comparative advantage has made some of Thailand's IT products become less competitive.**
- **Product fragmentation in manufacturing process generates intra-industry trade, where firms in different countries engaging in trading parts and components.**

International product fragmentation

- Cross-border dispersion of component production within vertically integrated production process.
- Each country specializes in a particular stage of production processes.
- Deepening structural interdependence of the world economy
- Rapid growth of trade in parts and components at a rate exceeding that of trade in final goods because a good crosses multiple borders while in the process.

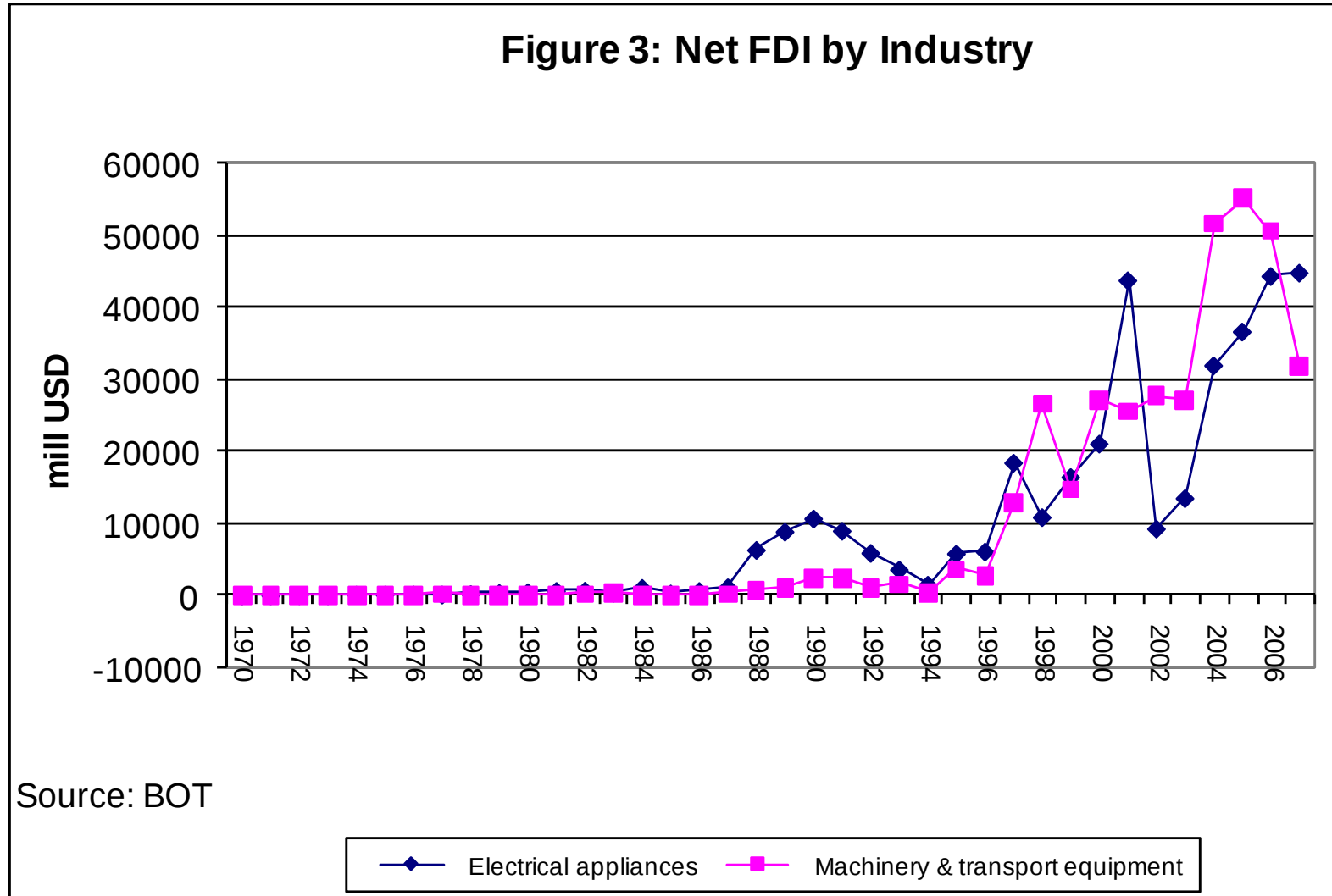
Trade fragmentation

- Production and trade networks result from the strategies of firms which shifted from exports to international production to reduce costs and react to the market and technological change from capacity improvement.

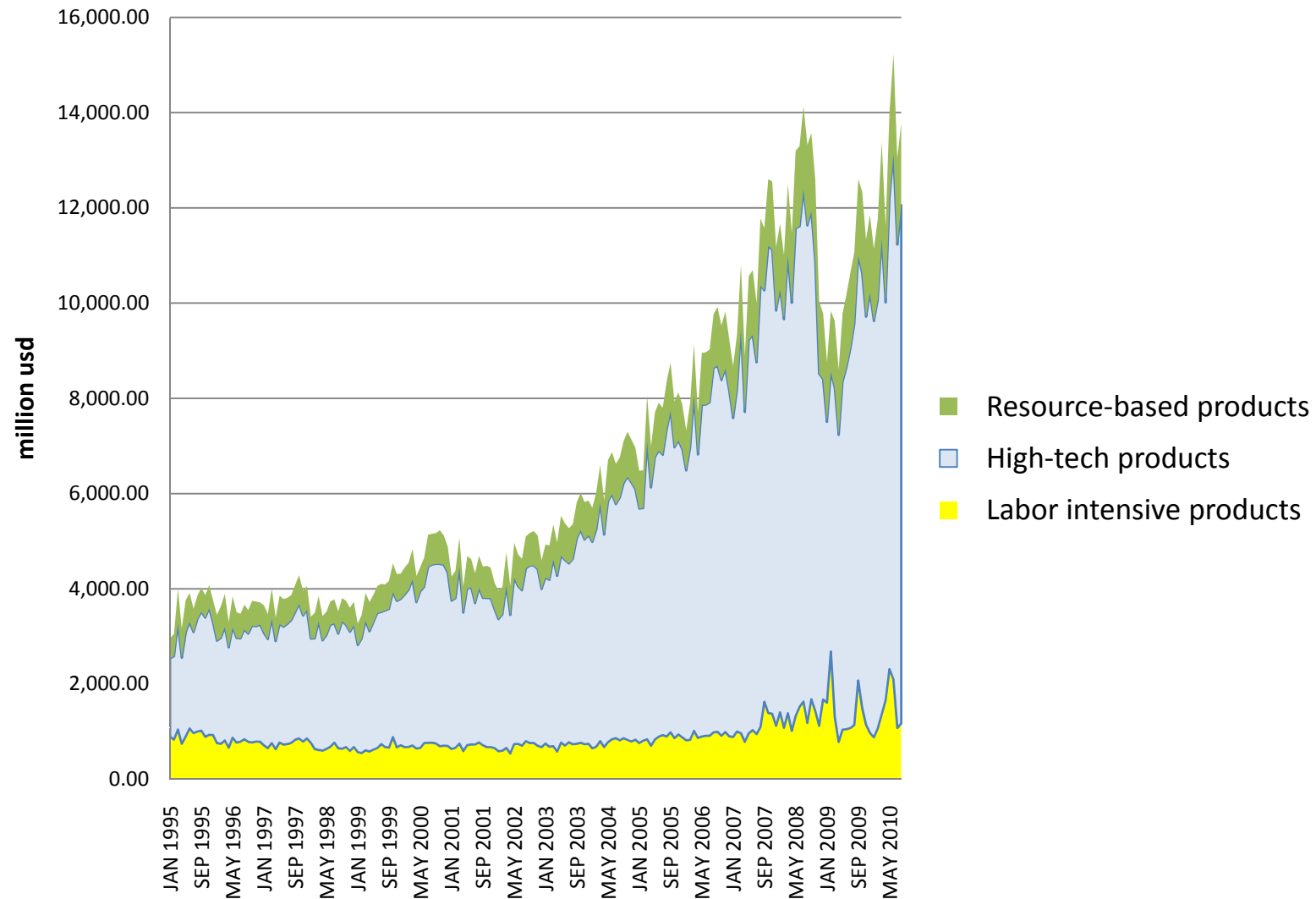
Vertical infra-industry trade

- The new trade pattern differs from the inter-industry trade pattern where trade of different final goods or intra-industry trade where same intermediate goods with different attributes are traded.
- Electronics and electrical machinery industries can be fragmented because they are manufacturing industries which the technology allow “slicing the value chain.”

Yen appreciation and FDI?



Manufactured exports: 1995-2010



Changing pattern of exports

- The share of high-tech exports rose from 45 percent in 1993 to about 60 percent of total Thailand's exports in 2000.
- The rising share in total exports of the high-tech products and the declining importance of labor intensive products demonstrate the changing pattern of comparative advantage of Thailand's industry.
- **Electronic products require only 13.6 percent of their input locally, resulting in heavily depending on imported raw materials.**

A big challenge

- Exports cannot take place without the flows of foreign direct investment in the IT industry.
- Since 2000, the rising trend of the high-tech products has been stabilized.
- Without continuing flows of foreign direct investment in to the IT sector, the trend might be reversed in the future.
- Another challenge in the IT industry: how to attract flows of foreign investment when large parts of FDI have been diverted to other countries in Asia.

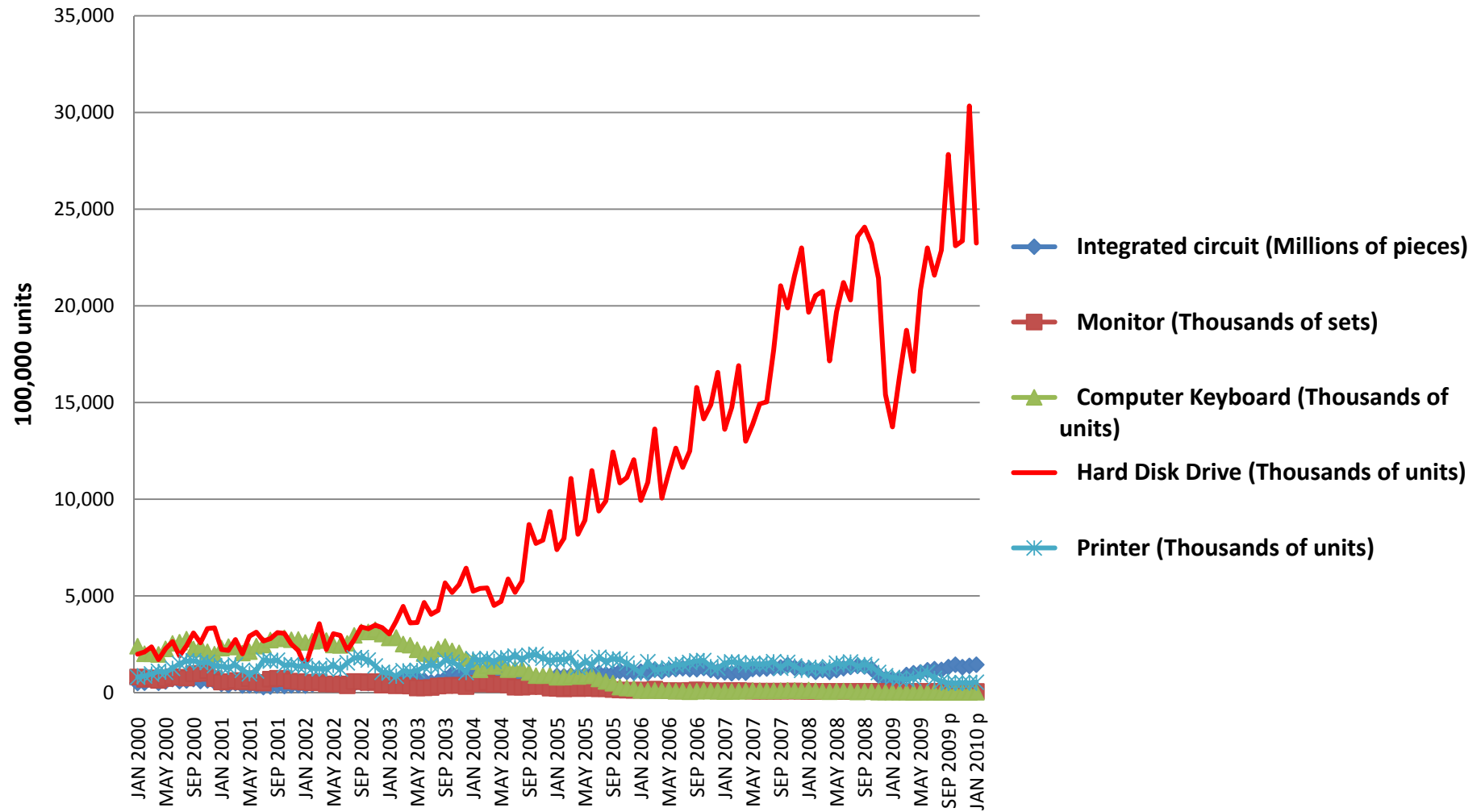
Can FTAs help?

- Will the formation of free trade agreements between Thailand and other countries win back some parts of FDI that might have gone to China?
- What are fundamental factors determining the inflows of FDI into the IT industry?

Greater volatility

- Exports of IT products rely mainly on the strength of the world economy.
- Thailand's exports of IT products fluctuate along the world trade volume.
- Their volatility is far greater than the volatility of the world trade growth.

Electronics Exports



export orientated products
60% > X/Q > 30%

- ***IC, Computer, Monitor, HDD, Printer***
- Canned pineapple and seafood
- Leather product
- TV, air conditioner, washing machine
- Rubber block and rubber gloves
- Wood furniture, glass sheet, leather footwear

As a price taker

- Dynamic ***supply response*** is the key to success to take the opportunity of the boom.
- Declining IT prices would return after the world glut of IT products.
- How to deal with temporary declining prices and excess supply: quantity adjustment is required.

Synchronization Problem

- The three major export markets whose shares exceed 10 percent of total exports are: USA, Singapore, and Japan.
- Thailand has already exported IT products to more than 200 countries in the world.
- Market diversification **cannot** solve the problem of market fluctuations as long as those exports markets are interrelated and subject to the same business and technology cycles.
- But India and China are growing rapidly during the global slowdown in 2009.

Technical barriers to trade: WEEE and ROHS

- Among the top importers of IT products from Thailand, the EU has the market share around 15 percent.
- The EU legislations that electronics manufacturers must comply are:
 - (1) Reduction of Hazardous Substances (ROHS),
 - (2) Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE)
 - (3) Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)

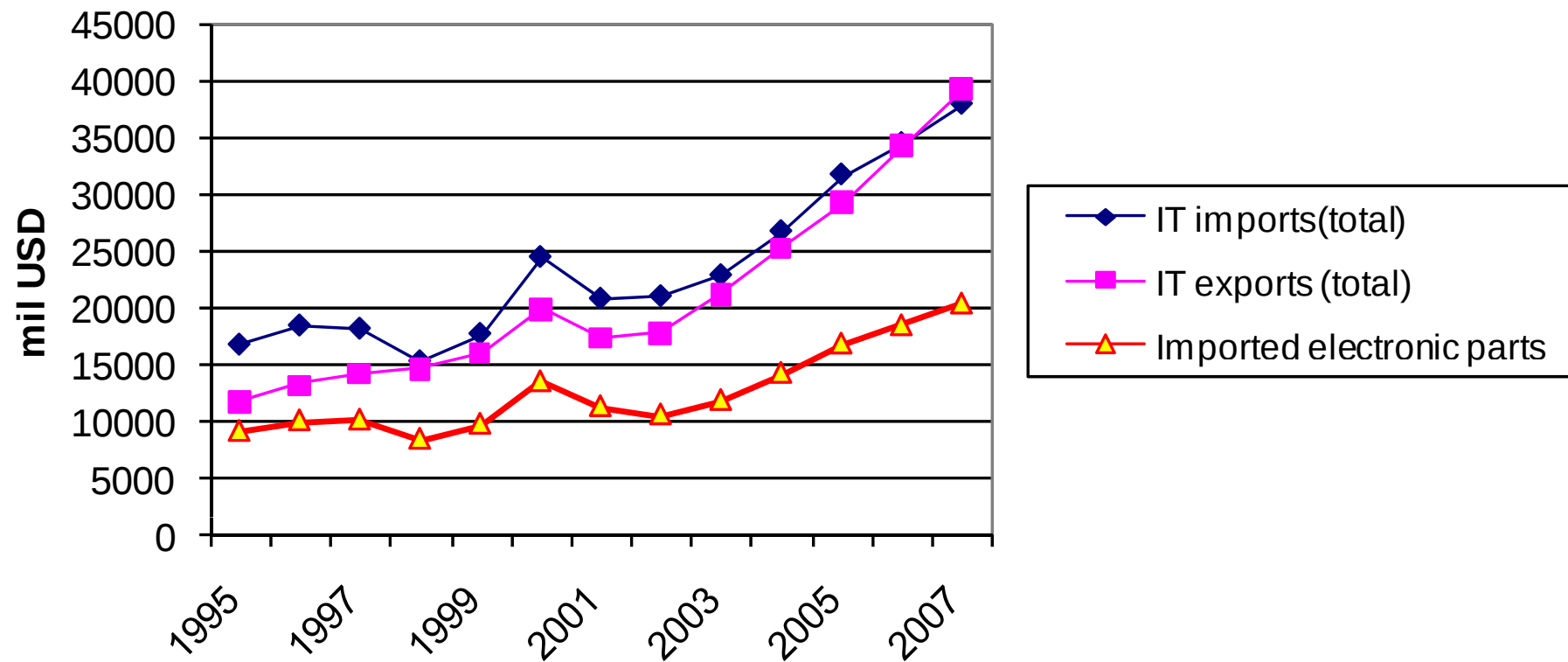
How to REACH Europe

- Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)
- REACH contains regulations that control the manufacture and use of chemicals in goods imported into Europe.
- These products need to be registered, evaluated, and authorized for production or use within the EU (European Union) without harming human health or the environment.

REACH has been in effect since June 2007

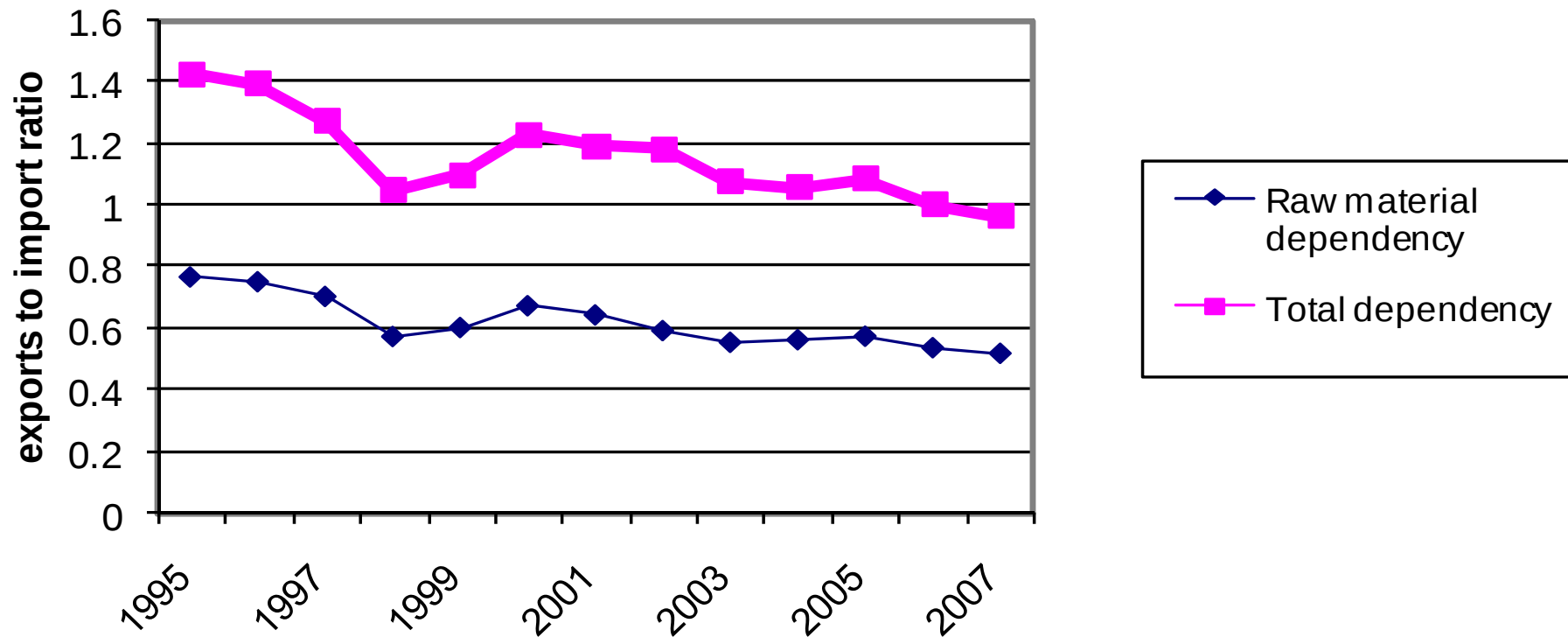
- Producers and importers must seek permission from the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) to produce and use chemicals
- These kinds of regulations would raise the cost of production due to high *compliance cost*.
- They can be regarded as *non-tariff barriers* to IT products from developing countries.
- *Have Thailand's exports to the EU been affected by such non-tariff barriers?*

Figure 6: Import dependent IT Exports



Source: BOT

Figure 7: Declining import dependency



Source: BOT

Just an assembler

- FDI in the IT industry brought along imported machinery as well as imported raw materials.
- The industry produces according to the specification of the multinational corporations that have chosen Thailand as assembly plants.

Innovation and originality is needed

- Similar to the automobile industry, the Thai IT industry does not have its original designs that can create its own market or brand names.
- The ability to do so depends on quality of human resources and telecommunication infrastructure.
- The effectiveness of the government policy in enhancing competition in the telecommunications so that they can provide efficient infrastructure for IT users and development.

The seven-second syndrome

- Should the government subsidize the IT industry?
- Any room for market intervention?
- Is there any justification by market failures and strategic intervention?
- Say goodbye to the 3G system

Sophisticated interventionism

- *“Industrial policies in High Asian Performing Economies are responsible for successful performance: policies that favor particular industries over others”.*
- These policies include, in addition to tariffs, import restrictions, and export subsidies, more complex policies such as low-interest loans and government support for R&D.

Skeptical view on industrial policy

A wide range of industrial policy

- Singapore: detailed government direction
- Virtual laissez-faire in Hong Kong
- South Korea: large industrial firms
- Taiwan: small and family-run companies
- With different emphasis on industry, yet these economies have achieved similar high growth rates.

Overrated

- Actual impact of industrial policies may not have been large, according to the World Bank.
- Little evidence that countries with explicit industrial policies have moved into the targeted industries any faster than those which have not.
- From 1973 to 1979, Korea followed a policy for promoting heavy and chemical industries, which were proved to be costly and judged to be premature and was later abandoned.
- Industrial policy was not a key driving force behind Asian success.

Growth drivers

- These successful Asian economies have very high saving rates which can be used to finance high rates of investment.
- Most of these countries have made great strides in public education.
- The combination of high investment and rapidly improving education levels explains a large part of the rapid growth in East Asia.
- Trade policy has permitted rapid growth, but it is overstating the importance of trade policy if we say that it caused growth.

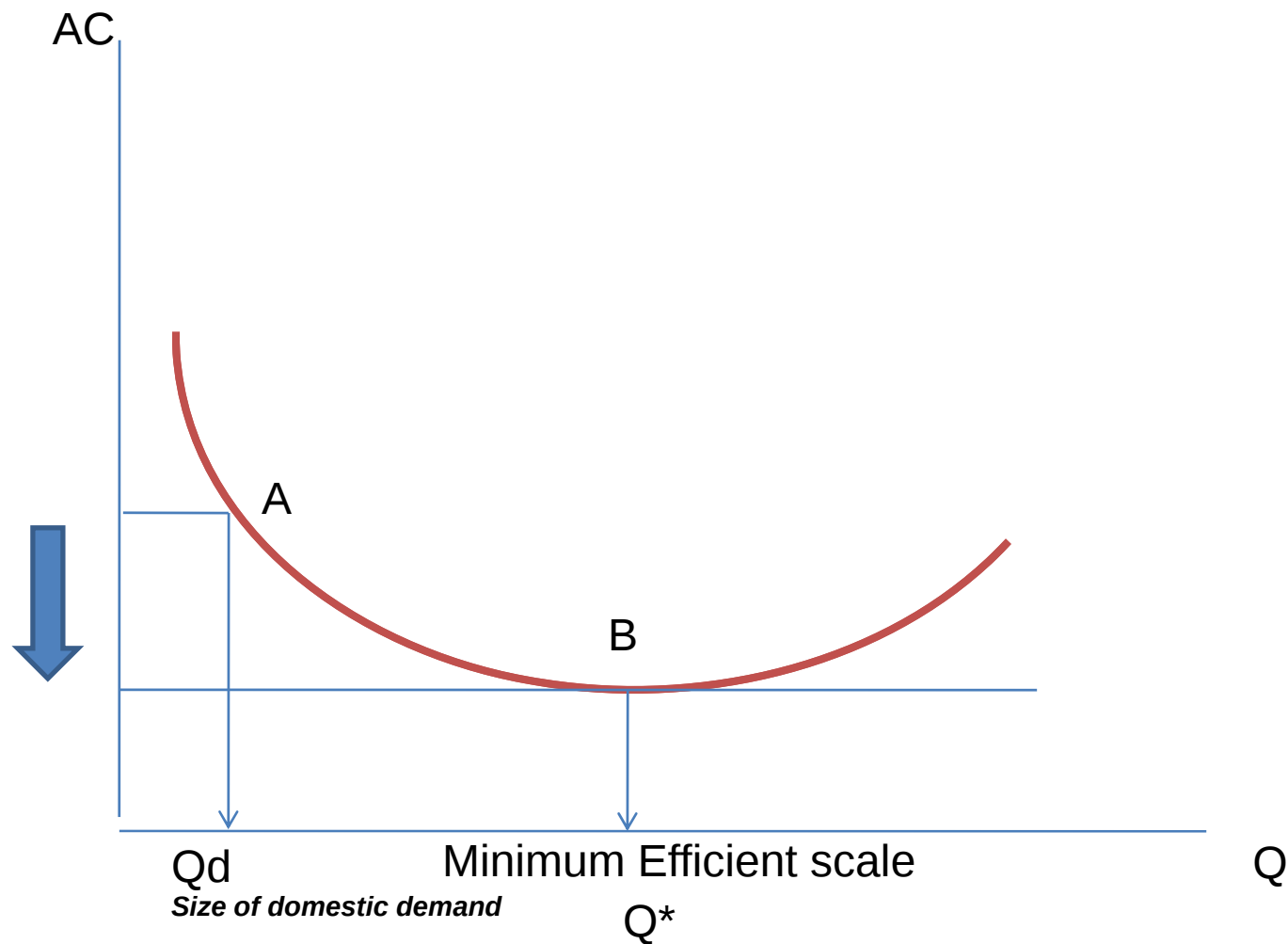
Challenges

- The industry cannot rely on the *undervalued* baht to offset the dollar price disadvantage.
- When the dollar has to perform its role in correcting the US's huge current account deficit, the IT industry in Thailand might face another crisis as the baht would appreciate significantly against the dollar.
- The industry must prepare for the strengthening of the baht as a result of the weakening of the dollar in the future (29 baht?).

Liquidity injection

- The industry must focus also on creating domestic demand to generate their income to partially mitigate the impact of global recession in 2009.
- How to deal with a temporary demand shock?
- Is there a limit to relying on domestic demand?

Inward-looking and self-sufficiency policy



Quality of human capital

- Large parts of ICT workforce are in low skilled labors such as technicians, while the percentage of high-skilled computer professional is very small.
- The average years of schooling for the Thais above 15 years old is only 7.8 years.
- The enrolment for the tertiary education is low (35 %) compared to countries with IT success.
- Government spends 5.5% of GDP on education

Science and Technology vs. Social science

- Thai universities produce only 32 percent of graduates in the field of science and technology.
- More social science and humanities are produced because of their lower unit cost.
- The total number of IT researchers was only 750 persons in 2001.
- What is the corresponding figure in 2009?

Population per patent

A proxy for innovation in science and technology

- Mexico 1,267,532
- **Thailand 340,000**
- Singapore 13,000
- Australia 18,000
- South Korea 6,000
- Japan 3,914
- USA 2,800

Source: The Economist



Innovation

- Patents are a crude but useful measure of innovation.
- The change shows that Chinese inventors are developing a stake in intellectual-property protection.
- And because national patents protect the technologies of foreign firms too, the trend reflects how global companies are ploughing into China as a market and a manufacturing base.
- Even Japanese firms have increased their patent filings in China but decreased them at home.

Poverty and Digital Divide

- Poverty and access to IT products are negatively correlated.
- Since education and labor productivity are related, solving the problem of digital divide requires a long-term solution through providing equal opportunities for education for the whole country.

Figure 8: Digital Divided by Poverty

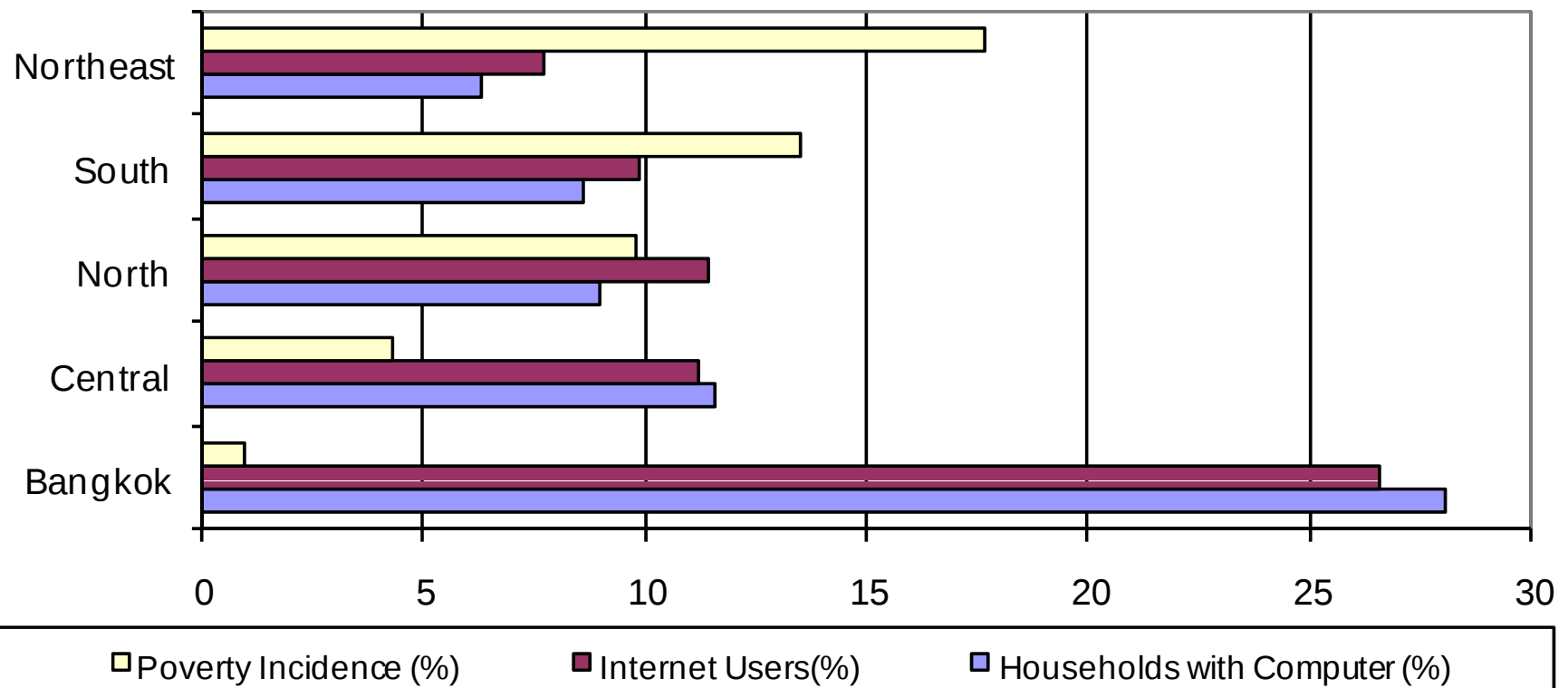
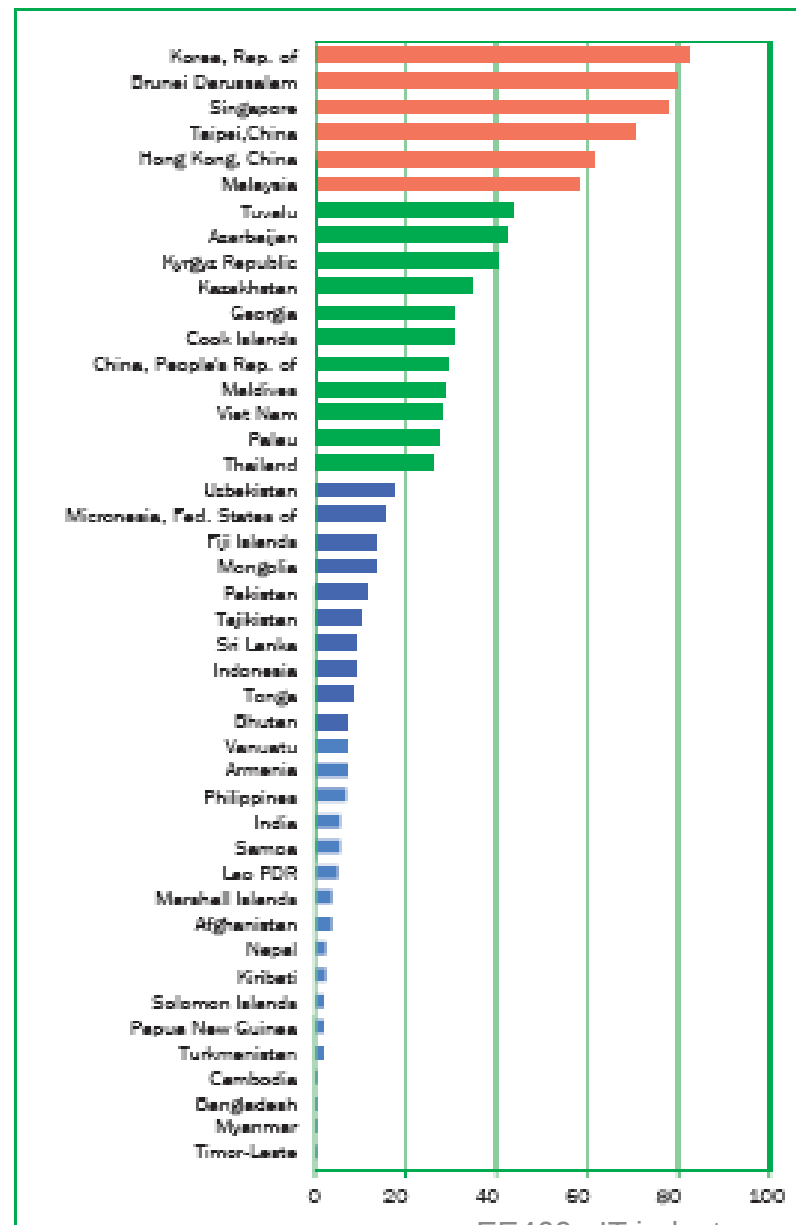
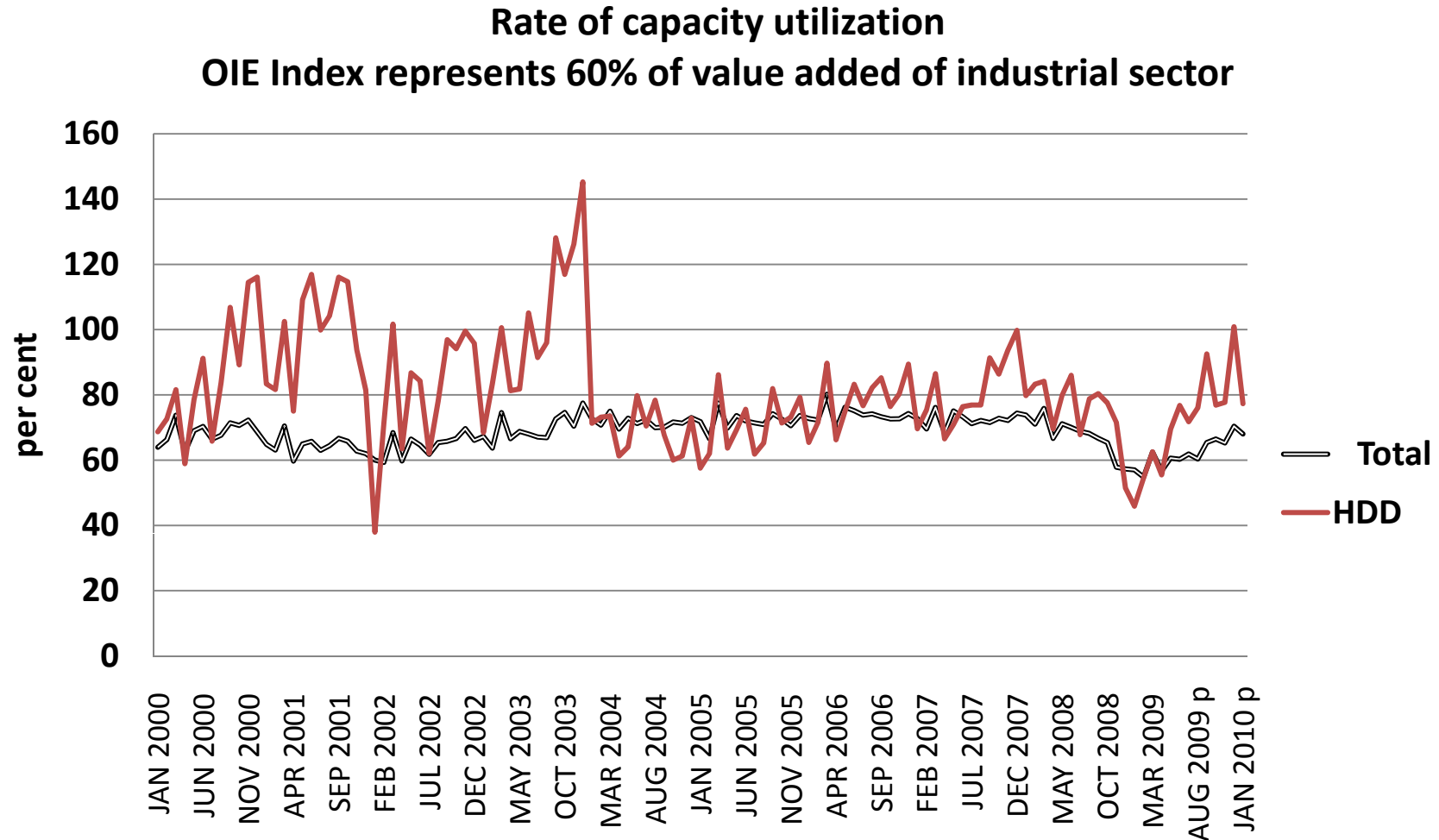


Figure H8 Number of Internet Users, 2009
(per 100 population)



The digital divide is a three-way split in developing economies. Six relatively rich economies have between 58 and 82 internet users; 11 economies in the middle group have between 26 and 43; and the remaining majority, 27 economies, below 17 per 100 population.

Impact of the two global recessions



Hitachi HDD maker to invest another B15.5bn

- BKK Post Published: 9/08/2010
- Hitachi Global Storage Technologies (HGST), the world's third largest hard-disk drive manufacturer, is preparing to invest 15.53 billion baht in Thailand where the data-storage industry aims for continuous annual export growth of 10-15%.
- The latest investment from HGST has been approved by the Board of Investment (BoI) for the production of HDD and components including head gimbal assembly (HGA) at its plant in Prachin Buri, according to the BoI.
- HGST is among the world's top four HDD players operating in Thailand. With the presence of **Seagate Technology, Western Digital (WD) and Toshiba Storage Devices**, the kingdom accounts for 90% of HDD production worldwide.
- The sector, which employs 200,000 people, expects record-high exports of 500 billion baht this year, an increase of 15% over 2009.

FDI on the rise

- Apart from HGST, Seagate and WD are also planning to expand the production in Thailand.
- Moreover, the world's top two HDD makers have been in the process of moving their research and development (R&D) operations to Thailand.
- "To support the industry's dynamic growth, the government is recommended to help develop the required human resources including PhD personnel in the area, and other skilled labour."
- According to the international research firm IDC, the global HDD industry is expected to have average annual revenue growth of 9% from 2009 to 2012 to close to 800 million units valued at \$40 billion.

What determines FDI

- HGST in the second quarter recorded 36% year-on-year growth in revenue to \$1.5 billion. Sales totalled \$3 billion in the first six months of this year compared with \$4.8 billion in all of 2009.
- According to the BOI, apart from HGST's project, other major investments in Thailand in the first half included Magnecomp Precision Technology's 3.6-billion-baht HDD suspension venture, a 2.9-billion-baht investment by Minebea for HDD components, and a 2.6-billion-baht project of Sony Technology for digital camera production,

Conclusion

- Policy must foster the expansion of the domestic demand for IT investment at all potential segments of society to bridge the digital gap between urban and rural areas.
- Both external and internal liberalization of the IT industry is necessary for Thailand to reap the benefit of the fast changing trend in the IT technology
- The global recession in 2009 adversely affected IT exports, but its resilience has been demonstrated by the sharp rebound in 2010.

The great flooding

- What will be the impact of the great deluge on the IT industry?
- How long will it take for the industry to recover?
- What should policy responses be to help the unemployed?
- Would the great flood divert FDI away from Thailand?