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For students and employees of Wageningen UR

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**INTERNATIONAL
EDITION**

>> JOHAN + COLLECTING

Johan Derksen, senior biotechnician at Unifarm

'You can always throw it out later'

Johan Derksen never throws anything away. He collects all sorts of things. You name it, he'll produce it from a box or a cupboard in his house, former WUR experimental farm De Santacker in Elst. Odd bits of equipment, piles of yellowing panoramas, state portraits of the royal family, dinky toys, a roll of old tickets for Wageningen Football Club... 'An interest in history,' is his own explanation. Tinged with nostalgia, a feast of memories. And another plus: 'I am never bored.'  RK / photo: Guy Ackermans

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'YOU HAVE TWO NEW MESSAGES'

I'm a phone man. Not an app man or a text message man, or an email man either really. I'm basically a phone man. That's what journalists do. Talk, chat, ask questions, pass the message on. I'm one of the dying breed who still leaves voicemails, though I may sometimes send an 'app' afterwards as well. But since working here, I've had to deal every day with a phone system that has clearly been designed by someone who never actually makes phone calls. An IT guy keen on efficiency, I suspect. A fan of email. If someone leaves me a voicemail, I get an email. Which I can't listen to without others listening in. But a text message gets converted into an excessively enunciated voicemail that a computer-generated voice barks down my ear. Nobody, and I mean nobody, can explain to me why this is. I decided years ago that I mustn't rage against these systems like a latter-day Don Quixote. Don't accept defeat, just bide your time. Until a moment like this. Wonderful. My thoughts frequently turned to the new Wageningen UR phone system last weekend. Just two months to go and then my verbal mailbox will be open to you all.

Edwin van Laar



>> [Scientist digitally hounded by E number haters | p.7](#)

CHANGE AT THE HELM AT ESG AFTER BIG LOSSES

- Losses of over 4 million euros
- New director of operations and head of finances

The Environment Sciences Group (ESG) suffered surprisingly big losses last year. As a result the director of operations and head of finances are being replaced.

Research institute Alterra Wageningen UR incurred a loss of over 3 million euros in 2015. The ESG chair group incurred a loss of over 1 million. These losses are 'surprisingly big', stated the ESG management on the intranet in 3 February.

As a result of the poor financial results, ESG's director of operations Auke de Bruin resigned with immediate effect on 8 February. This followed 'intensive consultations about the worrying financial situation with general director Bram de Vos and the executive board.'

De Bruin will be succeeded by Inge Grimm, now still director of operations in the Social Sciences Group (SSG). She will start at ESG on 1 March. The executive council,



who made the appointment in consultation with De Vos, wanted to arrange the succession quickly to ensure 'continuity in the operations at ESG so that the management is in a strong position to solve the problems.'

Marja Baljé, head of Finance & Control at ESG, resigned last Tuesday too. Baljé has been succeeded by Tjittra Basdew, who has worked for Wageningen UR in various acting roles since 2009 and as a con-

troller for the SSG for the last two and a half years. She was previously brought in as an external consultant to analyse the finances at the ESG, and will now be acting manager there. Before De Vos can plan cutbacks he wants to have a sharp analysis of the reasons for the shortfalls.

ESG ended last year in the red for the third year in a row. De Vos wants to avoid a reorganization and achieve cutbacks through

natural staff turnover, early retirements and helping staff to find other jobs.

The ESG's big losses have put the science unit's employee council on alert too. 'Now we've got to prove our value as an employees' council,' says chair Paul Hinssen. 'It is all hands on deck; what's at stake is saving the organization.'

According to Hinssen there have been big improvements in the relationship between the management and the employees' council of the science unit in the past year. 'Just like the management, we want a healthy organization that books healthy results,' says Hinssen. 'We can see that the management is open and transparent, and is open to our ideas on improving the organization. That openness is encouraging.' The council chair thinks ESG staff will need to take more initiative themselves to improve the institute's research position. 'There are 800 of us, we've got a lot of ideas about what can be improved, and it is important that these ideas come to the surface. The management is open to that.' **AS**

LUYENDIJK IN THE SPOT

Joris Luyendijk had a full house on Wednesday 3 February in The Spot in Orion for his evening talk about corporate culture in the banking sector. The eloquent journalist had been invited by the General Studies organization to talk about his book *Swimming with Sharks*. He vividly described how bankers in the City in London live in continual fear, at the mercy of managers who frequently sack employees on the spot. He also gave an impression of the balance of power between the well-behaved bankers and the 'big swinging dicks' trading in dubious financial products, with their coke and their prostitutes. **KG**



PHOTO: ART/JAN VAN DE GLIND

TO SURINAM FOR ZIKA VIRUS

- **Entomologist Sander Koenraadt has joined mission**
- **Scientists to assess spread of disease**

A Dutch research team is in Surinam this week to assess the way the zika virus is spreading. Wageningen entomologist Sander Koenraadt is on the mission. He and virologists from Erasmus University in Rotterdam are looking at how they can support the battle

against zika. In collaboration with the Bureau for Public Health in Paramaribo, the Dutch team is assessing the spread of the disease. The scientists also want to do research with their Surinamese counterparts on the virus's characteristics and their effects on the human nervous system. Koenraadt is focusing on the scope for biological pest control of the mosquito that carries the virus. The main method used at the moment is to spray insecticide in places

where people have been infected by the virus. Koenraadt was one of the architects of Muggenradar.nl, a network through which members of the public are invited to send mosquitoes in to Wageningen. The entomologist warned last year that a new insect-borne virus would appear in the Netherlands sooner or later. He studies viral diseases such as Dengue fever which are transmitted by mosquitoes. He had already been in touch with his Surinamese colleagues. **AS**

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Moral questions

The Spot was jam-packed when Joris Luyendijk gave his talk about banking. He had a convincing message, explaining that the financial crisis was primarily due to the amoral conduct of senior bankers. And there was apparently nothing wrong with that because: 'Everything we do is within the law so what are you worried about?'

Joris has been travelling around with this message for a year now and he says that his mailbox is full of stories from employees of listed multinationals, pharmaceutical companies, insurers and public broadcasters who say, 'It's just the same here too! Nobody is interested in whether our work can help solve modern-day problems; it's all about bonuses, share prices, profits and viewing figures.'

I feel concerned and wonder: is my WUR amoral too? Everything we do is within the law, apart from the occasional fraud and a bottle deposit study that went wrong. In fact, we use science to help companies make the right choices, politicians draw up sound laws and farmers increase production efficiency. You could even say that we are working on the major, legitimate question of how to feed the growing world population. That is our moral value!

Or is it not really like that? Are we mainly working to stay in the tenure track, get a high citation score or publish in a journal with a high impact factor? Or just to keep our jobs? The Spot was full of young people. It was disappointing to see how few lecturers, researchers and professors there were; I felt ashamed. Why don't our senior managers and executives find this interesting? **R**



Kees van Veluw (57) teaches Permaculture and is active in organic agriculture networks. His vision stems from his work with African farmers, his networks with Dutch farmers, his family life with his wife, three sons, dog and chickens.

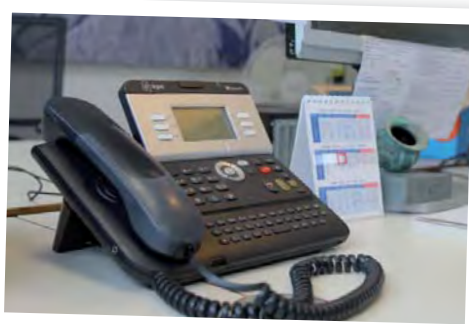


in brief

>>TELEPHONY

Landline phones to go

As of April, Wageningen UR will have a new telephone exchange and provider. That will virtually mean an end to landline phones. Employees will get a SIM card in March from the new provider, T-Mobile, and the switch will take place on 7 April. Everyone will keep their old numbers. Two weeks later, anyone still using a landline or old-fashioned mobile phone will get a smartphone. Only in exceptional circumstances will people be allowed to keep a fixed phone. Wageningen UR will also get a new telephone exchange — Skype for Business — in April. Users will not notice much difference, except that they will then be able to make calls using their PC, tablet or other devices. The programme will be integrated into Outlook. **RR**



>>PHILOSOPHY

Of biology

What is life exactly? This is one of the questions to be explored by a working group on the philosophy of biology, set up by Gerard Jagers op Akkerhuis at Alterra, among others. Jagers op Akkerhuis says concepts such as life, species, genes and populations are repeatedly the subject of debate. Together with two colleagues from Nijmegen and Hanover, he aims to breathe new life into the philosophy of biology. The working group will kick off with a symposium at Nijmegen's Radboud University on 11 February, on the role of '(non-)axiomatic approaches in evolution and biology'. **RK**

>>NOELLE AARTS

Inspirational for colleagues

Noelle Aarts is the most inspirational communications professional of 2016, according to the February issue of *Communicatie Magazine*. The magazine asked 250 Dutch communications professionals who among their colleagues they found most inspiring. The person who got the most mentions was Aarts, professor of Strategic Communication at Wageningen. Reint Jan Renes, who came second, studied in Wageningen too; the communications researcher is now a lector in Cross-Medial Communication at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht. **AS**

For more information?

Read the long version of these items on resource-online.nl.

NO PROFESSOR OF DISASTER STUDIES YET

- Three recruitment rounds without success
- 'Wageningen is not visible in the refugee debate'

For the time being Disaster Studies will have to do without a professor. After three recruitment rounds no suitable candidate has been found. An associate professor is now being recruited instead. A missed opportunity, in the view of assistant professor Bram Jansen, as it means Wageningen's voice is not being heard in the current public debate on the refugee crisis, whereas the organization has a lot to offer on the subject. Disaster Studies, which comes under the Sociology of Development chair group, has been leaderless since the departure of professors Georg Frerks and Thea Hilhorst in 2013. The difficulty of finding a successor to them is 'most unfortunate', says professor and chair of the appointment advisory committee Bram Büscher. 'Disaster studies is a very important field of studies in Wageningen and we occupy a niche in the field. We would very much have liked to get hold of a figurehead, someone with experience and a good reputation, who would be a draw. Unfortunately, after three rounds it proved impossible to find a candidate with enough seniority and baggage to fit the profile.'

PUT OFF

Bram Büscher noticed too that the Wageningen tenure track system was putting some applicants off. 'Several very promising candidates thought the tenure track criteria and the points system too rigid. They genuinely wondered, for instance, whether the required publications, acquisition and other points would leave them any time to invest in social contact with



PHOTO: MALCOLM CHAPMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

their new colleagues.' Disaster Studies is now focusing on recruiting an associate professor rather than a full professor. 'That means we ourselves can offer the person opportunities for professional development to grow towards a full professorship. There are already people within our group who are developing in that direction.' It does mean though that Disaster Studies will have to do without a full professor for at least another three years, because each step within tenure track takes one year. 'That is not dramatic because there are very good people around with whom we can develop things. But there's no disputing the fact that it would be better if we did have a professor.'

REFUGEE CRISIS

The lack of a professor is sorely felt within Disaster Studies, says assistant professor Bram Jansen.

'A professor is a key figure when it comes to how we organize ourselves as a university in relation to the theme of disasters. This is a typically Wageningen topic, there are people working on it in several departments and disciplines, but we don't come together. A professor could forge links between Disaster Studies and Wageningen's traditional fields of interest.' And it is high time this was done, Jansen feels, because in the current refugee crisis Wageningen could put its stamp on the discussion. 'Our approach to crises is unique in the Netherlands. There are many educational institutions that look at migration, natural disasters, conflict and aid interventions separately, but there are few that make the link between these themes, and approach the crises as social phenomena rooted in society. We have a lot to offer in terms of quality, both within the group and in the university as a

whole, and there is a lot of interest among students. But Wageningen is not visible in the debate at the moment. NGOs and Foreign Affairs don't know we are here. We have now even reached the point where we must fear for the loss of the great discipline we've got.'

CRIPPLING

In Jansen's view the selection criteria for the professor could be relaxed a little. 'Apparently it is difficult to match up to the existing profile. But surely that can't just be the end of the story? The current recruitment system is crippling and gets in the way of a creative solution. Instead of just looking at the bare figures, the university should look at whether a person is creative, capable of exploring new areas and looking beyond borders. If we want to expand it might be time to be a bit more flexible with our requirements.' **LvdN**

HELIX AIR EXTRACTION CAUSES LOSS OF 2.4 MILLION

- Costs to be recovered from builders
- Building should have been ready in August

The technical faults in the new Helix building's air extraction system will result in an estimated loss of 2.4 million euros. This is the amount stated in Wageningen University's budget for 2016. People were supposed to move into the building last summer but the problems with the air extraction mean it is still empty.

Facilities and Services will try and recover the loss from the builders, says director Peter Booman. 'It's usually best to go for an amicable settlement,' he explains, 'because going to court will cost both sides a lot of time and money.' Booman would rather not say anything more as he does not want to negatively influence the process.

The aforementioned 2.4 million only covers the direct costs in making Helix ready for use. It excludes indirect costs, for example in keeping Biotechnion open for longer and keeping the catering going at the Dreijen site. According to



Booman, these costs are relatively small compared with the building setback.

Helix will house eight chair groups in the Agrotechnology & Food Sciences Group (AFSG). They have stayed put at the Dreijen since the scheduled move failed to go through. Work has been going on feverishly in recent months to resolve the technical issues.

'Numerous measures, both major and minor, have been taken,' says spokesman Simon Vink. 'They seem to be working. A solution is in sight for all the problems.' Vink remains cautious in giving dates for the completion and move, but 'in principle the building should be ready before the end of this academic year.' **RR**

'IT FEELS LIKE A FATWA'



How do you feel about the storm you've ended up in?

'I do feel amazed when I look at this and see the lack of nuance in the reactions. I find it interesting as a phenomenon but I don't take it personally. Some people have expressed their sympathy, which is kind of them but not necessary.'

You have been saying this for a while. Do you know why you are suddenly getting this response?

'I wrote this morning in a response on *Foodlog* that it feels like a religious fatwa has been issued because I'm saying something people don't want to hear.'

You seem to have touched a nerve. Are you going to do something with this?

'I can see how much emotion and confusion there is about this subject and I intend doing more with this. I am open to a debate as long as people come up with arguments. It annoys me when people dismiss you as someone in the pocket of the food industry total nonsense and a pathetic response. That's just a way of avoiding talking about the substance.' **RR**

Who? Tiny van Boekel, director of the Education Institute (OWI)

What? Made the case for processed food in national newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* and regional papers

Followed by? A tsunami of aggressive reactions; a chef who wanted to 'string him up'

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RESOURCE
For students and employees of Wageningen UR

EATING FISH MAY HELP COMBAT DEMENTIA

- **Brains of 286 deceased seniors studied**
- **Oily fish particularly good for carriers of high-risk gene**

Regular portions of fish may help keep dementia at bay in people with a big hereditary risk of the disease. The result underlines the importance of current Dutch government advice to eat fish once a week, writes Ondine van de Rest, a researcher at Human Nutrition, in the journal *JAMA*.

More and more people in the Netherlands are suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. This is a growing health problem even in rising economies such as China. There are still big gaps in our knowledge about Alzheimer's and there has been little success in tests of potential medicines in recent years. Prevention seems to be the only fruitful approach: increasing welfare, education level and health

levels mean that Dutch seniors are only getting Alzheimer's at an advanced age.

Eating fish is a promising preventive measure. Together with colleagues in Chicago, Ondine van de Rest studied a group of 544 seniors who have been monitored since 1997. They filled in questionnaires about their eating habits. The brains of 286 deceased persons were studied for signs of dementia such as the scars of mini strokes and accumulations of damaging proteins. The brains were also examined for concentrations of heavy metals often found in fish, such as mercury.

The old people who had consumed relatively large amounts of fish turned out to have incurred significantly less damage to their brains. However, this only applied to people with the gene that raises



the chances of Alzheimer's. 'That is puzzling,' says Ondine van de Rest, 'and it is hard to explain it.' Of the participants 25 percent had this gene and they in particular were the ones who had less brain damage the more fish they had eaten. Van de Rest is eager to do further research on this link in future.

Van de Rest found another reas-

suring result as well. Elderly people who ate a lot of fish had more mercury in their brains, but this had no harmful effects. So people who eat fish once a week, as recommended by the Dutch health council, need not worry. Van de Rest did emphasize, however, that children and pregnant women should probably be more cautious. **RR**

ZAMBIA CAN PRODUCE BIODIESEL FROM SOYA

- **Tax exemption needed as incentive**
- **Soil fungus still poses problem**

Zambia could produce biodiesel from soya beans to replace expensive imported diesel. But local production would need stimulating with a tax exemption, recommend Wageningen economist Dusan Drabik and researchers from Cornell University and the World Bank.

For a long time the Zambian government kept the price of imported petrol and diesel down with subsidies, but it stopped doing so a few years ago and announced a policy of producing its own biodiesel from soya. The



economists assessed the consequences of this legislation. Without any further policy, the use of its own soya for biofuels would be detrimental to the Zambian economy, they write this month in the

journal *Food Policy*.

For the people of Zambia it would mean having to pay more for biodiesel produced on their own soil than they do now for imported diesel. What is more,

the soya farmers would earn less. The plan can only succeed if Zambian farmers start growing more soya, say the economists. So the government should stimulate production by exempting soya from tax. The economists advise against making it compulsory to grow soya.

Even if stimulating soya farming is a success, Zambian farmers still have another problem to deal with. Soya production in southern and eastern Africa is increasingly plagued by *Phakopsora pachyrhizi*, a fast-mutating soil fungus to which no resistance has yet been found. Wageningen PhD candidate Harun Murithi is currently studying the genetics and ecology of this destructive soil fungus. **AS**

SECONDARY FOREST STORES A LOT OF CARBON

- **More sequestration in wet climates**
- **More carbon absorbed per year than by rainforest**

Natural second-growth forests on abandoned farmland in Latin America sequester large amounts of carbon. This is reported in *Nature* by an international team of researchers led by Wageningen professor Lourens Poorter. In the study Poorter and his colleagues describe the growth of 1500 patches of secondary forest on 45 locations in Latin America.

The vegetation in question is new forest growing in places where the original rainforest was felled for agriculture. This second-growth forest sequesters enormous quantities of carbon: the annual carbon intake is eleven times larger than that of the average rainforest in the Amazon. It comes to 122 tons of biomass per hectare over 20 years. Calculations show that after 66 years the forest will have stored almost as much carbon as the rainforest that was once cut down there.

This does not mean, however, that you get the old rainforest back, warns Poorter. The combination of species that re-

grow is different to what grew there originally. 'There are many dimensions to the resilience of the forest. We only looked at the regrowth of the biomass. And that goes surprisingly quickly. But it will be a few hundred years before the forest has the same mix of species as the rainforest.'

For Poorter, then, the study should not be seen as sanctioning uncontrolled deforestation. 'In virgin rainforest large amounts of carbon are sequestered. But they are almost fully grown so they hardly absorb any more new carbon. By only looking at the contribution of rainforest to carbon sequestration you miss a lot of the dynamics in tropical forests. The potential of secondary forest for carbon sequestration is enormous. Our message is twofold, then: conserve the primary forest *and* exploit the potential of secondary forests.'

Carbon sequestration by secondary forests does not happen on the same scale everywhere, either. The researchers discovered a link between the increase in biomass and rainfall. The wetter the climate, the faster the secondary forests grow. Based on that link, a map was made showing where secondary forest offers the most potential for carbon sequestration. **RK**



PHOTO: FRANS BONGERS

VISION <<

'Godwit won't gain from cows in the meadow'

Secretary of State Van Dam is going to give dairy farmers 750 euros if they put their cows out to pasture before the first grass is mown in mid-April. The aim is to protect field birds such as the black-tailed godwit. David Kleijn, professor of Plant Ecology and Nature Management, is sceptical. 'I don't see the connection between putting cows out to grass and black-tailed godwits.'



If they put the cows out to grass farmers start haying later, and more godwits survive.

'That's of little consequence. Grutto chicks need long grass to scratch about in for their food without being taken by birds of prey. With the intensification of agriculture, livestock farmers have started mowing earlier and earlier and there is less and less long grass when the chicks hatch out of the eggs. Then you can let the cows graze but you'll still get short grass. Farmers should not only mow later but also raise the groundwater levels in the meadows.'

Why?

'With higher groundwater levels the grass will grow later and more slowly so that farmers can't mow it before the chicks hatch. What is more, the high water level means the grass is less dense so the chicks can scratch around in it better.'

Can the black-tailed godwit still be saved? There are ecologists who say it doesn't adapt well.

'Nonsense, the godwit is a very easy bird in fact. You find it in eastern Europe, for instance, in all types of landscapes, as long as they are open and wet. In Russia the godwit has moved 800 kilometres to the north. That suggests the godwit can adapt to changing conditions. But the godwit has nothing to gain from cows in the meadow, nice as it is to see them out there. The problem is intensive agriculture which leaves no space for the godwit and other field birds such as the lapwing and the oystercatcher, which are faring badly too. **AS**



CATHOLIC CHURCH STEERED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

- Neighbourhoods were modelled on parishes
- Countering the wickedness of the big city

The Catholic church had a big influence on urban development in the Dutch provinces of Brabant and Limburg, concludes Joks Jansen, special professor of Spatial Planning and Cultural Heritage. He studied the urban planning in Eindhoven and Roermond between 1900 and 1060 and saw that the church developed its own vision of urban development with catholic identity embedded in it.

Janssen describes how in the early twentieth century a broad network of social, cultural and political organizations grew up within catholic circles which shared a vision on spatial planning in the Netherlands. This subculture opposed the secular forces of the national government and industry. In Eindhoven, for instance, the church had to take up the cudgels against the expanding company

Philips, which soon needed housing for its workers, and the city architect De Casseres, who took a functional, modern-industrial approach to urban expansion. In opposition to this 'New Pragmatism', catholic architects were of the Delft School, which had more eye for beauty. This alternative fitted into a broader movement which favoured small communities and deplored the sinful city.

In practice the catholic vision took the form of 'garden towns' with new urban neighbourhoods on a scale based on former parishes, with the church at their centre. This way a catholic community was reproduced in modern urban planning, notes Janssen in the journal *Urban History*. The idea was that this design would enable the church to protect the catholic population against the disorder and weakened traditions of the big city. This catholic philosophy was so strong in Eindhoven that the modernization plan thought up by De Casseres was put on ice.

In Roermond the church strongly opposed the mayor, who



The catholic 'community target' thought up by Architect and urban planner M.J. Granpré Molière (1947).

wanted to have the city grow and annex the neighbouring city of Maasniel. The church emerged as the champion of the autonomy of communities. The plan for the Roermond conurbation was swept off the table, following which the Limburg architect Jos Klijnen ensured that the municipalities of Roermond and Maasniel started collab-

orating. Klijnen too uses the concept of garden towns. Catholic urbanization, in fact. Eventually, under the influence of the province, Maasniel was annexed by Roermond after all in 1959. This was unique as it was the first time since Napoleon that a rural community was absorbed into a city. Thanks to the catholic church. **® AS**

TAGGING TO SAVE THE WHITE SHARK

- **Hard to track threatened shark**
- **3500 specimens left**

A new tagging technique could help identify and provide protection in areas with a lot of white sharks. And this is much needed as there are only 3500 specimens left, fewer than the number of wild tigers. This was explained by Oliver Jewell, a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Marine Research NIOZ, on a science day at the Wageningen graduate school WIAS on 4 February.

It is not easy to keep track of sharks. Unlike seals or whales,

they rarely come to the surface so that data from tags cannot be transmitted.

Acoustic tags and receivers

provide a solution to this. A tagged shark which swims past a receiver is then registered. But such receivers have limited re-



ception, so the method cannot be applied out at sea. Nevertheless, results have been booked with the acoustic tags. Sharks are often spotted, for example, in places with a lot of seals. Comparing the data on the two species reveals that seals often hide in the seaweed on reefs. It is precisely at places where the seals cross expanses of water without reef or seaweed that the shark attacks.

Jewell is now testing new tags which measure the movement, depth and temperature of the shark and can even produce video images. This makes it possible to track shark hotspots more accurately. **® HdL**

There was discussion online this week about the growth of the university, the Dutch language and the value of a Master's degree on the labour market. Got an opinion too? Join in the discussion online or email resource@wur.nl

REACTIONS ON...



RESOURCE-ONLINE.NL

LOST IN TRANSLATION

A big group of Dutch people having to speak English just for you. Blogger Kristina gives a lot of thought to this situation.

She can't decide whether the university should encourage international students to learn Dutch. **Gerben** reassures her that there is no need to feel so bad about the situation. After all, she provides students with a chance to practise speaking English. 'On the other hand, if you want to learn Dutch you won't get far if everyone around you always speaks English. Just say 'and now in Dutch?' and you'll soon get some practice.' It doesn't seem as easy as that to everyone. **Hollander** points out that you can't have such in-depth conversations if you force people to speak a second language that don't speak as well. 'Dutch students are more likely to clam up as soon as the discussion switches into English. Only speaking English all the time

denies many Dutch students a chance to make a constructive contribution to the discussion.' Hollander is annoyed by the way Kristina complains about feeling ill at ease. 'I think an awful lot is done for international students already and that they should actually be more focused on Dutch culture.'

LIMITS TO GROWTH

Two Bachelor's programmes applied to set a limit to their intake next year. The Molecular Life Sciences (MLW) and Biotechnology programmes fear their rapid growth might harm their quality.

Most of the responses are positive. 'Super plan,' writes **Einstein**. 'A lot of people drop out now too because they embarked on it too lightly.' There is more support for the idea. One person thinks MLW only trains students to be scientists and not for a job in the business world.

So if it doesn't limit the intake the university risks producing a lot of surplus scientists. **Eridanus** would like students to be selected for their 'very clear motivation', or because 'they have the potential to do more than just complete a university degree and go on to a job in industry in which they use no more than 20 percent of their knowledge.' **Eridanus** is all for a selection process.

The challenge is to learn to spot the highfliers accurately.

ONE STEP AHEAD

Are extracurricular activities really so important for future success, wonders blogger Jan-Willem Kortlever. Surely just getting a degree is a significant achievement in itself?

Readers think Jan-Willem has a point. 'I think it's a pity those extracurricular activities are often used as an excuse for taking longer over your degree,' writes **Lezer**. 'It's perfectly possible to finish a degree within the appointed time and still do other things to boost your CV.' **Marleen**, who lives at home, says she is often judged – even by teachers – on the fact that she doesn't do any extracurricular activities. Yet she gets 'a lot of satisfaction' out of her studies and 'doesn't feel the need for more.'

RR



PROPOSITION

'Running home after work increases creativity and reduces feelings of stress.'

Dina Ripken, who graduated with a PhD in Wageningen on 5 February

Matchmaking parents



A lot of Chinese PhD candidates headed for home at the beginning of February to celebrate Chinese New Year. It is quite possible that their parents will raise the subject of marriage and propose candidates. This kind of parental involvement in the choice of partner is quite usual in China. Eight Wageningen PhD candidates talk about what that means for them.

text Stijn van Gils photos Hollandse Hoogte



It does feel a bit awkward,' says 26-year-old Wageningen PhD candidate MeiMei. For a long time her parents did not interfere with their daughter's love life, but that changed recently. A little while ago they came up with a profile of a boy from Shanghai. 'It feels unnatural. My parents initiated the contact, which makes everything much more loaded. I feel obliged to respond with a serious yes or no. It is not fair to my parents just to say, we'll see.'

MeiMei is not the only Chinese PhD candidate in Wageningen whose parents – or grandparents – get involved with their choice of partner. *Resource* talked to eight of them, who talked openly about it on condition that their real names and recognizable details were withheld. The PhD researchers' observations are broadly similar: it is usual in China to get married under the age of 30. If a partner hasn't appeared before you are 25, parents often give destiny a helping hand, even if their son or daughter happens to be doing a PhD in Wageningen. And even if you have found a partner, that is no guarantee that you will be left in peace.

LOVE CORNERS

'I developed my relationship quite independently; my parents had nothing to do with it,' says Zihao, who met his girlfriend at Wageningen University. The only tense moment, in his view, will be when she finally meets his parents. 'The parents of a friend of mine withheld their support, which destroyed the relationship. My girlfriend, who is doing her PhD here too, is worried about that for us. I'm not worried, I see it as a formality. After all, we're both OK aren't we?'

For parents who are afraid their child won't find a marriage partner in time, all sorts of markets and events are organized in China. 'To facilitate things for them there are special 'love corners' in parks, covered in little

notes in which parents present their children,' explains MeiMei. 'Other parents walk down the long rows of them looking for a suitable candidate for their child. It is not very different to the dating sites here in the Netherlands, I would say. The one big difference is that it is not the children but the parents who take the initiative.'

It is especially challenging for parents of a son to find a wife for him. In China there are on average 1.2 men per woman. 'Especially in the big cities such as Shanghai, girls are incredibly picky and their parents are even pickier,' says PhD candidate Lei. The selection criteria are educational achievement, profession, salary and home ownership. 'Those last criteria are especially important,' says MeiMei. 'It is much harder for a man on a low salary or in a rented house to find a wife. That is because in China there is no standard pension provision for everyone, and the norm in our culture is for us children to look after our parents in their old age. So a good partner for their child is in the interests of the parents as well.'

In Love corners parents hang up little notes presenting their children'

THREE SEXES

You might think it would be easier for women to find a husband. But according to the PhD candidates, there is a catch here. 'It is traditional for a woman to marry a man with a higher status and for a man to marry a woman with a lower status. That makes it difficult for a woman PhD candidate,' says MeiMei. 'In some media there was talk a while ago about three sexes: men, women, and women with a PhD. The latter category was said often to remain alone and unhappy.'

According to Dutch online magazine *De Correspondent*, however, the reality is more complex than that. Last



At special matchmaking events and in the corners of parks, Chinese parents study the personal profiles of potential marriage candidates for their children.



February Adrienne Simons and Kathleen Ferrier wrote in an opinion piece that the government liked to keep the image of 'lonely heart women' alive. Because putting unmarried men in the spotlight 'would mean exposing a much more serious problem', namely the effects of the surplus of men.

Parents of women PhD candidates do however feel there is no time to lose in finding a husband. The hope of grandchildren plays a role here, say the PhD candidates. 'The wish is to pass down your blood to the following generation,' explains 24-year-old Yutong. 'As a woman you can't afford to wait too long, otherwise you will lose your fertility.'

Yutong cannot imagine not getting married. 'My parents were looking for a husband for me too. I told them it was not necessary because I am still young, but if I haven't found a partner in a few years' time, I will agree to a suggestion from my parents. There is a useful side to their helping me too: my parents know me best, so they also know best what is good for me. In many cases you get married first, then you get to know each other better and love can follow then.'

NO CONTRADICTION

For Chinese twenty-somethings who are not happy with their parents' matchmaking efforts, there are some useful options available on the market, such hiring a temporary partner to help you mislead your parents. The Chinese PhD candidates in Wageningen that Resource talked to haven't resorted to this, though. They try to fend off their parents' efforts in kinder ways or they cau-

tiously check out whether a person their parents introduce them to is in fact a suitable match.

'Bluntly contradicting your parents is not done,' says MeiMei. 'I mainly try to listen carefully to their arguments in the hope that they will then get a better sense of my point of view too. It is difficult that I can only discuss it with my parents through digital media. I live in the Netherlands and I am working on my PhD, and I just

'Love doesn't come into it when parents select partners'

want to get on with my work. So if I meet a nice boy while I'm at it, fine. But if I don't, that's fine too. I will be perfectly able to take care of myself later, and I don't need a husband for that. And I think the worst thing would be to be stuck with someone I don't love for the rest of my life.' But MeiMei does see the advantages of her parents' help too. 'If I fall in love with someone my parents introduce me to, that would be great of course.'

Lei is less mild about it. 'Love hardly comes into it when parents choose,' he thinks. He refuses to cooperate. 'I am quite independent in my thinking. That



Li Xie: 'You take our women away from us.'

PHOTO: AART-Jan VAN DE GLIND

matchmaking urge in the family just causes a lot of stress, as far as I can see, both for parents and for children. Luckily my parents agree that I should concentrate on the things that are more important to me, like my PhD. They did show me a photo of a girl, but I didn't do anything about it.'

He started a relationship at secondary school, but his parents forbade it because his studies had to have priority. 'We kept that relationship going in secret. It is ironic: when I was in love I wasn't allowed a relationship, and now that I am not in love, I am expected to have a relationship.'

GAY

Bowen's parents want to help him find a wife too. 'But they are not pushing me yet; they are giving me time to finish my studies abroad.' And as far as Bowen is concerned, that study period will not end any time soon. 'I am gay, I don't want a wife at all. A lesbian friend suggested me get married so we could both go our own way. But that's not what I want. I just want to stay with my partner and maybe marry him one day.' Bowen is going to do his utmost to stay in Europe. He is not telling his parents about his orientation for the time being. 'They will only worry about it.' His partner did visit China last year and they got on very well: at the end of the holiday, his parents even told his partner he was very welcome to come again. 'And of course your wife is welcome too,' they added.

'Do I regret that I can't talk about it openly with my parents?' Bowen smiles. 'Well I so often can't anyway.'

GRANDPARENTS

PhD candidate Xinyi's story is different to those of all the other PhD candidates *Resource* talked to. Her parents don't try to help her find a husband at all. 'Only my grandparents mention it sometimes, but then I just change the subject. My parents are in an arranged and unhappy marriage themselves. They don't want to do that to me.'

Another rather different story is told by 32-year-old student Li Xie, who, unlike the eight PhD candidates, doesn't mind his real name being used in this article. He doesn't trust his parents and thinks he should get to work himself to find a wife. 'I had better get a good degree, otherwise I can forget a relationship.' The former chair of the Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands (ACSSNL) suspended his studies for his Master's in Wageningen for a while but is now studying hard again. 'As a man without a higher degree I would rather not try to date a PhD candidate,' says Li Xie. Secretly he rather envies western men. 'You do see Chinese women with western men but it hardly ever happens the other way round. You take our women away from us; I would like to get revenge, actually.'

At the end of the discussion Li Xie says: 'Could you take a photo of me as well? I think over there by that window is a good place.' He smiles. 'Who knows, this article might bring me a date.' ③

This article is largely based on interviews with eight Chinese PhD candidates. Their names have been changed at their request.

Being single in China is a guarantee you will be hassled, agrees vlogger Derek.

Watch the video on resource-online.nl.





Gebouwen Wageningen UR:
Buildings Wageningen UR:

- 100 Lumen
- 101 Gaia
- 102 Forum
- 103 Orion
- 104 Atlas
- 107 Radix
- 109 Radix Serre, Klima, Agros
- 115 Impulse
- 116 Actio
- 117 Nexus
- 118 Axis
- 119 Triton
- 120 Carus
- 121 Innovatron
- 122 Zodiac
- 123 Vitae
- 124 Helix
- 130 Sports Centre De Bongerd (SCB)
- 201 De Leeuwenborch

Gebouwen niet-Wageningen UR:
Buildings not Wageningen UR:

- A FrieslandCampina
- B NIOO-KNAW
- C Stoas
- D Plus Ultra
- E Campus Plaza
- F Zwembad Swimming pool
- G Tennisvereniging NVLTB
- H Wageningse Mixed Hockey Club

- P** Parkeerterrein
Parking
- Oplaadpunt elektrische auto
Charging point electric cars
- Bushalte
Bus stop
- Amfitheater
Amphitheatre
- Marktplaats
Market square
- Restaurant en toiletten
Restaurant and restrooms
- Werkplek
Workplace

- Route bus 84
- Route bus 86
- Route bus 88
- Fietsroute Cycling route

Looming shortage of thesis places

Growing numbers at the university mean more students than ever before are simultaneously working on their thesis. This is putting pressure on freedom of choice, flexibility and possibly even quality.

text Rob Ramaker Illustration Geert-Jan Bruins

Imagine you are a scientist. You get an email from an enthusiastic student who wants their graduation project to be on your subject. That is not only flattering, it also gives you two free hands and a brain. So what do you reply? In the case of Microbiology researchers, the answer is increasingly 'No, thank you.' That is because they do not have enough room. Students are applying for thesis positions in ever increasing numbers and there is no sign of a stop to that trend.

Ever since the 2006-2007 academic year, Wageningen University has been expanding fast. While 577 first-years started on their Bachelor's degree back then, the equivalent last September was 1469. The intake for Master's degrees grew from 983 to 2160 students. The programmes experiencing the biggest growth

are Biotechnology, Nutrition and Food. This growth is set to continue in the years ahead (up to 2020). The interest is clear from the huge turnout for open days, which are packed.

All of those new students will need to produce a 'masterpiece' in the coming years: a Master's thesis, which takes at least six months. They nearly always do this with a Wageningen chair group, and always with a Wageningen supervisor. The Bachelor's degree also ends with a thesis, but that only takes three to four months and students usually get most of the information from books. Only a few degree programmes require them to do their own experiments.

SECOND CHOICE

The ever growing numbers of students are putting increasing pressure on this system. 'Some chair groups are full,' says Wilko van Loon, the Molecular Life Sciences programme director. 'Students have to look round more and may end up with their second choice.' His own Master's programme and the 'adjacent' Biotechnology programme have grown considerably. That already affects students' freedom of choice sometimes; they are unable to pick their preferred group or subject. Meanwhile, departments that appeal less to students' interests still have room.

Although the problems are currently manageable, programme directors are already getting nervous about the challenges in the years ahead. 'A major worry is how we can continue to guarantee the quality of the thesis,' says Ralf Hartemink, Food Technology programme director. With 189 new students (68 in 2006), Food Technology is the second largest Master's programme. These are already challenging numbers, says Hartemink, and soon 70 extra students will be added from the Bachelor's, while you also have to allow for a possible increase in the number of international students. 'We're still coping at the moment; the first major problems will be in two years' time.' The Human Nutrition department also expects student numbers to be problematic by then.

Tiny van Boekel, director of the Education Institute, acknowledges the problems. 'We see that the research capacity is not growing in line with the numbers in education. The number of PhD projects has fallen slightly while these tend to be linked to the undergraduate thesis projects, certainly in the natural science groups.' Not only is it getting harder to find staff to act as supervisors, there are also more people scrambling for the available labs and desks. Many chair groups have had to give up space recently or are planning to do so. The move from the Dreijen to campus is one such



Orion UOL

example. Microbiology, which is already turning down thesis students, will have even fewer thesis workspaces in the new Helix building.

It is good to see a debate starting about how best to cope with the growth, says rector Arthur Mol. He does not see any need to intervene as yet. A possible measure would be to take on more PhD candidates and increase supervision capacity in that way. 'That costs about 200,000 euros per PhD candidate so we can't just do that.' Furthermore, the chair groups already get compensation for each thesis student they have, so the responsibility for arranging supervision lies primarily with them. However, there is a working group looking at whether the tenure track programme should deal more flexibly with people who spend a lot of time on teaching.

Mol has not yet heard about a lack of lab or desk space for thesis students. He does see a central role for the university in that area. 'Of course you can't be taking on students for a Master's programme when you don't have proper thesis workspaces for them.'


STRICT AGREEMENTS

In practice, both Mole and Van Boekel see a lot being done to cope with the growth (see box). Strict agreements are increasingly being made with students and recorded in thesis contracts, for example setting a firm submission deadline and a maximum to the time in the lab. It is becoming increasingly difficult to deviate from that. 'Researchers are becoming ever more creative,' says Van Boekel, 'They always find ways to make efficiency gains.'

People are also looking beyond the university gates. The DLO institutes are a logical starting point but students do still need to do fun-

damental research. Van Boekel: 'You can't have students working on something that needs to deliver results in three months' time.'

Programme director Hartemink would also be happy for students to do their thesis at Food & Biobased Research or NIZO Food Research, for instance. 'But they are just a drop in the ocean.' At most companies, research is either not sufficiently academic or has to remain confidential.

Mol understands the concerns but he points to the difficulty in predicting how the growth will continue. According to Mol, developments take place so fast that policymakers are continually being taken by surprise, both by the new developments and by the creativity of employees. 'The smartest option is just to continue to keep a close eye on things. I stopped making rigid plans long ago.' 

STUDENTS IN A CIRCLE

In recent years the university has had more and more 'thesis circles' in which thesis students comment on one another's written work under the guidance of experienced researchers. That is because writing the thesis up is often what causes delays. These circles are not about treating students like schoolchildren to increase efficiency, says Marian Vermue, a 'circle leader' in the Bioprocess Technology group. 'I think students actually learn more from looking at one another's work.'

Lab work is compulsory for students in some Bachelor's programmes. But for how much longer?

Read all about it at Resource-online.nl.



Citizen science in Africa

It's already a familiar concept in the west: members of the general public recording observations for scientific purposes. But is it feasible in Africa? Could agriculture and health care benefit from mobile platforms and social media? Ten Wageningen PhD researchers are going to give it a try.

text Roelof Kleis *photo* Paul Struik

They all looked a little diffident and uneasy last week, gathered in a small room in the Leeuwenborch. Ten brand new African PhD candidates flanked by a posse of supervisors. Ready to spend a day getting to know each other and exploring the challenge they will be tackling together: Evoca.

Evoca stands for environmental virtual observatories for connective action. In effect a form of citizen science, not unlike the 'mosquito radar' well-known in the

Netherlands, but this time in Africa. But there is more to Evoca than citizen science, explains project leader Cees Leeuwis, professor of Knowledge, Technology and Innovation. 'Garnering information through mobile platforms is just one side of the story. Then you need to do something useful with it too, and arrive at new forms of collective decisionmaking. That requires an understanding of communication and socio-political processes because sharing and interpreting information can often be sensitive.'


SOURCES OF INFECTION

Evoca aims to use citizen science to improve farming and healthcare in Africa. 'A potato farmer who can't locate the sources of the potato blight *Phytophthora* can't take action,' explains Leeuwis. 'Setting up good information systems is too costly for the government. If farmers can do it themselves, it opens up new possibilities.'

The project came into existence two years ago at a research day held by the three chair groups in the department of Communication, Philosophy and Technology. 'Our idea was to start a joint Inref programme,' says Leeuwis. Inref is the Wageningen University fund that supports interdisciplinary research by PhD candidates in developing countries. A subject was soon identified: the digital communication revolution in Africa. A revolution that is in full swing, says Leeuwis. 'Take payment systems, for instance. The average African doesn't have a bank account like we do. You pay cash down. The rise of the mobile phone has changed that utterly. Nowadays you pay using your phone credit. Buying and selling with telephone credit. That is having a huge impact on the economy.'

INNOVATION

Evoca includes five different projects all revolving around collecting up-to-date data and translating that information into concrete action and decisions. Decisions that will improve potato farming in Ethiopia (see box) or cocoa production and irrigation in Ghana. Information which makes it possible to fight malaria in Rwanda more effectively or to protect Kenya's livestock and wildlife better against tick-borne diseases. Two PhD candidates will be attached to each project, each working from a different perspective. Leeuwis: 'There is a technical and a social side to each project. So we have created teams led by two supervisors: one coming from the social angle and one coming from the natural sciences angle.'

What Evoca will deliver beyond ten theses is not clear beforehand. That is what makes innovation exciting, says Leeuwis. 'That is a kind of Darwinist process. You try things out and you have to accept that eight out of ten of them won't work. The aim is to create as many successes as possible which will have a social impact too.' 

MOSQUITO RADAR IN RWANDA

The battle against malaria in Rwanda is currently largely fought through the use of insecticides and impregnated bed nets in the home. 'And the government has achieved a lot that way,' says entomologist Sander Koenraadt. 'But malaria has not been eradicated yet. In fact we've seen a rise in the number of cases in recent years.' The Evoca project wants to use an African version of the mosquito radar used in the Netherlands to intensify the fight. The research area in the south of Rwanda includes 35 villages with about 40,000 inhabitants between them. Wageningen and three other universities have been working on combatting malaria there for four years now. 'We work on the principle that we can only eradicate malaria if the local people are prepared to collaborate.' That approach led to the formation of 'community malaria action teams' which organize meetings and small-scale campaigns targeting malaria. The mosquito radar can take this approach a step further, Koenraadt believes. 'The villages currently operate independently of each other. People don't know what's going on in the other villages and they want to exchange information. A

citizen science approach can facilitate that.'

Besides this social role, the mosquito radar should also generate some new entomological knowledge. Koenraadt: 'Mosquitoes are biting earlier in the day and more often out of doors. That is an effect of measures to combat malaria. If people sleep under nets the mosquitoes don't get a chance at night. The ones that bite earlier survive. If there is a genetic component to that, you get selection pressure. The mosquito radar is a way of monitoring such changes.'



PHOTO: STUDIO DS

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY AGAINST PHYTOPHTHORA

East Africa is the potato store of Africa: millions of small farmers grow potatoes there. But the harvests are small, says professor of Crop Physiology Paul Struik, supervisor of Evoca's potato project in Ethiopia. That is due to the effects of disease. *Phytophthora* (potato blight) and brown rot are the biggest culprits. You can spray potato crops against *Phytophthora*, explains Struik. With the right information it is possible to predict when will be the best time for a farmer to do that. 'There are advanced decision-making systems available to help with making the right choices. But a lot of information is needed for that. Where are the primary sources of infection, how does the infection pressure develop, how does the crop develop and how does the weather develop?'

Evoca plans to set up an information system for this using apps like the mosquito radar one or text messaging services. The technology is nothing out of the ordinary, says Struik. 'The technology is there. The point is the way it's applied. How do you win farmers over to participate, getting them to see the use of supplying that data? How do you

make a system like this operational?'

The situation for brown rot is a bit different. Nothing can be done about brown rot. Struik: 'So far farmers are not very good at recognizing brown rot and when they do spot it, it is often too late. And then they prefer not to tell anyone they've got brown rot. There is no curative treatment, but there is a big need for a widely supported strategy for controlling the infection pressure through hygienic measures. That starts with monitoring and for that you need a network.'



PHOTO: WAGA MAZENGIA

TOP SALARY FOR TOP SCIENTISTS?

Top scientists should be allowed to earn more than a minister, otherwise the most talented people will move abroad, fears the Dutch Association of Universities (VSNU). So an exception should be made for academia in the act regulating senior executive pay in the public sector. Is that fear justified?

text Roelof Kleis and Rob Ramaker *illustration* Henk van Ruitenbeek

Martin Scholten



Managing Director, Animal Sciences Group

'In my experience, the salary is not a major concern for top scientists at Wageningen University. They look at the conditions for carrying out top-level research: the laboratory

equipment, the number of PhD candidates and postdocs, and how good they are. **Scientists never mention the salary to me as the reason why they're looking for another job.** Perhaps it plays a role in the fields of medicine and economics.

'Incidentally, we can't offer them much anyway as a university. The funding for basic research has really dried up. And much of the money that is available has been earmarked, for specific subjects and social relevance for example. That leaves no money to attract top scientists. If I could give the Dutch parliament some advice, I would say that the lack of funding is the Achilles heel. I don't see what problem higher maximum salaries are solving in our field.'

Chantal Vogels



Secretary of the Wageningen PhD Council

'It's debatable whether higher salary is the main motivating factor for researchers. **If you want to earn a lot, you choose the private sector, not academia.** Certainly young scientists

find conditions in the Dutch academic world more important. Take career opportunities and the proportion of suc-

cessful grant applications, for example. That seems to me to be far more important for the competitive position of the Netherlands than one person's salary. They should really investigate why scientists leave the Netherlands – just ask them why. If salary does turn out to be a key factor, that changes things.'

Marian Stuiver



WUR Council chair

'Who will decide who is a top scientist? It is debatable whether you can measure quality fairly just using the number of citations, for example. Should you just look at the quality of the research or also at the teaching?

What is more, this means you are determining the quality of individuals. We aren't in favour of this individualization because science is often teamwork. **You need to look at the quality of the group as a whole.** We also wonder why you should focus so one-sidedly on pay. You could reward good researchers with more opportunities.'

Jan-Willem Kortlever



Resource blogger

'The Netherlands is a knowledge-driven society. We desperately need top scientists. That might require a salary that is more than what a minister earns. **If that's the only way of keeping someone on board, it should**

be possible. The question is, who is worth that? Should we



set a percentage for each university, for instance? How should you arrange that and how far should you go? I think it's difficult to win the race against foreign scientific institutions. Personally I think a real scientist attaches more importance to having a good scientific climate to work in rather than a high salary. I wouldn't move for 20 percent more pay. But what if you could earn twice as much somewhere else?'

Marleen Kamperman



Physical Chemistry and Soft Matter group

'I don't think this is an issue in my group. Scientists aren't so driven by money. **Perhaps salary plays a role for people who are of Spinoza laureate calibre.** I can imagine that you might of-

fer them a package to keep them in the Netherlands. Not so much in terms of salary as in terms of working conditions. I'm a member of the Young Academy, so I know Maaik Kroon from Eindhoven University, who went to Abu Dhabi. But I think for her too it was the challenge of setting up a graduate programme rather than the higher salary that per-

sued her to go. Salaries in the academic world are skewed in comparison with the private sector. But you know that when you decide to work for a university.'

Liesje Mommer



Professor holding a personal chair in Plant Ecology

'I'm not motivated by salary and I don't think my colleagues are either. If you want to be rich, you shouldn't become an academic. Even my children realize that. It's the climate at a

university or institute that's more important: what's the work pressure like, the atmosphere, tenure track? Those are the reasons why colleagues leave or stay. The chances of research projects getting funding are also incredibly low in the Netherlands. That can be another reason for moving abroad. **Incidentally, I do agree with the principle that performance should be rewarded. You don't need to pay everyone the same.** But I won't be leaving just because I can get a better salary somewhere else. I came to Wageningen because I have a lot of connections here with other scientists that are important for my work.'



‘WHEN YOU PLAY TOGETHER, YOU’RE IN A FLOW’

PHOTO: AART JAN VAN DE GLIND

Wageningen student Ruben Kuijpers and his violin will be inseparable in February, as Ruben is spending this month performing with the Dutch National Student Orchestra.

For a month, Ruben Kuijpers' life will consist entirely of music from the moment he gets up until the moment he goes to bed. Ten days of rehearsals, eleven days performing in various Dutch cities followed by three concerts in Madrid. All 95 musicians in the Dutch National Student Orchestra (NSO) are temporarily putting their studies on the back burner to concentrate on the music. Ruben is lucky as he did not have to resit any exams and he is not missing any compulsory modules. 'I would have done it anyway even if I was behind. It's such a special experience that it's worth it.'

Ruben, who is 20, has been playing violin since the age of five. 'I used to tell my parents that I wanted to play the saw guitar but they

never understood what I meant. Until we were standing in front of a shop window, I pointed to the violin and said: that's what I want.' His parents did not hesitate for a moment – 'You can't start early enough, can you?' – and the Nutrition and Health student has been a violinist ever since.

REFRESHED

Ruben often picks up the violin when he gets back to his Dijkgraaf room after a long day at the university. 'Then I'll play a couple of old favourites that I know really well and once I've got going I feel the stress disappear.' He also feels totally refreshed when he has been rehearsing with the orchestra and cycles home afterwards. 'When you play together, you're in a flow; you are completely absorbed in the music and forget about everything else for a while. Together you try to play the piece perfectly, and if you succeed, that gives you a kick.'

What is so magical about the vi-

olin? Ruben finds it difficult to explain. 'The sound is melodic and warm, and it's easy for you to play with other people. That's not the case for the piano. The only way to play in a symphony orchestra then is to be a soloist, like Arthur Jussen in the NSO concerts.'

CONCERTMASTER

For years Ruben just played for fun but he has started taking the violin more seriously since becoming concertmaster with WSKOV, the Wageningen student choir and orchestral society. 'I sit at the front next to the conductor, I lead the first violins and the string section and I'm responsible for the tuning at the start.' As the concertmaster, he has to study harder and he noticed that he got more enjoyment from the music as a result. The NSO audition seemed like the logical next step.

In the NSO, Ruben plays pieces by Claude Debussy and Béla Bartók among others. He will be perform-

ing in such places as Leeuwarden, Eindhoven, Utrecht, Groningen and Leiden. In Nijmegen, a special concert is scheduled for refugees. The tour will end with a week in Madrid, where three more concerts are scheduled. 'I've never been to Madrid so that should be pretty cool.'

Ruben is afraid it will be an anticlimax once the series of concerts ends. 'It will take some getting used to, being back in the normal world without a concert every evening. On top of that, other orchestras seem less good after the NSO because that has the best students. It is musically more proficient and purer.' Even so, he will definitely return to WSKOV. 'It is a nice society and you also join for the social side. So the fact that it's of a lower standard technically is not a problem.' **R LN**

In addition to Ruben Kuijpers, Wageningen International Land and Water Management Master's student Sarah Zernitz also plays in the NSO. She too plays the violin.

‘THE UNIVERSITY IS BIGGER THAN I THOUGHT’

The 2016 Winter Aid started on Monday. *Resource* spoke to three people taking part in the winter introduction period, which is primarily for exchange students.



ALEXANDRA DICKSON (19) MASSEY UNIVERSITY, NEW ZEALAND

‘It didn’t take me long to decide on Wageningen University. Exchange students from New Zealand traditionally go to Canada or Britain but I opted for the university with the best reputation in agriculture. I also wanted to go to a European country.

I originally planned to come for six months but I was advised to add on an extra six months. That way you experience more of the culture and you can take more modules. My parents totally supported my decision. They used to travel a lot themselves and they’re actually hoping to come to the Netherlands in the summer.

My main expectation is that students will be required to be more independent. I have been studying here for one period so far and I’ve already noticed this. In New Zealand you have lectures and often just one course book. In Wageningen they give you many more sources, which you are then supposed to examine critically. But even if they expect a lot of independence, I have noticed that teaching staff are still prepared to help you.’



MARTIN SKJÆVELAND (24) NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES, NORWAY

‘I saw a Norwegian comedian do a sketch in which he spoke Dutch as if it was a kind of Norwegian dialect. I could understand what he was saying so I thought it wouldn’t be that difficult to learn Dutch. I tried to master the language using Duolingo, a language programme on the computer and smartphone. But it turned out to be quite tricky so that’s why I wanted to come to the Netherlands, to learn the language.

Wageningen University appealed to me because it’s a lot like my own university — small, with a focus on agriculture. But when I got here the university was much bigger than I had expected, in particular because the town itself is about the same size as my university town, Ås.

Now I have been here for about a month, I notice that the work pressure is higher than at my university. But the people here are very friendly and always willing to help you. I’m also amazed at how good the infrastructure is for cyclists. You often have priority.

What I like about Wageningen is that you don’t just learn about Dutch culture, you also come into contact with other cultures because of the many international students at the university.’

KARL KUZNE (21) CORNELL UNIVERSITY, UNITED STATES

‘When I arrived in the Netherlands, I stayed in a hotel in Ede to start with. On my second day, I arrived at Idealis early to register for a room. I had to wait in the rain for an hour. At that point, sitting in the rain in the centre of Wageningen, I did think: what have I got myself into?

That was one month ago. Now I’ve gone to some classes and met some great people. So far, the weather is the only thing I don’t like about the Netherlands. The Dutch are very friendly. Some Americans might be a bit reserved when they come into contact with the Dutch, who can be very direct. But I actually like that. It makes communication a lot easier and more effective.

University life seems somewhat more relaxed here. At Cornell it can get rather stressful and it’s more competitive. One difference is that here your grade often depends only on a group project and an exam. In my university back home, you get marks for your contribution in the lessons and for homework too.’ **© CN en Tvds**



ORGANIC

Organic agriculture could feed the world sustainably, claim researchers at Washington State University in an extensive review in *Nature Plants*. Organic farming produces big enough harvests to feed seven billion people. And it is environmentally friendly, safe, profitable and good for biodiversity into the bargain. Read the article Louise!

DEATH

More tall people than short people get cancer. The chances of dying of cancer go up by 4 per cent for every 6.4 centimetres, according to calculations by scientists at the German Centre for Diabetic Research (DZD). This is related to the amount of animal protein consumed. The chances of dying of cardiovascular diseases, by contrast, go down by one per cent per centimetre. Well, death comes to us all sooner or later.

PARADISE

Male tortoises must think they've died and gone to heaven. Due to the warming of the oceans more females than males are being born, it has been discovered at Florida State University. So climate change is creating a bachelor's paradise. But tortoises need to get a move on. The male-female imbalance is threatening the species.

FOLSOM PRISON

Fourteen new tarantulas have been discovered in the United States. One of them has been named after the deceased country legend Johnny Cash: the *Aphonopelma johnnycashi*. The creature was found near Folsom Prison, which Cash immortalized in a song. The adult male is black too, the colour Cash often wore. We don't know whether the spider sings.

PhD candidate, mom and blogger

There is a new blogger on Resource-online: Nadya Karimasari. In her first blog she introduces herself.

Since my supervisor, Bram Buscher, contacted me via Skype in November 2015 and said 'Welcome to Wageningen!', my life has been in a state of eternal euphoria. My excitement multiplied when Resource asked me to join the team of bloggers.


My name is Nadya Karimasari, and I'm from Indonesia. I got a PhD scholarship from NWO to study nature conservation in times of crisis, starting March 2016. I am the first person and first generation in my extended family who got a scholarship to do a PhD abroad. I am also a first-time mom of my one-year-old son. I did my Master's in 2010-2011 at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague. I currently work at Bogor Agricultural University. I also volunteer for the national farmers union.

I have been blogging since high school, since the very first time blogging platforms were intro-




Read the blogs of Nadya and our other bloggers on resource-online.nl.

duced. I feel the need to blog now about my PhD odyssey. Why? First, if you're Dutch (or Canadian, for example), perhaps you're already familiar with the realm of a PhD student. But for someone like me a PhD is such a peculiar thing! I used to think of PhD candidates as elderly people who already have a lot of expertise in their field and were expected to be the next Einstein or someone of that calibre. Imagine how surprised I was at ISS to witness a lot of young people at their early twenties already doing a doc-

toral degree! Second, I observe other PhD blogs are mostly skewed between two polar extremes, either the self-deprecating PhDs beating themselves up or those who only showcase their academic brilliance. I would like to challenge myself to capture the regular life of a non-know-it-all PhD student. After all, it's a journey, and I hope you enjoy the ride with me. 

Hylas and Hera

Last week, student rowing club W.S.R. Argo christened two new boats with a dash of Rhine water. The Dutch national champion and Argo oarswoman Linde Gommers-Verbeek christened Hera, a double skull for lightweight women. The rector, Arthur Mol, christened a coxed four named Hylas.

In accordance with tradition, the two boats were named after characters in the tale of Jason and the Argonauts. Hylas was one of the oarsmen on Jason's ship while the goddess Hera helped Jason with his quest for the Golden Fleece. The addition of Hylas and Hera means that Argo now has a total of 70 boats in the boat-house. The two new boats together cost about 25,000 euros.  VW

See the clip on resource-online.nl.



PHOTO: AART-JAN VAN DE GLIND



EPISODE 65 - MORTIERSTRAAT 14B <<

Text
Rob
Ramaker

The story so far: Willem-Jan is at last making progress with his studies. Only his chronic shortage of money is holding him back now.

Patience

Willem-Jan wondered whether he had ever been so bored in his life before. To earn money he took part in a medical experiment this week. This entailed staying in an empty hospital wing together with three other boys. Every morning he took a pill – or a placebo, that was not clear – and then had to stay in bed until three o'clock. Then the nurse came to take blood, after which he was free for the rest of the day. The test subjects were not allowed out of doors so they just hung around in the common room.

When Willem-Jan came in one afternoon, a bad-tempered medical student was cursing the router. 'Not working again?' asked Willem-Jan.

'Nope. If you ask me, that is the real experiment. Withdrawal symptoms from Wifi.' Willem-Jan grinned. The 3G signal was weak too, probably because of all the hospital's concrete. Willem-Jan put his pile of article on the table and started reading. The boredom had its uses: he had done more work in two days that seemed possible beforehand.

'Shit,' cursed his companion. He abandoned the router and started a game of patience on his laptop. Restlessly, he switched it off again halfway and began to fiddle with the closed cupboard the TV was standing on.

'What are you doing?' asked Willem-Jan. 'I'm just curious what is in here.'

Willem-Jan threw him a paperclip that was keeping his papers together. 'Try this.'

Grumbling, the lad began to poke the lock with the paperclip. 'Ha,' he cried triumphantly a bit later. The door had opened



ILLUSTRATIONS: KIM PETERSE

and revealed a Wii. 'Anyone for tennis?' he asked with a grin. Willem-Jan couldn't say no. Before long they were playing tennis by moving their arms about holding the remote. 'This is certainly a lot cooler than patience,' said the lad, flailing about wildly. Willem-Jan was a fanatical player himself, but retreated in the face of this uncoordinated flapping. Just as he was about to say something the boy did a sweeping backhand and sent the remote flying through the air. 'Fu-u-u-ck.'

It was silent in the house as Willem-Jan closed the door behind him. On a Friday evening most people had either gone home or down the pub. Just as he wanted to slip into his room, he heard Bianca.

'Hey, you home already?' As he turned around he heard her catch her breath. He had seen in the mirror that morning that his black eye looked terrible.

'What did you do?' asked Bianca, shocked. 'Was it a scary experiment?'

'No,' growled Willem-Jan. 'Just a little sporting accident.'

Resource follows events at Mortierstraat 14B

Disputes commission hears students and uni

On 4 February, Wageningen University and the Student Council faced one another in front of the National Disputes Commission. The issue: whether the Student Council was being unreasonable in rejecting the university's proposed new FOS scheme.

The Executive Board and Student Council have been arguing for months about the size of the Financial Compensation for Students (FOS), intend-

ed for students on committees. Wageningen UR has offered 320 euros a month, but the Student Council thinks this is not enough. There will no longer be a supplementary grant in the new scheme and the council fears that this will affect the number of students willing to spend a year doing committee work.

Another disputed issue is the public transport payments for social science Master's students. The university does not want to compensate them for

their public transport pass in the second year. The Student Council says that is not fair as students doing a recognized two-year Master's do get that compensation. The commission seemed to support the Student Council's position. 'In the old situation, you gave these students the basic grant as compensation,' said the chairman to the rector, Arthur Mol. 'So it will be cheaper for you if you now just pay for the public transport pass instead.' Its ruling is expected in March. **LvdN**



>> PARTIES

The best parties according to Wageningen Uitgaans Promotie. Check www.wageningenup.nl for all parties.

**SSR-W - OPEN PARTY**

Thursday 11 February from 22.00 to 05.00

Red is the colour of SSR-W's open party today. Come in a red outfit to celebrate the end of an-

other resits period in red surroundings. The student society open parties always get a good turnout so come early if you don't want to queue for ages. Also, people who turn up early for this 90s party will get free red party accessories. Admission is 3 euros. Don't forget your student card.

CERES - OPEN PARTY

Thursday 18 February from 23.00 to 05.00

We've no info yet on this party's theme. But it will undoubtedly be an epic occasion going by the long tradition of Ceres open parties.


REEHORST - WAGENINGEN STUDY ASSOCIATIONS GALA

Friday 19 February from 20.30 to 02.00

Wageningen's biggest student gala is ... in Ede. On 19 February, nine study associations will be organizing a joint gala in Hotel de Reehorst. You don't have to be a member of these associations to come along. Last year, tickets were sold out in no time and the party was a huge success. Tickets are on sale via gala2016.tk.

CAFÉ LOBURG - KABAAL REGIONAAL 2016

Tuesday 23 February from 19.00 to 02.00

Eight regional bands will be playing for a place on the 'Kabaal am Gemaal' stage during the Liberation Festival on 5 May. Three bands will be performing this evening: *Empire of the Wolves* from Ede (deathcore), *Fake ID* from Nijmegen (ska-punk) and *De Grote Boodschap* from Arnhem (nedermetal). 

>> THE WORKS

CLIMATE RESEARCH IN GUERRILLA TERRITORY


Who? Zita Hegger, student of Climate Studies

What? Master's thesis on tropical montane cloud forests

Where? Chaméza, Colombia

'My research area was very unusual; I was one of the first foreigners to have been to Chaméza. This will probably change fast now that oil companies are moving into the area, but it still feels very special. The farming village of Chaméza is in Colombia. I did research there on how the water system works in a tropical montane cloud forest. That is an ecological system that is a feature of mountain rain forests. Not much is known about it at present, whereas knowledge about it is very useful and could be important for the future of the water supply for the farmers in the district. The lack of knowledge is partly a result of the difficulty of doing research because of the guerrilla violence. I couldn't go into my research area for a while myself because a guerrilla had shown up. Things were very tense. Luckily I could carry on with my work later.

My stay in the village was very interesting. It was obvious that the people there didn't know as much about the world as we do. To my astonishment, for instance, there was someone in the village who genuinely did not know that the world was round. This made me very aware of how much we take knowledge for granted. There was a lot of superstition too: a tattoo was seen as something demonic. And yet some people

in Chaméza were amazingly smart and inventive. In Chaméza I learned how to milk a cow, I helped build a house and learned to ride a motorbike. And that proved particularly useful because it meant I could get to the research site. I also did some tours through the mountains on the motorbike at sunset. That was a really beautiful sight.'  AJ

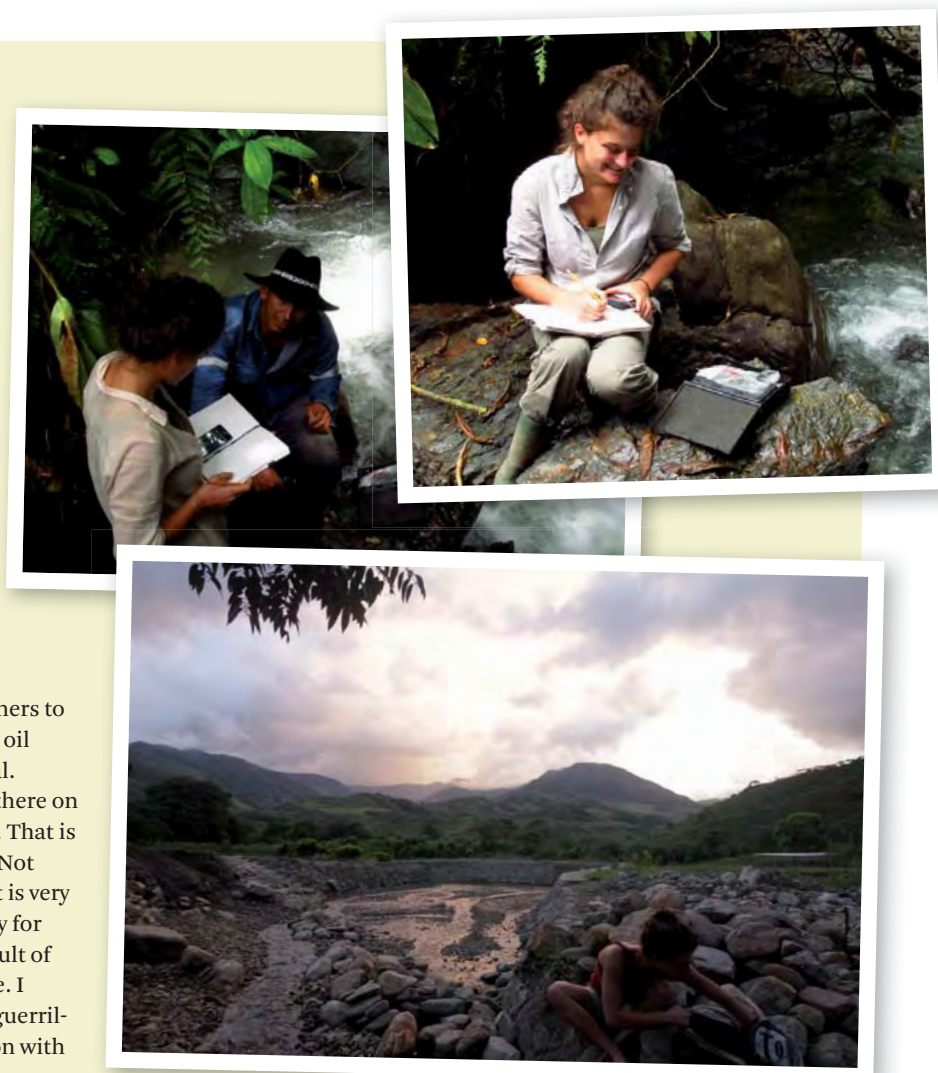




PHOTO: PRESIDENCIA DE LA REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA

MEANWHILE IN... <<

Meanwhile in Latin America

In the news: Latin America has been shaken by an outbreak of zika virus, which is mainly dangerous for unborn babies. How are people in Brazil, Surinam and Colombia affected by this health crisis?

Commentary by Silvia Gabriela Abreu e Silva (MSc Nutrition and Health), Richella Parker (BSc International Development Studies) and Natalia Vasquez Urbina (MSc Animal Sciences).

Silvia: 'My cousin lives in the US and she's pregnant. She wanted to come back to Brazil for Christmas. We advised her against it because it would be dangerous. So she stayed at home this year. The zika virus is spread by mosquitoes. It's summer at the moment and it is raining a lot so there are loads of mosquitoes. It is a big problem in the north-east of Brazil especially. This region is poorer and less developed than the rest of the country. Poor hygiene makes it hard to control the virus. It is only really dangerous if you are pregnant. It is important to remove water and garbage from your house. Even a glass of water on the table can be dangerous. The government is working with universities and research institutes to find solutions.'

Richella: 'A good friend of mine and her family all had zika. They had joint pain, red spots and fever. After a week in bed they got better. There are not always symptoms. The government in Surinam is calling on everyone not to get pregnant at the moment, because that is dangerous. Most women are not scared because there haven't been any cases in our country of pregnant women getting the virus or of deformed babies like in Brazil.'

Natalia: 'In general people in Colombia are not scared of the zika virus. The dengue fever virus has already been here a while and is spread by the same mosquito. You get much sicker from that than from zika. People here are more afraid of that. But the government has advised against getting pregnant until July 2016. A friend of mine is pregnant. She is under strict observation by doctors. Just like other Colombians she makes sure she throws out garbage quickly, uses insecticide sprays and stops puddles forming around the house.' **LdP**

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English French
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MCB-51403: Capita Selecta Commodity Futures & Options

Always wondered about what is happening at the trading floor of exchanges like the ones in Amsterdam, London and Chicago? Wondered about how (agribusiness) companies manage their risks using commodity futures and options? Wondered about how it would be if you were trading commodity futures in Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Paris?

The *Marketing & Consumer Behavior Group* organizes a unique course that will introduce students to commodity futures and options markets. Students will develop an understanding of the markets and how they work, gain knowledge about the theory behind futures and options markets, identify their economic functions, and develop an analytical capability to evaluate their economic usefulness. This course is taught by Professor Joost M.E. Pennings (*Marketing & Consumer Behavior Group*, Wageningen University). There are only 40 seats available.

If you are interested in taking this course (3 Credits) please register with Ellen Vossen at MCB (room 5029, De Leeuwenborch, e-mail: Ellen.Vossen@wur.nl, tel. 0317-483385). You can also pick up the materials here. Lecturers are on 18 March and 1, 8, 15 and 22 April (period 5) in room C78 of the Leeuwenborch. Times are 10.30-12.15 hrs.

SINGLE TO CHINA!

Derek Pan studied at Wageningen but is back in China now. His short films about his experience there can be watched on resource-online.nl

RESOURCE

For students and employees of Wageningen UR



Announcements

Otherwise vacancy: innovative communication assistant

Are you great with social media? Creative in designing posters and logos? And do you enjoy thinking about innovative strategies for how to connect with an audience? Then we would love to have you join our team! Starting in March, one day a week, minimum of three months. Contact: jildou.friso@wur.nl or 06-22074903.

Lexkesveer, the ferry between Wageningen and Randwijk, is looking for ticket sellers

An opportunity to work outdoors on Holland's nicest ferry, with shifts of at least 1.5 hours, once every two weeks on a Saturday or Sunday. Call or app 06-46008091, email: niek.goldhoo-rn@wageningen.nl

Open grenzen (Open borders) exhibition in The True Limpet Gallery

Artist Rob Steenbergen reveals his fascination with the concept of borders in his Borderzone artworks. He uses topographical maps as the basis for his art, transforming them with the help of a variety of techniques and materials such as ink, textiles, handicrafts and even fireworks. Borders are lines that both connect and divide countries, sometimes visible, sometimes made invisible, spaces that are both open and closed and that usher in change. In short, a phenomenon open to multiple interpretations. The (free) exhibition is on view until 6 March in the Wilde Wereld building, Herenstraat 10 Wageningen. Gallery opening hours: Wednesdays 10-17, Saturdays 12-17, Sundays 13-17.

WWW.ROBSTEENBERGEN.NL

Borrowing sheet music or musical instruments

The Van Uven Foundation music library offers sheet music, vocal scores and literature on classical music. Students are allowed to view these exceptional documents, copy them and borrow them. You can also arrange this via the internet. The foundation hires out musical instruments too. Library opening hours: every third Thursday of the month from 20.00 to 22.00. Location: Generaal Foulkesweg 1A, Wageningen.

WWW.VANUVEN.NL

Nominate your colleague for the 'Lef in het lab' award

Researchers and biotechnologists who work on alternatives to animal trials or ways of reducing or refining animal experiments can be nominated for this award. The deadline is 1

March. The prize has been awarded since 2007 by the Dutch society for the protection of animals in cooperation with the 3Rs-Centre Utrecht Life Sciences at Utrecht University and the Utrecht University Medical Centre. See www.uu.nl/nieuws/ under 'Diergeneeskunde' (Veterinary Science) for the criteria.

Neder-Veluwe food bank needs volunteers

The Neder-Veluwe food bank is urgently looking for new volunteers for various positions, such as drivers, co-drivers, packers, food checking staff, etc. You can specify how often and when you're available. That information will be used to draw up a roster every month. We work in teams, which makes it very sociable! Information: Anneke Sijbrand on 06-40932724, or via www.voedselbanknederveluwe.nl.

Beastly burgers or Kickin' chicken piri piri or a tasty veggie dish or sexy chicken satay for only € 6,50. All served with crispy French fries and fresh salad. Every Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from 6 to 8 pm. Only in the attic of Eetcafé H41. No other main dishes upstairs. Also Take away.

SUPER DUPER ATTIC OFFER

Eetcafé H41 - Herenstraat 41 Wageningen - (0317) 42 17 15 - www.h41.nl

University Fund
Wageningen

Call for
applications

Aalt Dijkhuizen Fund Young Scientist Grant

OBJECTIVE Acquire high-tech knowledge at foreign research center of excellence

REQUIREMENTS Relevant to 'how to feed 9 billion people sustainably' and the Dutch agri & food sector

FOR Postdoc researchers, PhD- and MSc-students

DEADLINE February 29th, 2016

HOW TO APPLY wageningenur.nl/aaltdijkhuizenfund



engaging alumni & friends

agenda

Thursday 11 January to

Wednesday 24 February

FILMS FOR STUDENTS

Showing at Movie W: Son of Saul, a hallucinating war drama about Auschwitz in which a Jewish man has to help kill and bury Jews and thinks he recognizes his son; El Club, an imaginative, grim drama in which four priests who live a carefree, secluded life are joined by a fifth priest and have to face the question of whether they have shown sufficient remorse for their misdeeds; Our Little Sister, about the lives of three Japanese sisters who live with their half-sister in their grandmother's home. Movie W, Wilhelminalweg 3A.

WWW.MOVIE-W.NL

Weekend of 13 & 14 February,
10.00-17.00

5TH NATIONAL SEED WEEKEND - RECLAIM THE SEEDS

On Saturday, ASEED, the Farmers' Foundation and others will be organizing a seed exchange where organic seed breeders, horticulturalists, societies, botanical gardeners, allotment and city gardeners can exchange unusual seeds, seed material, tips and expertise. There is also a programme of workshops with presentations on harvesting your own seeds, preserving and using crop diversity, and the power of the seed companies, plus the film From Seed to Seed. Children can learn how to make compost or amuse themselves with seed bombs/boxes or by creating colourful rangoli. On Sunday, people can visit local garden projects such as Creative Garden at Bornsessteeg 87, where WU students will give a

guided tour from 11.00 to 12.30.

WWW.CREATIVEGARDEN-WAGENINGEN.ORG

WWW.RECLAIMTHESEEDS.NL

Wednesday 17 February, 20.15

CABARESTAFETTE

If you are interested in discovering talented young comedians, and perhaps the latest sensation in the world of comedy, then come to the *Cabare-stafette*. An exciting evening is guaranteed with three widely differing acts, brilliant compères and music by Pica DJ to warm up the audience beforehand. Which comedians you will see in Wageningen is a secret. The names probably won't mean much to you now but you often come across the winners of such festivals later on. The evening will be hosted by various different compères. Venue: Small auditorium, Junushoff Theatre, Wageningen.

WWW.CABARESTAFETTE.NL

Friday 19 February, 20.15

MAJOR DONORS' CONCERT BY THE STUDENT ORCHESTRA DE ONTZETTING

De Ontzetting's conductor is Jean-Pierre Gabriël. The theme of this concert is *Once upon a time*. The orchestra will be performing well-known pieces (and perhaps some less well-known tunes) about fairy tales and stories. The programme is varied with *Miss Saigon* by Claude-Michel Schönberg, *Orient Express* by Philip Sparke and *The Lion King* by Elton John/Hans Zimmer. Tickets via ontzetting@wur.nl or goo.gl/ITjmv4. Admission is €5.00 for students and €7.50 for non-students. Venue: Junushoff Theatre, Wageningen.

WWW.ONTZETTING.WUR.NL

Saturday 20 February, 18.30

CONCERT PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME 'SENSATIONS IN NATURE AND THE PERFORMANCE', INCLUDING TALK BY MATTHIJS SCHOUTEN

For one night only, the concert by the Dutch student chamber choir will be preceded by a special programme: 'Sensations in nature and the performance'. Philosopher and WU professor Matthijs Schouten will give a talk and pianist, university IT lecturer and chamber choir veteran Cynthia Liem and musicologist Sander van Maas invite you to take part in an experiment. The concert *Voices of Nature* will fol-

low at 20.15, with 37 young people going on a quest through nature: what sound does the wind make, an annoyed lobster, a leisurely whiting or a cacophony of colours? Venue: Akoesticum, Nieuwe Kazernelaan 2, Ede. Info and reservations via www.nskk.nl

Sunday 21 February, 9.00-17.00

ZEN SUNDAY AT KENKON

A day of Zen meditation in silence under the guidance of Frank Dries and Olaf van Kooten, with the theme: 'Am I OK or not?' There will be ten seated sessions of 25 minutes each, walking meditation, a chat, tea and a Q&A session. Come along from 8.30. Venue: Nieuwe Kanaal 11, Wageningen. Register via info@kenkon.org.

WWW.KENKON.ORG

Tuesday 23 February, 19.15-22.30

SWU THYMOS: MARTIAL ARTS EVENING

Have you always wanted to take up boxing or learn more about ninjitsu? At the annual Martial Arts Evening, you can choose from various martial arts in three sessions, including Ken-do, Jiu-Jitsu and MMA. Participation is free and you don't need to sign up. Venue: De Bongerd Sports Centre.

WWW.SWUTHYMOS.NL

Wednesday 24 February,

20.00-22.00

WEPTALKS, 5TH EDITION

Sustainability can be more than a lifestyle; it can be about business projects. Come and listen to Rens van den Bulck's motivating ideas about the package-free shop and get inspired by Pepijn Vloermans on the electric car revolution. WEPtalks is based on the well-known TED-talk format, with short, powerful talks to share ideas. Young entrepreneurs present their creative initiatives, covering a wide range of topics from green architecture to circular economies and living without waste. Venue: Forum building, C213.

WWW.WAGENINGENENVIRONMENTALPLATFORM.NL

Deadline for submissions: one week before publication date (max. 75 words)
Email: resource@wur.nl

colophon

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>>TYPICAL DUTCH



The Tallest People on Earth

I felt so small when I arrived in the Netherlands for the first time. Of course, I am Asian and my height is only 154 cm – which is quite normal in my motherland. But when I came to Holland, I met tall people everywhere, both men and women.

For the Dutch, meeting a girl of my height is strange too. An Asian friend of mine felt a bit insulted when, on her first visit to the campus, a Dutch man said to her, 'You are very short'. By now she must be accustomed to the generally outspoken Dutch.

It's an issue in my class too. I have so many Dutch friends who are over 180 cm in height. To talk to one of my Dutch friends I have to bend my head right back to look up at him. For me, sitting at the front of class is a must. Otherwise, I cannot see anything that's written on the blackboard. If Dutch people sit in front of me, I'll miss a lot during the class. Even if I ask the person to bend a little bit, it does not help. Yes, welcome to the Netherlands, the country with the tallest people on earth.  **Lini Anisfatus Sholihah, Master's student of Nutrition and Health, from Indonesia**

To talk to one of my Dutch friends I have to bend my head right back

Do you have a nice anecdote about your experience of going Dutch? Send it in! Describe an encounter with Dutch culture in detail and comment on it briefly. 300 words max. Send it to resource@wur.nl and earn twenty-five euro and Dutch candy.
