

Development News – 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2016.

## Virtual School

The first virtual school in South Africa to offer CAPS and Cambridge curriculum from Grade R to Grade 12, THINK Digital College is now available as an alternative schooling system for children.



This flexible, convenient, cost effective and immediate virtual schooling system makes it possible for students to work from home or from a Think Tutor Centre at the click of a button.

Registrations for the 2017 academic programme are currently open with fees varying from R 3,500 per year for Grade R to R9,500 for Grade 12.

Students who get accepted into the school will join an online community and communicate virtually with classmates. All the student needs is a smart phone or tablet and internet connection to complete their schooling from anywhere in the world.

“Our aim is to produce young adults who are innovative, creative and independent in their thinking, who have courage, perseverance and resilience, and who believe in themselves and their potential,” says THINK Digital College CEO Janessa Leita.

Students will be able to complete their school curriculum guided by online teachers through an engaging and interactive process where a combination of animation and video will be used as teaching tools.

Students are welcome to work ahead of the suggested schedule, however they must maintain a minimum pace to successfully complete the curriculum.

Students can simply log on to their profile at any hour of the day, work on assignments/projects and then submit their work to be marked.

Electronic feedback will be sent through to their learning coach portal.

Leita, who is also a mom to three sons, with the youngest son having been diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome says she visited countless schools but could not find one suitable for her son.

“There was no problem with his academic ability but he was facing unrelenting bullying,” she said. “THINK Digital College was inspired by my son’s need for a schooling alternative that met his unique needs.”

THINK Digital College is registered with SACAI and offers both the National Senior Certificate as well as the Cambridge curriculum.

For more information and interviews please contact Theresa Lotter on +27 (0)82 774 6720 or visit [www.thinkdigitalcollege.co.za](http://www.thinkdigitalcollege.co.za)

### **Africa's Food Market**

Africa's agricultural productivity has long lagged behind the rest of the world. Crop yields grew across Asia from 1960 onwards, lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty, but stagnated in Africa where cereal yields stayed largely unchanged for the 30 years of the green revolution.

As a consequence, many African countries have met increased demand for food through overseas food imports, a wasted opportunity given that the continent boasts 60% of the world's available arable land. This over-reliance on imports is also a risk, as trade restrictions and price hikes in volatile times leave populations at risk of food insecurity. If climate change isn't tackled, Africa will simply never begin to fulfil its potential. It will only make things harder for the continent's millions of smallholder farmers who rely on farming for their income or livelihood. According to the Adaption of African Agriculture initiative (AAA), the slump in crop yields could reach 20% in 2050, even if global warming is contained under 2°C.

The good news is that we know investment in agriculture works and we have seen encouraging progress. Research from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) shows how governments that invested 10% of spending in agriculture and supported the sector, have seen productivity and GDP rise, and poverty rates decline since 2005. Momentum has been building for several years now with promising public and private sector initiatives such as Grow Africa, AGRA, the Malabo Declaration, the New Alliance, and now the triple AAA initiative. African governments have committed to allocate at least 10% of public expenditure to agriculture.

Agriculture is also increasingly seen as an engine of economic growth and a source of jobs for the continent's large youth population. The Zimbabwean businessman Strive Masiyiwa has noted that the continent's food market could be worth US\$1 trillion in just 15 years.

### **FAO Data Base**

Data is costly to produce and often complex to communicate but is the key decision-support tool for policy makers. FAO has launched a new and revamped [FAOSTAT](#) website - the most comprehensive statistical database on food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, natural resources management and nutrition - and made it even more accessible for public use.

The updated web-based tool, now in its fourth edition, includes a host of behind-the-scenes technological improvements as well as user-friendly innovations such as full compatibility with mobile devices and superior download options that will significantly improve the overall user-experience.

FAOSTAT offers free, open and easy access to time-series and cross-sectional data for 245 countries and territories starting from 1961. It typically receives around 200,000 visits per month from national statisticians, government officials, researchers, the private sector, international agencies, civil society and the media from all over the world.

### **Easier to use, more to see**

It now offers a completely new state-of-the-art user interface, accessible by smartphone and tablet as well as by personal computer. Its search options have been enhanced, filters improved and navigation simplified, while the overall system architecture has been made more flexible, allowing quicker publication of new data sets in the future.

Data visualisation has been improved with the new tool, and it is now possible to download customized data sets, maps and charts that users could previously only browse.

### **Ready-to-use key indicators**

The new FAOSTAT also introduces a new feature, presenting a set of ready-to-use key indicators - ranging from land use and food production to food access and government budget allocations for agriculture - by country, region and for the whole world.

Some of these indicators are those adopted to assess and measure progress towards the targets set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. FAO is the custodian of 21 key SDG indicators, and FAOSTAT will help monitor the international community's pledges to eradicate extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition by 2030 as well as promote

sustainable agriculture and use of natural resources.

Moreover, with the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on climate change, international organisations will help countries to put in place and monitor national actions for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

FAOSTAT's data set on greenhouse gas emissions is already being used to facilitate analysis of where the best mitigation options lie along food-system supply chains, helping countries and their farmers to develop faster and more targeted climate-smart strategies that boost resilience and food security as well as enabling access to international climate funding.