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For everyone at Wageningen University & Research

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Rewriting genes


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>> GUIDO + BAKING

Guido Camps, PhD candidate at Human nutrition

'Bread is always a challenge'

He specializes in baking bread. 'The best bread consists of flour, water and a pinch of salt,' says Guido Camps with conviction that reflects his passion for this art. 'You put the dough in the oven and hope for the best. You can't tweak it later with a bit of decoration, like you can with a cake.' Camps can be seen on the weekly TV programme *Heel Holland Bakt* [All Holland bakes]. The episode about bread was last week: he got through. How long he survives on the show is a well-kept secret.  RK / Photo: photo omroep Max

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AGRI GIANT

Last week the chemical company Bayer bought up the seed production company Monsanto for 59 billion euros. If the supervisory boards approve the merger, it will lead to the formation of the biggest dealer in seeds and pesticides in the world. The media were soon full of talk of an 'agri giant' which is now going to decide what poor farmers get to grow on their land. Our poor farmers here in the Netherlands, but even more so the farmers in developing countries. I was suddenly reminded of a discussion I had recently with our former rector magnificus Martin Kropff. He is now director of the international breeding institute Cimmyt. 'Sixty percent of the wheat and maize grown in the world comes from us.' Most of the new varieties, especially those grown in developing countries, come from Cimmyt. It turns out that the big seed companies target rich western agribusinesses, while the millions of small-scale farmers in developing countries get most of their seed from small breeding companies developed by government-funded institutes such as Cimmyt. Is this scandalous or is it a silver lining?

Albert Sikkema



>> Can you get hepatitis E from liver sausage? | p.10

RECOVERY PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH UNDER DISCUSSION

- **Employees Council wants 'from-job-to-job' deal**
- **'Don't saddle individuals with a collective problem'**

The Employees Council (OR) at Wageningen Environmental Research (hitherto Alterra) wants the management to apply the existing 'from-job-to-job' arrangement in its new Recovery Plan. That would mean the management would discuss the necessary cuts with the departments, which would then come up with solutions. 'That arrangement is in our CAO [labour agreement] and is a transparent way of making cutbacks,' says acting OR chair Jaap van Os.

The OR published its advice on the management's Recovery Plan

on 15 September. The plan includes cutting 60 of the nearly 300 jobs in the organization. Half of these job losses will be achieved through retirement and the ending of temporary contracts, and the other half through standard HR policy in which staff are individually assessed on their performance.

OR members and unions have protested in the past against this individual assessment, because they said employees get pressurized to accept an outplacement. The OR at Environmental Research would prefer to see a 'from-job-to-job' system. Van Os: 'If you ask the group to deal with the cutbacks, people could for example decide to achieve them partially by cutting down their hours.'

Van Os does not oppose the standard HR policy of helping peo-

ple who are not performing well to find another job. But he sees this personal approach as undesirable in cases where people have less work because of a decline in demand. The OR sees this as a collective problem which should be discussed and addressed collectively. Van Os: 'We hope we won't have to take a hard line on this point, but that we can convince the management, since this arrangement fits a coaching leadership style.'

The OR is also keen to hear as soon as possible what the management's new strategy for adapting to the market and staying financially healthy is going to be. Van Os: 'Actually you need a strategy first, be-

fore you start cutting back. On the other hand, we need to shrink fast now to get out of the dip quickly.'

The management of Wageningen Environmental Research announced last week that 23 of the targeted 60 jobs have already been scrapped.' **AS**



PHOTO: SVEN MENSCHER

SEVEN LISTED TREES ON CAMPUS

- **Trees to get extra protection**

The stand of trees at the entrance to Radix Klima is officially listed as of historical significance. The trees are on the recently drawn-up municipal list of historic trees on private land. They include four pedunculated oaks, a weeping beech, a copper beech and a silver lime, or linden. Being on the list means the trees will enjoy extra protection from now on. They may only be felled if there are serious safety considerations or other weighty circumstances.

There are 119 trees on the municipality's list. Almost one quarter of them line the Generaal Foulkesweg. A tree does not easily qualify for this historic status. To do so it has to be at least 80 years old, be the picture of health and be set to last at least another ten years. No one knows exactly how old the trees on the campus are. Two years ago a list was drawn up of 75 trees of historical value on public land. There is also a separate list of historic trees in the Belmonte Arboretum. A similar list for the smaller Dreijen Arboretum has yet to be drawn up.

RK



PHOTO: GUY ACKERMANS

WUR IS DEVELOPING DIGITAL MICROMASTERS

- Package of digital courses on biobased sciences
- Courses can be taken on education platform EdX

Wageningen University & Research is going to develop a 'MicroMasters' on biobased sciences. The aim is to offer a package of digital courses on the digital education platform EdX. The plan is for first part of the MicroMasters to be online on 24 January 2018.

A MicroMasters brings together several Massive Open

Online Courses (MOOCs) on one theme. This creates the possibility to delve deeper into the subject matter, giving the package more value than the individual courses alone. The need for this is particularly felt by professionals who study part-time alongside their jobs, says Suzanne de Bruijn, who works on communication at Open and Online Education. A completed MicroMasters earns students 24 ECTS points which they can put towards the full Master's in Biobased Sciences, should they decide to take it.

It is not certain what the university stands to gain from the MicroMasters. 'In the short term it is an investment. Students pay for the certificate, so in the long term the investment could be recouped.' Another, indirect source of income, says De Bruijn, is increasing Wageningen's renown in the sector. 'In the end that should produce some research assignments.'

Wageningen University & Research chose biobased sciences as the theme of the MicroMasters because a full Master's programme is currently under development. **RTF**

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Absolute low point

Sometimes you know for sure that it can't get any worse. The sign with 'wage ningen', 'campus' and 'welcome' was one such absolute low point for me. But I was wrong. The wageningen campus people (whoever they might be) have thought up something new now — an even uglier campus sign. If you haven't yet seen it, this sign consists of three sections. The top is white and displays the familiar words wage, ningen and campus. The bottom is bilious green and refers to a website whose relevance I fail to see.

Sandwiched between these two anonymous parts is the heart of the sign. This central section displays a photo of three people who have been asked to look as uninspiring and uninterested as possible. They succeeded. Even so, I think the design team must have been afraid that the woman on the right of the photo was secretly harbouring a tiny bit of inspiration. To crush that impression, they have placed the meaningless words 'Discover your campus' right next to her. In contrast to the top and bottom, this middle section is concrete. While the top and bottom prompt the question 'What on earth is this?', the central section gives the answer: 'Probably an old people's home'.

I can only guess at the purpose of the sign. Is this a new measure aimed at scaring prospective students away from our overfull campus? Is it just a bad joke?

I have no idea, but the longer I spend looking at it, the sadder I feel. I now know for sure, this is the absolute low point. But then, that's what I thought last time. **RT**

See also page 6

Stijn van Gils (29) is doing doctoral research on ecosystem services in agriculture. Every month he describes his struggles with the scientific system.



in brief

>>WOLF

Poo analysed

DNA research has proven a farmer from Beuningen (Overijssel province) right: he did see a wolf in his meadow in September. The animal's faeces were analysed in Wageningen. 'We were lucky that the farmer reported the wolf and then saw the poo,' says genetic researcher Arjen de Groot of Wageningen Environmental Research. 'The droppings were very fresh so the analysis was quite easy.' This is the second time a wolf has been spotted in the Netherlands. In March 2015 a wolf was walking around here for the first time in 150 years. After four days it went back to Germany. **RT RK**



>>BIKE JOURNEYS

'Record your bike trips'

For the second time, a national 'Bike monitoring week' is being held this week. For a week participants record all their movements by bike using an app on their telephones. Wageningen municipal council is calling on students to take part. 'Students are big users of the Wageningen cycle network,' says councillor Han ter Maat. 'The more students download the app, the more we can understand about their cycling habits.' One of the aims of collecting data via the app is to find out which routes to the campus are most popular. The app can be downloaded free from Play Store and App Store. **RT RK**

>> WOODEN GLOBE

Collection failed

The fragments of wood sent in by staff and students of Wageningen University & Research for an artwork for the Orion building will not be used. The collection campaign produced too little material, says artist Diederick Kraaijeveld. He had counted on getting at least 100 pieces of used wood but only got 25. So Kraaijeveld is going to make the globe with his own wood. The fragments that were sent in will be used later in other work. The globe, measuring six metres across, will be hung in Orion on 31 October, according to the plans. **RT RvD**

UNIVERSITY HAS IMPROVED QUALITY OF EDUCATION

- Number of teachers with teaching qualification doubled
- 81 percent of students get BSc within four years

Wageningen University has achieved all the improvement targets set in 2012 in consultation with the ministry of Economic Affairs, says Gerlinde van Vilsteren, who works at Education, Research & Innovation. The ministry has not yet published its formal evaluation, which is based on the advice of the Review Committee for Higher Education.

In 2012, Wageningen University & Research promised – along with other Dutch universities – to improve on seven points, including the pass rate, the dropout rate and student evaluation scores. These agreements were intended to help higher education institutes create a clearer profile and improve the

quality of the education they provide. Seven percent of the total funding would depend on their score on these points.

The results have now been lined up by the university. The two most ambitious goals seem to have been reached. The number of Wageningen students graduating with a BSc within four years has risen from 62 to 81 percent. The percentage of teachers with a 'Basic teaching qualification' has increased from 24 to 48 percent. And on the other points too, the university either improved or held its own.

Despite the good results, the board is not very keen on these target agreements. Rector magnificus Arthur Mol said last January in Resource that he did not see the value of making new agreements. In practice most of the universities achieve their objectives and funding is hardly redistributed at all, says Mol. Mol would rather spend the money now spent on the 'bu-



PHOTO: NIELS VAN WOSSEVELDE

A lecture by professor of Communication Noelle Aarts.

reaucratic machinery' for the target agreements on educational improvements. Van Vilsteren says this has been discussed with the review committee.

The approach of improving edu-

cational quality through target agreements is being evaluated by a committee led by Wim van der Donk, King's commissioner for North Brabant. Their report is due to come out in March 2017. **RR**

WAGENINGEN OUT OF TIMES TOP 50 AGAIN

- Dropped from 47th to 65th place

Wageningen University & Research has fallen from position 47 to position 65 in the Times Higher Education rankings. The institution suddenly scores a lot lower on research quality. It may be that the way the publication and reputation scores are calculated has been changed again.

Last year WUR shot up the rankings from 75th to 47th place – partly because of changes to the rules. This position made WUR the best Dutch university. This year both Delft and Amsterdam (UvA) are higher, at position 59 and 63 respectively.

To understand the lower evaluation, we need to look at how the scores are built up. Last year Wagen-

ingen scored 52.6 points for its education, this year 51.8 – a small drop. The citation score rose from 87.8 to 92.8, and for international outlook the university went up from 70.3 to 75.6 points, while its score for industry income remained stable at 100 points. The big drop on the score table was for research. While last year's score was 66.9, this year's is only 50.1. Such a big drop can only be explained by a change in the rules, or a failure to include all of Wageningen's research achievements. The latter is not the case, says information specialist Ellen Fest of the WUR library. It is possible that this year the Times divided the number of Wageningen publications by the combined staff of the university and research institutes, whereas last year the publications were divided by the number of university researchers only. This change produces a lower score. **AS**



PHOTO: GUY ACKERMANS

BILLBOARD

The Wageningen campus needs livening up, says Wageningen University & Research. And staff and students are all too often not aware of lectures, events and other activities that are coming up. The new campaign Discover your Campus aims to set this right, advertising forthcoming events on billboards and an activity calendar that is distributed free. One of the three models on the large billboard at the campus entrance is Anton Haverkort, a researcher at Wageningen Plant Research. This is one of his last official appearances: Haverkort's retirement party is this week. **RR**

See also page 5: Absolute low point

HUNDRED CHINESE PHD CANDIDATES TO WAGENINGEN

- Wageningen is supervising PhD candidates at the Chinese agricultural academy
- The first 20 candidates have started

In the coming four years Wageningen University & Research will be helping supervise 80 to 100 PhD students at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS). The first group of 20 PhD candidates was given a two-week introductory course in Beijing in September.

The PhD candidates are doing sandwich PhDs, spending one and a half years in Wageningen and two and a half in China. They are supervised by researchers from both Wageningen and the CAAS. The candidates are selected by the Chinese Academy. Then the candidates and their Chinese supervisors select a Wageningen supervisor, who can decide whether to accept or decline the invitation.

During the first introduction week in Beijing, 20 PhD candidates took the courses Scientific Writing and Effective Academic Development. They wrote an English-language article and presented a project proposal, with guidance from Wageningen teachers.



PHOTO: CAAS

The first 20 Chinese PhD candidates followed an introductory course last month.

In the second week they were given some insight into problems they could encounter during the PhD process, such as fear of failure, perfectionism and difficulty with planning and time management. With this in mind, the PhD candidates wrote an action plan for dealing with these issues during their research period.

The Chinese students were impressed by the introduction course, say Wageningen teachers Claudius van de Vijver and Roger Staats. One of the candidates paid them a compliment: *'The way you teach will never ever happen among Chinese teachers: the confidence, the sharing, the respect, the humour.'* **AS**

STUDENTS IN REVAMPED DUIVENDAAL

- 345 new units in centre
- Space for students and PhD candidates

The plans for a makeover for Duivendaal and Hof van Wageningen include space for 345 housing units. These are intended for a mix of students, PhD candidates, seniors and young couples. This is outlined in a plan for the area in the middle of Wageningen, drawn up by the town's mayor and councillors.

A key element of the plan is the demolition of part of the current hotel and conference centre Hof van Wageningen – the long wing on the Lawickse Allee. Part of this land will become parkland and the hotel's high-rise block will be doubled in size. A block of 120 housing units will be built right next to the hotel. To the left of the hotel there

will be a multi-storey carpark.

The Duivendaal compound, which belongs to Wageningen University & Research, has space for 225 housing units. The former WUR administration building, in which 180 students have been living since 2013, is to stay. The terrain will be landscaped like a park, and listed buildings and trees will be preserved. The town council has not yet said what it thinks about the plans. Implementation is expected to take ten years. **RK**



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RESOURCE

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GOVERNMENT ALLOWS CITIZENS LITTLE SCOPE

- **PhD researcher scrutinizes citizens' initiatives**
- **Government should have courage to hand over responsibility**

The Dutch government should allow citizens' initiatives a lot more scope. Only then can the full potential of citizens shaping their own environment be fulfilled. So says governance expert Rosalie van Dam in her thesis *Bonding by Doing*. 'Sometimes the government has very little confidence in citizens' initiatives. The government says the citizens should take the initiative themselves, but its actions do not match its words. All too often the government wants things done its own way exactly.'

'If you really want to see citizens' initiatives, you've got to let people do things their own way,' adds Van Dam. 'If you don't, citizens' initiatives deteriorate into no more than citizen participation.' In this case the citizens get to participate but the govern-

ment keeps firm hold of the reins. For her study Van Dam scrutinized 17 citizens' initiatives and self-organizing groups. These ranged from groups such as Mooi Wageningen, which aims at creating a more attractive landscape, to Golfresidentie Dronten, which has developed its own golf resort.

Citizens' initiatives often stem from a combination of idealism and dissatisfaction. Citizens look for kindred spirits and set to work. Making connections is the key to success, Van Dam's work shows. 'The more you enter into relationships with other parties, the more successful you are, on the whole.' And the government is often an important partner in this. 'If the initiative is about designing the living environment, it is often the government that owns the land.'

But the government does not hand over the reins lightly. In practice, this often means citizens' initiatives just have to adapt to what the government wants. You could call that slavish and subservient, says Van Dam, or you



PHOTO: LAHAYE ARCHITECT

Golf residence Dronten is one of the citizens' initiatives studied by governance expert Rosalie van Dam.

could call it smart and strategic. In some cases citizens' initiatives turn into a kind of 'surrogate government'. On the other hand, citizens' initiatives which go down a different route are often treated as irrelevant or a nuisance.

Van Dam denies that citizens' initiatives are largely the preserve

of highly educated groups of people. 'It's not like that in reality. The citizens' initiatives I studied often have a very social focus. They make an effort to include vulnerable groups. Everyone contributes what they can. You also need people who are prepared to roll up their sleeves.' **RK**

FARMERS CAUSE SMOG IN CHINESE CITIES

- **Pollution from burning of crop waste long underestimated**
- **'Chinese government should ban the custom'**

The poor air quality in Chinese cities does not all come from polluting factories and cars. Many farmers in northern China burn their crop waste, thereby generating extra ozone and fine particles in the cities.

The contribution of the extensive burning of crop waste to poor air quality in China has been underestimated for years, says a team made up of Belgian researchers and Wageningen researcher

Folkert Boersma. For a long time it was difficult to get accurate estimates of the extent of the crop-burning in northern China, but the researchers have now used satellite measurements to gauge the concentration of formaldehyde in the atmosphere resulting from the fires between 2005 and 2012.

Formaldehyde is a good indicator of the levels of volatile organic matter in the air, and a predictor of the formation of ozone and fine particles. The measurements obtained with a satellite come out higher by factor 2 than earlier measurements on the ground, note the researchers. They calculate that the fires cause an in-

crease of 7 percent in the ozone concentration and 18 percent in the fine particle concentration in the densely populated cities of China.

As well as formaldehyde, the fires also caused raised concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and methanol in the air above the plateau and the cities, say the researchers. In the month of June especially, the air pollution caused by the burning of crop waste is often higher than the pollution by factories and road traffic, Boersma and his colleagues write in the journal *Scientific Reports*. Their advice is that the Chinese government should develop a policy banning the burning of crop waste. **AS**



'AGRICULTURE MUST MAKE ROOM FOR NATURE'

- Emeritus professor Frank Berendse sounds the alarm
- Pamphlet calls for reflection on the future of the countryside

A complete overhaul is needed in how space is allocated in the Netherlands. Nature should get more room and agriculture less room as that is the only way to conserve many of our wild plants and animals. These are the conclusions drawn by emeritus professor Frank Berendse in his most recent book *Wilde Apen* ('wild apes'), which was presented on 17 September. It's really a pamphlet, as Berendse admits. A cry for help in putting an end to the further decline in nature and the countryside in the Netherlands.

In his book, Berendse sets out his vision of the future for rural areas. At present, more than half the land in the Netherlands is taken up by agriculture. In the future this should be no more than a third, according to Berendse's ideal scenario. The area allocated to recreation, water and, in particular, nature should expand.

Berendse uses economic arguments to support his vision. In the past two decades, agriculture's share of GDP (gross domestic product) has fallen to 1.5 percent. That will only decrease further still if the economy develops as expected. According to Berendse, it is no longer possible to maintain that agriculture should still take up more than half the available land in the

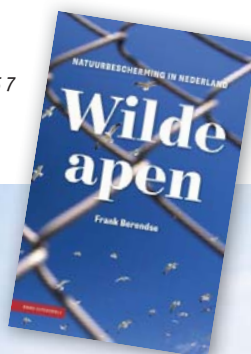
Netherlands.

'At the same time, livestock and arable farming are having a disastrous effect on our countryside,' writes Berendse. 'Whereas emissions of hazardous substances by industry were reduced to virtually zero years ago, Dutch arable farming is still allowed to spread the most toxic substances in the countryside. Something is not right here! Parliament should take action! Develop a proper vision for the future of rural areas.'

Berendse does not want to hound farmers out of their jobs. 'In fact, I want farmers to occupy a respectable position again in our society and earn a decent income.' But only by farming in places where that is possible and sustainable. Berendse says many species will not survive unless nature is given more room. The extra space advocated by the professor would ensure a sustainable future for 70 percent of the current species, according to his calculations.

Berendse has also thought about the financial underpinning. He advocates a simple, Europe-wide tax on the use of pesticides, fertilizer, antibiotics and the imported animal feed that a farm purchases per hectare. 'Food prices may increase slightly as a result but as a society we have to be prepared to pay that price.'

Wilde Apen,
KNNV Publishing,
ISBN 978 90 5011 595 7



VISION <<

'The merger won't affect the number of varieties'

The chemical company Bayer wants to take over the biotechnological company Monsanto for 59 billion euros.

If the merger goes ahead, Bayer will hold more than 30 percent of the global market for agricultural seeds and pesticides in its hands. This would make

Bayer-Monsanto a little bigger than the Chinese state-held company ChemChina, which took over the Swiss company Syngenta earlier this year. Richard Visser, professor of Plant Breeding, does not think the merger will result in fewer plant varieties on the market.

MONSANTO



Is this merger a bad business?

'From an economic point of view the merger is very interesting because the companies are very complementary. Bayer is big in crop protection and in Europe; Monsanto in breeding key crops and the pesticide Roundup. For the breeding of vegetable seeds the merger means that they have a joint market share of about 25 percent. A big player. I don't expect there to be fewer varieties on the market in the short term because of the merger. Upscaling has been going on for years and the number of new varieties has not gone down so far.'

The merger needs the blessing of the authorities in as many as 30 countries. How likely do you think they are to consider the new combination too dominant?

'Difficult question, I'm not an authority on industrial competition. People will take a good hard look at this megamerger both in Europe and the US. If this new merger holds 25 percent of the world trade in vegetable seeds in its hands, its dominance would seem limited, as the other 75 percent is not in its hands.'

What does it mean for Dutch plant-breeding research?

'Bayer and Monsanto have both taken over Dutch breeding companies so I could imagine people in the Netherlands will start concentrating and cut down on locations. What you also often see is that managers first want to get a good internal overview of the research in the merged company and what it might mean for their innovation. A consequence of this is that for a few years the companies participate less in public-private research projects, including collaboration with WUR.' **AS**

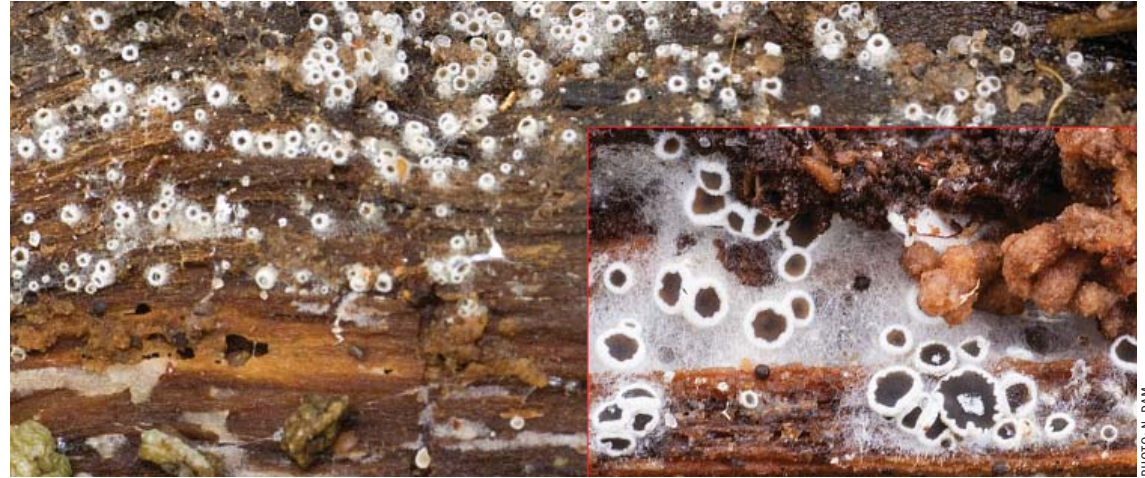
FROG'S FLUFF AND WITCH'S UMBRELLAS

- 500 mushrooms are given Dutch names
- Wageningen professor leads the naming group

As many as 500 mushrooms have been given a new name by the Dutch Mycological Association. And there are some stunners among them: *iepenpuntkogeltje* [roughly translated as elm bullet], *knikkerpluis* [frog's fluff], *reikhalsje* [grasper], *gewimperd menhirzwammetje* [fringed menhir mushroom], *obscuur geleischijfje* [obscure jelly disc] and *roestparasiet* [rust parasite].

Thom Kuyper, mycologist and personal professor in the Soil Quality department, was closely involved as chair of the group responsible for picking names. 'Every year about 100 to 150 new species get discovered in Holland or Flanders,' he says. 'They are often species no more than a millimetre in size. With these 500 new names we have dealt with a backlog of about three years.'

Every organism found in the Netherlands is supposed to have a Dutch name as well as a scientific



The krentenpapspinnragschijfje [currant porridge cobweb disc].

one, explains Kuyper. This is different to other countries. The French simply Gallicize the Latin name. The British don't bother at all. The Germans do so half-heartedly, and are especially behind with the small mushrooms.

There are rules for the naming of mushrooms. 'Firstly a name should express a characteristic of the mushroom, and preferably not have too many syllables. I like 'beiteltje' [little chisel], for example, the name of a small triangular mushroom.

'Spleetlip' [cleft lip] is a good one too. Names should contain no more than one adjective and we prefer not to specify geographical location because you never know where else a mushroom might crop up. We don't name them after people and the name shouldn't be misleading. The nicest names are very poetic, of course. Elves' bench, for instance, witch's umbrella or Judas' ear.'

Initially it's up to the discoverer of a new species to propose a name. Kuyper: 'We try to honour that as

much as possible. But sometimes we deviate, perhaps because it's not good Dutch or because there is already a Flemish name. The more species appear, the less fancy the names become because we run out of vocabulary.'

Kuyper himself came up with the name 'Adonis trechterzwam' [Adonis clytocybe]. 'Most clytocybes are quite colourless. This one is a pretty pink. So with suitable poetic licence I named it the Adonis Clytocybe.'

RK

'DEVELOP VACCINE AGAINST HEPATITIS E'

- Virus causes pain and paralysis
- More than half of Dutch pigs are infected

The hepatitis E virus, genotype 3, probably coming from pig farms, is causing severe pain and paralysis in increasing numbers of people. RIVM has seen an increase in the number of infections in the Netherlands, and the ECDC finds the same in Europe as a whole. Wim van der Poel, a virologist at Wageningen Bioveterinary Research (formerly CVI), advocates developing a vaccine.

Van der Poel conducts research on zoonoses, viruses that can be transmitted from animals

to humans. 'This virus has been known for more than 15 years to be a zoonosis, mainly transmitted from pigs,' he says. 'I gave the first description of the virus for the Netherlands in 2000.'

Now more than half the pigs in the Netherlands are infected with this virus. It is probably transmitted through unheated food containing pork, such as pâté and liver sausage. But Van der Poel says more research is needed on its transmission. 'The routes hepatitis E genotype 3 takes from animal reservoirs to humans are known but the crucial question is which of these routes is really important. You can only take focussed, effective action once you know that. We



Hepatitis E genotype 3 could be transmitted by unheated food containing pork, such as liver sausage.

need to do more research to find this out.'

The scientist sees two possible options for a solution. 'Firstly, measures in the food production

chains to inactivate the virus. And secondly, measures to curb the virus in pig farming and other animal reservoirs. One possibility would be vaccines.'

AS

The *Resource* website has daily news updates and stories. You can find a selection on this page. Go to resource-online.nl to read the full reports and add your comments.

MEANWHILE ON...



RESOURCE-ONLINE.NL

TO THE NORTH CAPE

Wageningen student Sjoerd van Dekken has reached the North Cape after a major trek. He walked nearly 3000 kilometres to get to the northernmost tip of mainland Europe. The Forest and Nature Management student left for Norway on 3 June — without any money or a bank card. Somehow or other, he managed to get hold of everything he needed. 'The weather is pretty awful here, it's raining and cold. I needed a raincoat. I was at the local supermarket begging for my evening meal when a couple of tree planters asked me what I was doing. They listened to my story, then gave me a raincoat.' Sjoerd will try to hitchhike back to the Netherlands from the North Cape.



'BILLION EXTRA'

Het volgende kabinet moet jaarlijks een miljard The next Dutch Cabinet should spend one billion euros a year extra on research and innovation, according to research and applied universities, businesses and teaching hospitals in a joint call for action. They want to use that money to tackle societal challenges. 'From the implementation of the Energy Agreement and the integration of refugees to adaptation to climate change and future-proof innovations in health care,' according to the statement by the Kenniscoalitie ('knowledge coalition'), as the group is called.

HISTORIC MEDAL

The Wageningen athletics team made history in September at the Dutch Student Championships (NSK) for teams. In Nijmegen, the men's athletics team won a medal for the first time ever.

INTERVIEW WITH KROPFF

Martin Kropff, rector magnificus in Wageningen until last year and now Director General of the international research institute Cimmyt, says in an interview that he wants more collaboration with his former employer. He wants to supervise PhD candidates in partnership with the university. Cimmyt is an international institute for the improvement of maize and wheat cultivation. The institute has its headquarters in Mexico and has branches in 18 countries.

ed and was granted access to this mysterious space and found a 'treasure': plants preserved in alcohol.

ACCOMMODATION FOR REFUGEES

Student accommodation provider Idealis wants to house 50 'status' refugees from October. Despite this, Idealis still expects to have cleared the waiting list for students by 1 May. Idealis made this announcement in an e-mail to tenants. 'Status' refugees are refugees with a provisional residence permit. Idealis mainly wants to house young refugees (aged less than 25) who speak English and are preferably still in education. They will be accommodated in self-contained rooms – met their own bathroom and kitchen – in the complexes on Bellostraat, Marijkeweg, Oude Eekmolenweg and Rijnveste.



FORGOTTEN 'TREASURE'

The Schip van Blaauw building on the hill in Wageningen is a standard attraction during the annual Open Monuments Day. The former WUR building was included in the route again this year on Sunday 11 September. Visitors were able to view the old professorial accommodation and the lab. The cellar underneath the building is usually closed. *Resource* request-

Cutting and pasting genes

The new technology Crispr-Cas9 makes it easier than ever to edit genetic material with great precision. The development of this gene editing technology is moving so fast that legislation and ethics are having trouble keeping up. Is this gene manipulation or accelerated classic breeding?

text Rob Ramaker *illustrations* JeRoen Murré



Today we are learning the language in which God created life,' said the then American president Bill Clinton in June 2000. He was receiving the results of the Human Genome Project, in which all the genetic material of a human being – all the genetic letters A, C, G and T – was decoded for the first time.

Now, 16 years later, scientists can read this 'gene language' increasingly fast, easily and cheaply. And in the past few years they have even managed to edit this language with increasing success. A new technique called Crispr-Cas9 has made it simpler than ever to tinker with the genetic material – the DNA – of plants, animals and humans. This makes it possible, for instance, to prevent hereditary diseases or to give plants new characteristics.

REVOLUTIONARY

The story of Crispr starts in a bacterium. Although themselves pathogens, these micro-organisms can also fall sick if they are infected by malignant viruses. Some bacteria, however, have developed a unique defense mechanism against this. They store up little 'barcodes' – Crisprs – of the pathogenic viruses they encounter. Proteins such as Cas9 – there are other variants too – then scan the cell for these barcodes. When a pathogen is detected, Cas9 mercilessly cuts out the genetic material of the virus. Enemy eliminated.

John van der Oost, personal professor of Microbiology at Wageningen University, is one of the pioneers of Crispr technology. His researchers showed how the system works in relation to the protein Cascade. Another variant – Cas9 – turned out to be easier to use as a biotechnological tool than Cascade. In the lab the protein uses a tailor-made 'guide' to find specific locations in the genetic material and make a cut there. This enables scientists to switch off genes, replace fragments of genetic material or correct genetic letters – a process they themselves call genome editing.

As soon as the potential of Crisprs became clear, teams all around the world applied themselves to the technique. In no time it was used on plants, zebra fish, mice, and eventually even on human embryos. The 'revolutionary' and 'Nobel prize-worthy' technology elicited unprecedented enthusiasm all around the world. At the end of 2015, the scientific journal *Science* declared Crispr-Cas9 'the breakthrough of the year.' The technique is expected to have a massive impact on science and beyond it.

LONG LIFE TOMATOES

Plant breeders are watching the rapid development of Crisprs with interest. 'I have never seen anything like it,' says Jan Schaart, a researcher at Wageningen Plant Research. Schaart already had some experience with earlier methods of genome editing, using specially developed proteins, for instance. These were extremely labour-intensive compared with Crispr-Cas9. 'One of the strengths of Crispr-Cas is that it is so easy.'

This view is shared by Ruud de Maagd, another researcher at Wageningen Plant Research. He has been using the method since 2015. De Maagd used Crispr-Cas9 to cut pieces out of genes to disable them – by far the most common application. 'We got results very easily,' he says. 'At once, in fact.' His ultimate goal was to improve the shelf life of tomatoes. The ideal is to create a variety that goes soft less quickly without slowing down other aspects of the ripening process, such as flavour development. To achieve this, De Maagd needs to find out which genes determine individual characteristics. The easiest way to do this is to switch off the genes and see what happens. His fellow plant scientist Schaart envisages other applications too, such as making plants less vulnerable

'One of the strengths of Crispr-Cas is that it is so easy'

to diseases. This is done by switching off genes that pathogens need in order to infect plants. It's as though you remove an Achilles' heel. But it can only be done if the plant can do without that gene. 'More and more of these kinds of susceptibility genes are being discovered,' says Schaart. 'They create robust resistance.' Schaart would like to modify oil crops too, so that they make a more useful oil mixture for human use.

RADIATION

Although Crispr-Cas9 is simplifying his work, Schaart does not think it will entirely replace existing breeding methods. 'We'll go on needing classic breeding through cross-breeding and selection.' Crispr-Cas9 will help with creating targeted new mutations – and thus variation. This is currently labour-intensive and random work. Plants and seeds are first 'mutagenized': blitzed with radiation or exposed to a chemical which causes hundreds of mutations. After that thousands – or even tens of thousands – of plants are screened for the right mutation. This is where Crispr-Cas9 provides a short cut, with far fewer unsolicited mutations.

Plant breeders would also like to replace (fragments of) genes in plants with more useful variants, or introduce new material with Crispr-Cas9. In practice this is still difficult, though. Plants only seem to build in newly introduced genetic material incidentally. But both Schaart and De Maagd are optimistic that new innovations are going to make this possible.

Crispr-Cas9 is still a new method and its full potential has yet to be discovered. New or better applications appear every month in scientific journals. One possibility opened up by combining Cas9 with another enzyme is to change individual genetic letters. 'My imagination can really run wild on the potential of that,' says Schaart. What is more, new Crispr systems with new potential are



HORNLESS CATTLE

American scientists demonstrated earlier this year that they had used gene editing to create a cow without horns. All they had to do was to introduce a single gene variant. That may sound like a miracle, but Martien Groenen, personal professor of Breeding and Genetics, is cautious. He fears the potential of gene editing for livestock breeding may be being exaggerated.

The reason is that in order to keep sufficient genetic variety and prevent inbreeding, breeders have to work with sizeable herds. If they want all their animals to get a new gene – for hornlessness, for instance – they either need to modify the genome in many embryos, which is expensive and far-reaching, or to select so stringently for the new gene that they lose other positive characteristics. This

makes a new breed much less interesting.

So gene editing is not yet viable in livestock breeding, unless a new gene makes an animal massively more interesting to farmers, says Groenen.

He does see a lot of potential in the scientific research



still being discovered. One example is Cpfl, a protein described by John van der Oost and a group of American researchers. This protein resembles Cas9 but cuts out genetic material in a different way. A further possibility is to change Cas9 so that it does not switch off genes but either counteracts or actually stimulates their functioning.

GMO OR NOT?

As the technology advances by leaps and bounds, legislation cannot keep pace. The European Union makes a strict distinction between plants produced by classic breeding and by genetic modification (mutagenesis using, for example, radiation, comes under the latter category but is exempted because it has been used safely for decades). This distinction is becoming harder and harder to make, concluded the Dutch Commission on Genetic Modification (Cogem) earlier this year in its Biotechnology Trend Analysis. This is due not only to Crispr-Cas9 but also to other innovative breeding techniques. The commission therefore proposes that it is time to 'review the EU legislation to provide clarity for the public, consumers and industry.'

The current lack of clarity poses few problems to scientific research. Yet it can throw up limitations. For example, a project proposal by Plant Breeding was rejected after strong criticism by the evaluating commit-

tee, says René Smulders, business unit manager at Wageningen Plant Research. The committee felt the status of the Crispr-Cas9 technique was too uncertain. A bitter disappointment, says Smulders, because the call by Horizon2020 explicitly aimed at innovative breeding techniques. Schaart notices that clients in the business world are also worried about whether the applications under consideration will be subject to the legislation on genetically modified organisms (GMOs). A situation considered unworkable by most companies.

ABSURD

Brussels promised more clarity last December. The decision was then postponed until March 2016, only to be postponed again. Now some member states are going their own way. The Swedish Board of Agriculture, for instance, licensed the cultivation of cabbage in which a gene had been switched off by Crispr-Cas9, but no 'foreign' DNA had been introduced. An unprecedented move in Europe. The right decision, according to the researcher responsible, Stefan Jansson at the University of Umeå. As a statement he publicly consumed the product, in the form of Tagliatelle with 'Crispry' fried vegetables. Most researchers express themselves less theatrically

Scientists want the product to be assessed, not the process

ally but share the conviction that it is absurd to define a plant as a genetically modified organism when the mutations in question could also come about naturally. They would rather have Crispr-Cas9 any day than the crude mutagenesis brought about by chemicals or radiation. Schaart and many of his colleagues want to get rid of the process-driven assessment that looks at how a plant is produced. In its place they would like to see a product-driven assessment. If the mutations in question could have come about naturally, then they see no reason to subject the plant to the strict GMO legislation.

Greenpeace took the opposite position in November last year. The organization claims that although gene editing is indeed more precise than earlier forms of genetic modification, 'newly created organisms could display unexpected and unpredictable effects'. Products which contain GMOs should therefore be labelled and traceable. And they should be subject to strict legislation. In the eyes of Greenpeace, modification in the lab is categorically different to mutations which arise spontaneously, and even to mutations brought about through mutagenesis by chemicals or radiation.

POWER

Scientific discoveries have proceeded exceptionally fast in the case of Crispr. Discussion of the ethical implica-

tions and legislative framework, on the other hand, has only just started. Plant breeders and scientists hope to avoid the intense polarization that arose around GMOs in Europe in the 1990s. Now that the general public is getting to know about the technique, it will be interesting to see how they react to it.

Back in 2000, President Clinton expressed concern about the power that came with knowledge of our genome. But optimism nevertheless prevailed – prematurely at that point perhaps, but with more and more basis in reality since. 'The science of the genome,' reckoned Clinton, 'is going to have an enormous impact on our lives.' ®

CRISPR PIONEERS IN WAGENINGEN

Jennifer Doudna, one of the pioneers of Crispr-Cas9, is coming to Wageningen on 30 September. She is in the Netherlands to receive the Heineken prize for biochemistry and biophysics. She will give a lecture together with Edze Westra, winner of the Heineken Young Scientists Award and an alumnus of Wageningen University. In the lecture in Orion the pair will describe their work and the ethical dilemmas it raises. Doudna was invited to Wageningen by Science Café Wageningen, Resource, the Microbiology chair group, Wageningen Young Academy and the KNAW. You can register for the lecture on the website of Wageningen Young Academy.

PROF. DR. JENNIFER DOUDNA (UC BERKLEY) DR. EDZE WESTRA (UNIV. OF EXTER)

REWIRING OUR GENES?

CRISPR-CAS SYSTEMS AS TOOLS FOR GENOME EDITING

CO-ORGANIZED BY SCIENCE CAFE WAGENINGEN, WAGENINGEN YOUNG ACADEMY, CHAIR GROUP OF MICROBIOLOGY, RESOURCE AND KNAW

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH Science Café RESOURCE

Friday 30 September 15.00 Room C1040, Orion (building 103) Bronland 1, Wageningen

Subscription required before September 25 on: www.wageningenur.nl/wya

WOMEN'S RUGBY TEAM

September 18 was a red-letter day for the rugby players and fans of Wageningen. The Wageningen women's rugby team (in purple) played its first home game in years, winning a magnificent victory over the visiting Utrecht team: 29-12. The Wageningen team has both student and non-student members aged from 17 to 50. Since 2007, when the rugby team ceased to exist, the players have had to go to Arnhem and Doetinchem to train. No need for that now. Anyone interested in playing can come along to the training sessions at Sportpark De Zoom on Tuesdays at 19.45.

© JB / foto Sven Menschel

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on resource-online.nl.



Bachelor's degrees go international

A small selection of Wageningen Bachelor's degree programmes will probably be taught in English from 2018. The programmes see this as another step along the road to being an international institution. But the wish to grow plays a role too.

text Roelof Kleis illustration Geert-Jan Bruins

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REMEMBER WHEN THE ELEMENTS
COULD RAIN ON YOUR PARADE?

HYUNDAI

About ten years ago, the Bachelor's degree programme in Food technology was on its last legs. Anja Janssen, chair of the programme committee, picks up a graph to illustrate the point. 'Look, in 2005 we had 20 to 25 first-years. That is below the viable level.' The bars on the graph shoot up in the subsequent years. 'In the last couple of years we've had a stable 140 to 150.' But these figures cannot be taken for granted, as Janssen is well aware. In view of demographic trends, the number of Dutch students is set to go down. 'We hope to compensate for that with an influx of foreign students. For us that is the main argument for going over to an English-language Bachelor's.'

Food Technology is one of six Bachelor's programmes on the list to be taught entirely in English from the academic year of 2018-2019. The others are Biology; Soil, Water and Atmosphere; International Land and Water Management, Forest and Nature Management; and Environmental Sciences. The final decision still has to be made, and this will happen next Spring. These six programmes are pioneers, says Environmental Sciences programme director Theo Lexmond. He is in the working group that has been pondering the issue. The other Wageningen Bachelor's programmes want to watch developments; some of them might follow suit at a later date. Five of the programmes do not want to do so at all.

LARGER POOL

At Environmental Sciences, the wish to grow plays a role in the decision to run the programme in English, says Lexmond. 'We've been thinking about an international Bachelor's degree for a long time. Some years ago we told the Education Institute that we wanted to go over to English only.' Environmental Sciences is one of the smaller Bachelor's programmes. Switching to English is a way of appealing to a larger pool of potential students.' Here Lexmond has an eye on Utrecht, the only other Dutch university offering a Bachelor's in Environmental Sciences. 'They have just merged their Dutch-language programmes into the new Global Sustainability Science programme, which is taught entirely in English.'

So growth and competitiveness play a role. But furthering the internationalization of the university is at least as important, explains Lexmond. And one of the keys to this is the international classroom. That ideal class, in with at least one quarter international students, is under pressure at the moment. By no means all the Master's programmes achieve that minimum, says Lexmond. 'Environmental Sciences is one of the most international. At the other end of the spectrum are programmes such as Biology, where less than 10 percent of the students are international. The big surge in recruitment of Dutch students has put even more pressure on that international class. And English-taught Bachelor's could make up for that effect.'

INTERNATIONAL DOMAIN

International Bachelor's students who stay on for a Master's might even out the make-up of student populations on Master's degrees, agrees Tiny van Boekel, director of the Education Institute. 'At the moment there is indeed a big difference between the programmes. But the main argument in my view is the international domain in which we operate. Themes such as food production, climate change, soil, water and atmosphere,

are international. You add something to the students' learning experience if you don't look at these things from the Dutch perspective alone.' Van Boekel also points to the fact that the Bachelor's programmes are a qualification in their own right and not just a prelude to the Master's. When it comes to looking for a job it is a plus if this qualification is international.'

ENRICHING

For International Land and Water Management, the switch to English is no more than logical, says programme director Erik Heijmans. 'For us that internationalization is the most important point. It is always enriching if you can get on with difference nationalities and cultures in places where you end up later. With an English-taught Bachelor's the students can already start getting used to the intercultural atmosphere you create on the Master's programme. And those cultural differences are not to be sneezed at. You even see them between Dutch and German or Flemish students. The way Dutch students give feedback, for instance, is very different to the way foreigners do it.'

The Bachelor's in International Land and Water Management already attracts the odd student from abroad. They first have to learn Dutch. 'The use of English on the programme will make things a lot easier for those people.' Of course Heijmans also hopes that an English-taught Bachelor's will attract 'some British students or a few Africans'. Nevertheless, he says, 'growth is not our main argument. We have grown from 30 first-years in 2008 to 80 now. That is quite a lot. We do want to retain the small-scale, personal quality that Wageningen offers.'

Bachelor's degrees taught in English go with Wageningen's international themes

OBSTACLES

The shift to English as the language of communication runs up against various obstacles. The actual use of English in speaking and writing may be the least of the hurdles. English is already used in the last two years of the three-year Bachelor's programme. 'It's a small step,' says Heijmans. 'An added advantage is that there is much more material available in English.'

Selection, on the other hand, does pose a serious hurdle, says education director Van Boekel. 'For Dutch students a VWO diploma suffices, but what about students coming from abroad?' That problem is acknowledged by the working group, confirms Lexmond of Environmental Sciences. 'What knowledge do those students bring in with them, and how do you bridge any gaps in their knowledge? That needs to be thoroughly researched.'

Lexmond also points to cultural issues, such as the specific skills required to teach an international class. 'We ask about this in evaluations of the Master's programmes. To what extent does the teacher succeed in dealing appropriately with cultural differences? Most of the programmes get high marks for that.' According to the education director, both teachers and students should be offered 'tools' for this. These finer points will be subject to scrutiny in the coming period. ⑥

THE SAME SAMPLE FOR EVERYONE

Hundreds of laboratories around the world analyse soil or water samples. The fact that there is no need to doubt their results has to do with the WUR institutes Wepal and Quasimeme. They keep the labs up to scratch with their 'ring test'. The crux is to produce identical samples.

text Roelof Kleis *photos* Guy Ackermans

The Nergena greenhouses can be found at the end of the Bornsesteeg. The building nextdoor houses Wepal and Quasimeme, two relatively little-known Wageningen University & Research insti-

tutes, which guarantee the quality of chemical analyses in laboratories. About 700 laboratories all around the world are in close contact with Nergena by post. Postal services are key to the ring test provided by the institute.

In the ring test, identical samples are sent

to participating labs around the world. An average is taken of the results that are sent back, and this provides the consensus value. Any lab deviating too far from that is not doing it right. So the ring of participating labs always establishes the norm itself. A lab that

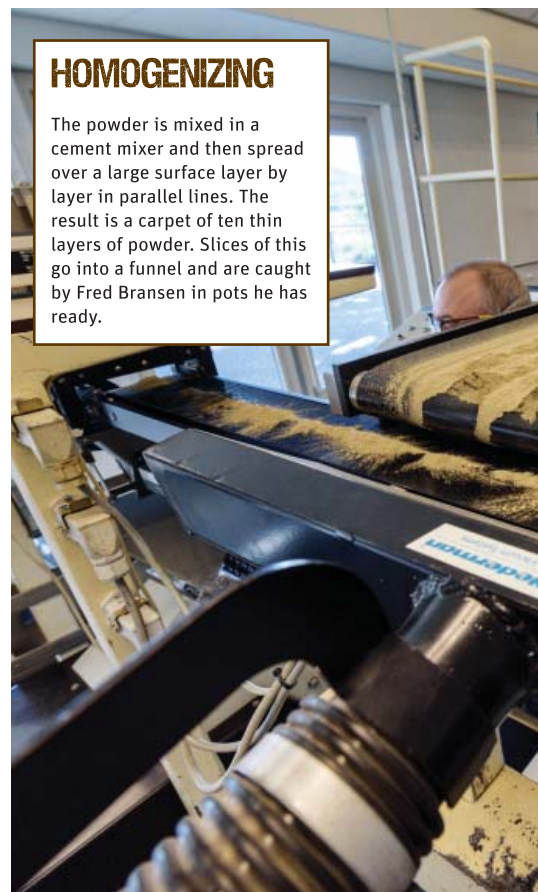
POWDERING

Wepal makes uniform soil samples in three main steps. Fred Bransen first breaks up and powders the dried, rough soil in the 'jaw crusher' and the 'cross-beater'. The result is a powdery substance.



HOMOGENIZING

The powder is mixed in a cement mixer and then spread over a large surface layer by layer in parallel lines. The result is a carpet of ten thin layers of powder. Slices of this go into a funnel and are caught by Fred Bransen in pots he has ready.



deviates from the norm too often can lose its accreditation.

SOIL AND SEA

Ring tests have come into existence because of the need to compare analysis results better worldwide, explains Winnie van Vark of Wepal (Wageningen Evaluating Programs for Analytical Laboratories). 'Previously everyone just used to do their own thing. That's why the idea grew up: let's all analyse the same sample and see what comes out of that.' The nice thing about a study like that is that everyone is free to use their own technique. As long as the result is the same. Wepal, which is 60 years old now, does ring tests with samples of soil crops, fertilizer and biomass. Wepal's younger sister Quasimeme – an acronym for Quality Assurance of Information for Marine Environmental Monitoring in Europe – does the same thing with samples of seawater, sediment and fish. The organization started nearly 25 years ago as an EU project in the Scottish city of Aberdeen, and moved to Wageningen in 2004. Wepal and Quasimeme have since merged to form one organization.

EXACTLY THE SAME

The store at Nergena is full of cardboard boxes containing soil samples. Labels like Terneuzen, Elbe, Liverpool, Wadden and Venice give away their origins. Not that origin is very important. The crux of a good ring test is that every participant gets the exactly the same. Equal treatment: that is the art which these institutes have perfected over the years. It is a question of drying, milling, mixing and homogenizing so that every lab get exactly the same sample in their test tube (see photos).


The basis of a good soil sample is that it is natural. In principle, pollution is not added later. Van Vark: 'The substance you are studying can start interacting with the rest of the soil. To prevent that, it is important that the samples you send around are as close as possible to the samples normally analysed by the labs. What I would really like would be to have a collection of all European soils.'

MUSSELS

At Quasimeme it is customary to 'spike' the samples, adding the substances to be detected, says Steven Crum. A particular way of spiking is currently being trialled. Crum and his colle-

agues will be feeding mussels with powdered stinging nettles over the next few weeks. This is a more or less controlled way of poisoning the creatures with PAKs, PCBs and other chemical pollutants. The reason they are doing this is interesting: it is hard to find mussels polluted in this way in the Netherlands. Crum: 'Dutch coastal waters have simply become too clean.'

Crum did not actually make the samples for Quasimeme in Nergena, but in the Environmental risk assessment lab in the cellar of Lumen. 'With mercury measurements, for example, you're looking at nano quantities. In which case you need to be able to work in a pretty much dust-free environment. That is not possible at Nergena.'

Another striking difference from Wepal is that water samples are sent in a frozen state. This is necessary so as to prevent material from breaking down. Crum packs his samples in polystyrene boxes with coolpacks cooled to -80 degrees Celsius. 'In these they stay frozen for 72 hours. That is just long enough to be able to send them by courier service.' The ring test providers give these services good custom. Crum: 'We spend 15 to 20 thousand euros a year on courier services.' 



POSTING

'Postman' Peter Pellen puts pots of soil samples into plastic envelopes. Four pots per delivery: three different samples plus a pot whose contents are known, as a control. The envelopes are posted by ordinary mail. They don't need to go registered mail because they are worthless in themselves.

USED TO THE NEW NAME YET?



From 6 September Wageningen UR became Wageningen University & Research, with a new 'domain specifier' tagged on for most research institutes. What do staff at these institutes think of the change? Are they getting used to it?

text Yvonne de Hilster illustration Henk van Ruitenbeek

Anne Besse-Lototskaya



Researcher at Wageningen Environmental Research (formerly Alterra), in Wageningen

'I am still getting used to using the name in daily life but I am totally in favour of the change. **I do a lot of acquisition and I notice that clients have often heard of Wageningen but not of Alterra.** And it was always difficult to explain our relation with Wageningen University. People thought we were a large consultancy firm linked with the university. And in EU projects we are at last rid of the confusing term DLO. With our new name we can benefit from Wageningen's reputation and make it very clear that

what we do is environmental research. And this name system promotes a sense of One Wageningen, too. Now all we've got to do is really start operating as One Wageningen.'

Salima Nanhekhan-Mahomed Dawood



Management assistant at Wageningen Bioveterinary Research (formerly CVI) in Lelystad

'I'm already getting used to it, although I sometimes forget to say or write 'Wageningen'. This has been our name for a while already. I've already made all the practical changes, to house style, name on proposals and new contracts, social media and my

email signature. Communication paved the way for all that very well. The main thing now is to keep an eye on new documents. I do get messages from clients saying they would still like formal confirmation of the name change; I leave that to the legal affairs office. **To me, Wageningen Bio-veterinary Research sounds very professional. The only thing is that people sometimes think we are actually based in Wageningen.'**

Dolfi Debrot



Researcher at Wageningen Marine Research (formerly Imares) in Den Helder

'I still have to think a moment when I mention the name of my institute, but other than that it makes no difference to me: I'm just an employee.

When it still says Imares in documents you just use "find and replace". **Wageningen Marine Research is a very suitable name.** Short and to-the-point, and it indicates the organization structure, our close link with the university, and the kind of collaboration we aim at.'

Bert Brinkman



Researcher at Wageningen Marine Research (formerly Imares) in Den Helder

'I haven't adjusted my email yet and my contacts have not yet been alerted to our name change. **I think the name change will affect the brand recognition we now enjoy.**

Imares has made a name for itself Alterra, which is known almost all over the world. And we have our own specific client base. We were already called Wageningen Imares, and to me that was enough to show that we were part of Wageningen. What is more, the new name is longwinded.

Lusine Aramyan



Researcher at Wageningen Economic Research (formerly the LEI) in Wageningen

'As it happens I was planning to find out this afternoon exactly what I'm supposed to put in my email signature.

The main thing that is affected by the disappearance of the name LEI is our brand familiarity in the Netherlands, I think. That has been our name for 75 years and we have never changed name before. I really have to get used to the idea myself. But overseas it won't make much difference – everyone thought of us as "Wageningen" there anyway. And Economic Research is a good description of what we do.'

Edward Smeets



Researcher at Wageningen Economic Research (formerly LEI) in Den Haag

'Edward Smeets speaking. (...) Yes, one of my colleagues laughed about me forgetting to say Wageningen Economic Research. I still have to form that habit. But I'm getting used

to the new name. I've changed my email signature and I make sure the new name is on new contracts. I do think it's unfortunate that the abbreviations for Wageningen Economic Research and for Wageningen Environmental Research are the same: WER. When you work on a project in a consortium, the names of institutes are always shortened in tables and descriptions. Besides, Wageningen Economic Research is a bit strange considering the head office is in The Hague. **But apart from that, I think the new name is very strong and it's totally One Wageningen.'**

Astrid Schop



Project controller at Wageningen Marine Research (formerly Imares) in Den Helder

'No, I can't get used to our new name at all. It's so long as well, much too long to use among ourselves and when you have to use it several times in the

course of a conversation. So I expect the name will get shortened to WMR. And it creates a lot of extra work too. You have to make sure all the documents are adjusted, especially when they are going to external parties. And bills have to be accompanied by a letter explaining that we've changed our name, because someone who gave the assignment to Imares now gets a bill with a different name on it.'

Joost Lahr



Researcher at Wageningen Environmental Research (formerly Alterra) in Wageningen

'Joost Lahr, Alterra, (...) Yes I am getting used to the new name but I just had a moment of doubt when I picked up the phone. Wageningen

Environmental Research is such a mouthful when you answer the phone. But I will use it for sure. I have already changed my automatic signature and informed project partners, and I end emails with: PS we have a new name. I think the name is a good idea, too. **I shall miss Alterra: it was a strong brand. But I think Wageningen is an even stronger brand.** What is more, I feel connected with other institutes and I work a lot with people from these other parts of the organization.' ®

At the end of the earth

The hotel on Ascension Island where Jessica Brown is staying has just one other guest. The Master's student of Climate Studies is on the remote island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean to study cloud formation. 'Sometimes I feel like I'm on the moon.'

text Rob Ramaker photos Jessica Brown

Wageningen students are keen travellers and often do internships in remote places. But few of them go as far (literally) as Jessica Brown from Australia. This Master's student of Climate Studies is currently doing research on Ascension, an isolated island in the southern Atlantic, roughly half way between Brazil and Angola. Its closest 'neighbouring country' is about 1200 kilometres away: St Helena, the volcanic island that became famous when Napoleon was banished there.

Brown arrived on Ascension at the begin-

ning of September on a British Royal Air Force plane that was making a stopover on its way to the Falkland Islands. Ascension is British too, forming a British Overseas Territory together with St. Helena and the even more remote Tristan de Cunha archipelago. The roughly 1000 residents are largely dependent on Great Britain for their food supply. 'So it's pretty hard to get fresh veggies,' says Brown, 'which is hard as I'm vegetarian!'

FOREST FIRES

Brown is working on Ascension on an international project called Clarify-2016. There are two Dutch participants in this project: the royal

meteorological institute KNMI and the Technical University of Delft. Clarify researches the impact of forest fires on cloud formation. The droplets of which clouds are made up never form entirely spontaneously, not even if the air contains enough condensation and is cold enough. A nucleus is needed: a grain of sand or a flake of ash, for instance, on which water condensates. The project scientists monitor this process using measurements taken from satellites, the ground and planes. They want to gain a better understanding of the effect of smoke, because it is a relatively poorly understood aspect of our climate. 'Clouds are very difficult to incorporate into climate models,' says



'This island is often described as a natural laboratory'

Brown, 'and smoke changes how clouds develop.' Particles –aerosols, to use the technical term – stimulate cloud formation. As the number of particles in the air increases, more and smaller condensation droplets are formed, influencing in turn how the resulting cloud scatters the light and how much energy is absorbed.

VOLCANIC

Ascension is a good place to study this process. 'Mainly because there is plenty of both: lots of smoke and lots of clouds.' This is due to the volcanic island's position. Cold ocean water surfaces here, making for a relatively cold and


humid atmosphere. Meanwhile, a lot of ash drifts over the sea from the African continent, where there are frequent forest fires in the dry season. 'This island is often described as a natural laboratory.'

Brown herself takes ground measurements. She has set up a LiDAR sensor, a kind of radar system which uses laser light instead of radio waves. The degree to which laser light is scattered shows how many particles there are in the air. For the next three weeks Brown has to make sure the gadget continues to measure correctly. Meanwhile she is already analysing the data and working on her report.

When she's not working on these tasks,

Brown has plenty of time to explore the island on foot. Ascension is rugged and shows many signs of geological activity. 'It's a very strange landscape here, says Brown, 'sometime I feel like I'm on the moon.' In the middle of the island there is a single mountain, planted with a small area of tropical forest. Originally the island was completely bare but the idea was that the tropical plants would help retain water.

SHARKS

Initially Brown was planning to go diving. 'There are a lot of fish here.' Since seeing six Galapagos sharks of two and a half metres long ripping fish apart in a feeding frenzy, she has had second thoughts. So far, she has not been troubled by the quiet or by loneliness. The hotel where she is staying, mainly used by people coming who come to this exotic destination to fish or dive, only has one other guest. There are no other scientists here at the moment. 'I have lots of time to work on my report without distractions,' Brown jokes. Would she spend six months here? 'Maybe if I took up fishing. But no, I think one month is enough.' 



TEST ROCKET WITH THREE MICE

Between 1967 and the mid-1990s, the American space organization NASA had a tracking station for rockets on Ascension, described by the German writer Judith Schalansky in the *Atlas of remote islands*. Even before that, in 1960, the nose cone of an intercontinental test rocket landed close to the island. The three black mice inside it survived. 'In good condition.'

5 SECONDS

Food that has been on the floor for less than five seconds is safe to eat. This rule of thumb is a myth, shows microbiological research at the American Rutgers University. The risk of contamination has at least as much to do with the kind of food and flooring than with the contact time. The moister the food, the faster contamination goes. For a piece of melon one second is too long.

WALK

Walk up and down and I'll tell you how aggressive you are. Possible, say psychologists at the university of Portsmouth. They demonstrated a link between the way people walk and aggression. Aggressive people have a more swinging gait, twisting their bodies more at the hips. The psychologists have offered to train police in spotting aggressive types. 'Halt! I don't like the way you walk, Sir.'

BRACE

Spanish and Austrian researchers have proven a link between crooked teeth and a person's balance. The straighter the teeth, the better the balance. The effect is mainly revealed when people are tired. The psychologists advise top sportspeople to get their teeth checked. A brace can help with more than you think.

SELFIE

Taking frequent selfies makes you a happier person. Researchers at the University of California discovered this. Just one photo a day is enough to have an effect. You have to be smiling on the photo, otherwise it doesn't work. What makes this finding even nicer is that it works on other people too. Send someone a photo you think will make them happy and... they'll be happy. Scientifically proven. Really.



Argo and Ceres most popular among first-years

Student society Ceres welcomed 192 new first-years this academic year, more than any of the other student societies. KSV Franciscus and SSR-W are next with 163 and 130 new members. Incidentally, the traditional social clubs were overtaken once again this year by the student rowing club Argo, which has 250 new members.

Compared with last year, the total number of members among the seven societies approached by *Resource* has grown by nine percent. The chairs attribute this increase to the growing numbers of students in Wageningen.

NSW saw the number of new members grow van 50 to 60 and Unitas from 50 to around 70. Nji-Sri was able to record as many



Dinner at student rowing club Argo.

members as last year (50). IxESN is seeing the effects of more students from other countries. In addition to its Erasmus students, the international society is now trying to attract more Master's students through a

modified buddy system. This has resulted in 100 additional members.

Student rowing club Argo has had to turn people away because of the large number of applications – 301. **TvdS**

Rove beetles

Millipedes, woodlice, ants and rove beetles have one thing in common: they are all soil creatures. Students in their first year of the Bachelor's in Forest and Nature Policy were studying them last

week for the Ecology II course. They took specimens from three different woods around Wageningen. They were afraid they wouldn't be able to find as much soil fauna in the hot weather, but

that was not a problem says teacher Ron de Goede. Back on campus, the students classified and quantified the creatures – which were released again in their own habitat after the practical was over. **VK**



See too the photo series
op resource-online.nl.

Idealis: 'Temporary rooms needed for next year'

Idealis is looking at options for temporary student accommodation. It will need these temporary rooms to cope with the expected growth in student numbers in Wageningen from September 2017, says Sylvie Deenen, the student accommodation provider's director.

'There were far more new students this year than the university predicted,' says Deenen. 'That has not resulted in any urgent problems but there will definitely be shortages if we get another year with growth like this. That's why we need to make arrangements earlier than we expected for additional rooms.'

The student accommodation provider wants to do this in part by speeding up ongoing projects. For instance, there are plans for 178 new permanent rooms on the site of the former Diedenoort university of applied sciences on Churchillweg, as well as around 200 rooms at Costerweg 65, opposite the entrance to Duiivendaal. 'But they will not be available before September 2018,' says Deenen. Furthermore, the fate of the planned 120 rooms on the site of the Kirpestein garage on Ritze- ma Bosweg is still uncertain. Gelderland province has not yet given dispensation for a six or seven storey building as it fears the De Vlijt windmill on Harnjesweg may then not get enough wind.

All in all, the plans for permanent accommodation will result in too little, too late to cope with current rates of growth, according to Deenen. Idealis has therefore asked Wageningen University & Research and the municipality to help think of suitable locations for temporary accommodation that could be made ready for people to move in to within one year. This could be existing buildings or temporary units such as container homes. Deenen does not want to name any specific locations as yet. 'It is still too early for that.'

© LdK / Photo Joris Schaap



There are already temporary container homes for students on Haarweg, at Earth House.



EPISODE 77 (THE END) MORTIERSTRAAT 14B <<

The story so far: The group of housemates is falling apart. Vera and Willem-Jan have already left, Bianca and Filippo are on the point of leaving. But every ending is a new beginning.

Ikea

When Wageningen came in sight Derk broke out in a sweat. September was too hot for running and in frustration Derk noticed that his tempo was lower than usual. He slowed down from the Idealis complex on the Haarweg and plodded home.

At the Mortierstraat he was met by silence. The silence of a house to which no one was coming home today. Vera and Willem-Jan had left for good. Filippo and Bianca's baggage was standing ready. Derk sat down at the table with a glass of water and stared gloomily out of the window. Of course, housemates came and went, that was part of the deal. Everyone was in a Whatsapp group and they really did intend to meet up now and then. But today he couldn't handle the goodbyes. He felt like a little kid who had realized the party couldn't go on for ever. That this jolly ragtag crowd couldn't go on living together for ever. That your student days don't last for ever. Something furry brushed past his leg and Vecino jumped nimbly on to the table.

'Yes, at least you're staying around,' said Derk. 'At least there is still someone who wants to stay with me.' He grinned at his melodramatic mood. Of course there were advantages. His friend Jelle was going to move into the room next to his. They were calling it a living-together trial. Quite an event.

After another glass of water Derk took a shower. Some time later, refreshed, he wandered through the house and turned on the stereo full blast. At that moment there was a ring at the door. Derk hastily pulled on a dressing gown – who could it be? – and went downstairs. When he opened the front door he faced an enormous Ikea package, with hands on each side of it.

'Hey,' said a girl's voice. 'I know I can't move into the room until next week, but is it alright if I put this somewhere inside already?' Derk peered behind the package. 'Ha, I'm the new tenant,' grinned a girl with a pony tail. Heavens, did he look that young when he started at university, Derk wondered.

'Sorry I can't shake hands,' said the girl, as Derk took hold of one side of the package. They struggled up the stairs with it, puffing and panting.

'You know,' she said, as they plonked the package down in the living room. 'I am really happy that I get to live here.' She glanced around the living room. 'I'm going to really enjoy student life here.'



ILLUSTRATIONS: KIM PETERSE

Resource follows events at Mortierstraat 14B

>> PARTIES

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

**KSV FRANCISCUS – SOUND OF SUMMER**

Thursday 22 September from 23:00 to 05:00

Palm trees, surfboards, cocktails and summer hits: KSV Franciscus wants to make the summer last and give you the ultimate holiday feeling! KSV's first open party. Student cards compulsory, charge 4 euros.

THE SPOT - OPEN AIR MOVIE NIGHT

Wednesday 28 September from 19:30 to 22:00

Watch a good film in good company under the night sky. A special event at The Spot, which we are happy to promote! You get to

vote on which film is shown, there are free snacks and admission is free. Just hope it stays dry!

WAGENINGEN - POPRONDE 2016

Thursday 29 September from 20:30 to 01:30

The whole of Wageningen town centre will be fizzing with life at this annual event. Young and old can go from pub to pub to hear promising bands from all around the Netherlands. Past performers include Raccoon, De Staat, Dotan and Chef'Special. No need to buy tickets; it's all free (except the beer). ⑧

>> THE WORKS

'DUTCH EFFICIENCY DOESN'T GET YOU ANYWHERE'

Who? Jinthe Roelofs, Master's student of Forest and Nature Conservation

What? Thesis research on conflicts between local residents and honey bears

Where? Sumatra, Indonesia

'I am very glad I was with two other students in Indonesia, because we faced quite a language barrier. In fact nobody spoke English, not even the staff, whereas we had been told they did. The villagers we interviewed only spoke a local language. An interpreter wrote it down for us in Indonesian and it was translated into (poor) English afterwards. This meant we couldn't steer things during the interview, so it was difficult to get the kinds of information we were looking for. We had been asked by the Sumatra Rain Forest Institute, an NGO, to investigate conflicts between honey bears and the local population. Honey bears destroy the harvest. No one knows the extent of this, or under what circumstances it happens, so that is what we tried to find out in the interviews. Our cross-cultural experience was great. To start with, Dutch efficiency gets you nowhere. In the first weeks I got irritated by how slowly everything goes but after a while I liked it better than the Dutch pace. Life was much more primitive there too: there were frequent power cuts and we had to "shower" with a bucket of water. When we arrived there weren't even any beds for us: we made ourselves beds with a thin mattress and outdoor chair cushions. The way people react when they see white people is very funny. The idea



that you can make money out of whites hasn't reached there yet, so everyone is very helpful. Although I was often laughed at when I tried to do "men's jobs" like buying wood.

The way children respond to you varies a lot. In accessible villages I was surrounded by children who took photos of me and wanted to touch me. That was amusing at first, though it made it almost impossible for me to wash in the river. The children in the remote villages were shy, though. Besides getting to know the fascinating culture, the reckless drives on which I often nearly fell out of the pickup were another unforgettable highlight of my stay.' ⑧ LvK



PHOTO: OLAF SPEIJEN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

MEANWHILE IN... <<

Meanwhile in... Spain

In the news: Politicians failed again to form a coalition in Spain. As a result Spanish citizens might have elections for the third time in a year this Christmas. They have been without a government for more than 250 days.

Commentary by Sergio Llamas Sobrino Msc student Biotechnology

'Spanish politicians are not at all used to discussing things and making pacts, which is a common practice in the rest of Europe. Usually one party has ruled with an absolute majority. This time 180 parliamentarians voted against the government proposition of the Partido Popular or PP, the party that has been ruling for the past term. For a majority they need 176 votes. Negotiations between the socialist party PSOE and PODEMOS (new left) are not going well either. PODEMOS and the PP have an interest in holding fresh elections, hoping for better results. In the current term, they still have some time to build an alternative government in opposition to the PP, so let's expect they are able to do it. A third round of elections would be pointless since no different outcome is predicted. I think the main lesson from this, is that the government should be elected directly by citizens in a system like the Swiss collegiate government. Not having a government is inconvenient but it is very good to have a strong opposition able to keep any ruling party in check. In the end there are several reasons why the PP (the former ruling party) has lost its support. First, tons of corruption cases and second, it is one of the most reactionary governments we have ever had in this democracy. With tax increase and tremendous budgets cuts on welfare. Imagine this in a context of 25% unemployment, 50% young unemployment and growing poverty and inequality. The political crisis in 2011 started a political and cultural wave claiming for new kinds of policymaking and more direct democracy. This is simply incompatible with how traditional parties worked. But at least now everybody is discussing politics constantly, which is a real improvement compared to the past indifference.' CN



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Announcements

3D printing and laser cutting, or how does a cutting plotter work?

The FabLab Wageningen is open every Saturday from 14.00 to 18.00 and on Sunday 2 October 2016 during 'The Weekend of Science'. Seize the opportunity to make your acquaintance with the various techniques used here in a guided tour of the Fablab. You'll see examples from biology, medicine and other disciplines. WWW.FAB-LABWAG.NL

Vacancies OtherWise

OtherWise is about questioning the dominant ways of thinking and doing. Giving voice to alternative ways by engaging in promising people-driven initiatives. Through our activities we pursue social and environmental justice. Is this what makes you tick too? Join the OtherWise board! The new board members will start from October 2016. Are you interested in developing your skills and experience in a dynamic organization and are you passionate about social and environmental justice? We have several vacancies such as: fundraising commissioner, chair, secretary, treasurer, social media & promotion commissioner and an activity commissioner. Application is open until October 1.

WWW.ST-OTHERWISE.ORG

Beer Knowledge Institute offers grant

This year the Dutch Beer Knowledge Institute is offering a grant of €5000 for research aiming at

sensible alcohol/ beer consumption as part of a healthy lifestyle. Students, PhD researchers and postdocs in Europe can submit proposals. The research can be about biomedical psychosocial or nutritional aspects of sensible beer consumption. Another possible topic for research is alcohol-free beer. The Beer Knowledge Institute is keen to separate fact from fiction when it comes to sensible beer drinking and health. There are a few gaps here and there in the existing knowledge and that makes research necessary. The institute's aim in offering this grant is to stimulate young scientists to do research. Deadline for initial research proposals on one sheet of A4 maximum: 2 November 2016.

WWW.KENNISINSTITUUTBIER.NL/GRANT

How then? Innovative alternatives wanted for the NWO MVI Young Responsible Design Award. The NWO's Socially responsible innovation programme challenges students, young researchers, designers and entrepreneurs to get to work on a socially responsible design for a technology, service or product. The aim: to solve urgent societal problems. Send in your idea with your team, in the form of a short video, by 1 November at the latest.

WWW.NWO.NL/MVI-AWARD

Free walk-in surgery for students with RSI issues

Every Thursday afternoon there is a free walk-in surgery for students suffering from or who have ques-

tions about RSI or arm, neck and shoulder pain. The surgery is for quick questions about these complaints, and appropriate exercises and work posture. Students can also get advice on what to do about the problem (e.g. rest, sport and exercise, work break software etc.) and whether they need therapy. Location: Karin Vaessen's Mensendieck exercise therapy practice at Kolkakkerweg 2 in Wageningen. The entrance is on the left side of the building.

WWW.BETERBEGEEN.NL

Agenda

Thursday 22 September – Wednesday 5 October

NEW FILMS FOR STUDENTS

The Neon Demon, a Baroque mix of horror and a tale of growing up in the fashion world of Los Angeles; *Compostella*, a spiritual journey without dogmas and a self-confrontation with gorgeous vistas as a backdrop; *Les Chevaliers Blancs*, a thriller-like drama full of the moral dilemmas involved in saving African orphans; *Lo and Behold*, Werner Herzog's fascinating and worrying voyage of discovery, an anthropological look at the internet.

Venue: Wilhelminaweg 3A, Wageningen.

WWW.MOVIE-W.NL

Thursday, September 22, 12.30-13.20

LUNCH WORKSHOP: 'SEARCH EFFICIENTLY IN THE RIGHT DATABASE'

There are many places and ways to look up information. Knowledge of

databases and search strategies will help you to find scientific publications on your topic in an efficient and systematic way. Learn about tips and tricks in this workshop. You can bring your own research question to get advice. Be on time, as participant numbers are limited to 20. Organized by Wageningen Writing Lab and Wageningen UR Library. Admission: free. Venue: Forum Library, room 460. Registration: info.wageningenwritinglab@wur.nl.

Tuesday 27 September, 12.00-14.30

SEMINAR ON RESEARCH FUNDING: THE SNAGS AND PITFALLS

The funding of research is being made more and more complicated by changes in legislation. And industry is becoming less willing to invest resources in research. Law firm Eric Janssen van Kneppelhout are holding a seminar entitled: 'Research and (government) funding: the snags and pitfalls seen from Brussels'. The seminar is the initiative of Corporate Governance & Legal Services. There is an opportunity to ask questions.

Location: Impulse, Speaker's Corner. Info: Frans Pinget, 0317-485298, frans.pinget@wur.nl

Thursday 29 September, 12.30-13.20

LUNCH WORKSHOP: 'OPTIMIZE YOUR PERSONAL WRITING STYLE'

In this workshop by Wageningen Writing Lab, you will discover your personal writing style, and learn about typical pitfalls and how to avoid them. We will get you to practise some techniques that will help you to make most of your writing style in current and future writing assignments. Be on time, as participant numbers are limited to 20. Admission: free. Venue: CO408 Forum. Info: info.wageningenwritinglab@wur.nl.

Thursday 29 September, from 20.15

POPRONDE WAGENINGEN

During the Popronde, venues around Wageningen town centre provide podia for rising Dutch talent, the new generation of pop musicians who tread in the footsteps of ex-participants such as

Frugal Innovation

how to do more with less

Haye Hazenberg,
Iva Pesa

sep 28 | 19:00h

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Kensington, Racoon, de Staat and Dotan. With 22 venues and more than 35 shows in one day, this edition of the Popronde Wageningen is the biggest yet. Besides cafes and pop podia, stages are also provided by art galleries, the library and other unusual venues. This year, for instance, there is even an act at the hardware store Gelderse IJzerhandel (GIJ) and in the afternoon there is a preview by Ruud Fieten in the HEMA. From 1.30 LUCA (formerly Het Gat) is the place to be for the afterparty. There'll be dancing to Nightshift into the early hours.
www.facebook.com/popronde-wageningen.

Friday 30 September, 15.00 WAGENINGEN YOUNG ACADEMY PRESENTS: LECTURES 'REWRITING OUR GENES?'

Jennifer Doudna, professor of Bio-medical Sciences at UC Berkeley, and Edze Westra, researcher at the University of Exeter have respectively won the prestigious Heineken Prize and the Heineken Young Scientist Award, both for Biochemistry and Biophysics. They are both known for their work on Crispr-Cas, a defence system present in many bacterial

species. The potential applications of these systems may have a tremendous impact on medicine and biotechnology (see also page 12-15). The lectures are followed by a debate and drinks in The Spot. Venue: Orion, C1040.

WWW.WUR.NL/EN/ACTIVITY/LECTURE-REWRITING-OUR-GENES.HTM.

Sunday 2 October, 15.00 'LEEZIE SUNDAY' WITH LOUISE FRESCO ON 'THE GARDEN OF THE SULTAN IN ROME'

In the year of the book there is a 'Leezie Sunday' every fourth Sunday of the month in Wageningen town library. This time you can talk to Louise Fresco about her novel *The Garden of the Sultan in Rome*. Back in 2005, when she was living in Rome, she was already confronted by the issue of refugees from Africa and Asia. She realized that a fast-changing world would lead to more refugees, and that Europe was paying very little attention to this. Louise Fresco wrote this intense, moving novel about a young Syrian immigrant living in the margins of a big city. Probably the first Dutch-language book on this theme. She penetrates the hard life of a newcomer with her own,

clear voice. For this latest edition she wrote a foreword about how the book came about. Venue: Public Library (bbkthk), Stationsstraat 2, Wageningen

Thursday 6 October, 12.30-13.20 LUNCH WORKSHOP: 'REVISING OF TEXTS'

It's a myth that a well-written text is written in one go; revising is crucial! At first you fully concentrate on the content of your text and only in the second stage do you concentrate on all the other aspects of academic writing. Wageningen Writing Lab will offer you practical strategies for revising your text. Do bring the draft version of your text with you! Be on time, as participant numbers are limited to 20. Admission: free. Venue: C0408 Forum. Info: info.wageningenwritinglab@wur.nl

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

colophon

Resource is the magazine and news website for students and staff at Wageningen University & Research. Resource magazine comes out every fortnight on Thursday.

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ISSN 1389-7756

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Design

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Translators

Clare McGregor, Susie Day, Clare Wilkinson

Printer

Tuijtel, Hardinxveld-Giessendam

Subscriptions


A subscription to the magazine costs €58 (overseas: €131) per academic year. Cancellations before 1 August.

Advertising


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Publisher


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PHD party?

All- inclusive lunch arrangement for € 11,00 per person (minimum 20 persons):

- Indian curry soup (v)
- Mexican quesadilla's (v)
- Various sandwiches
- Couscous salad with roasted vegetables and feta cheese (v)
- Coffee/tea/milk/juices

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>>TYPICAL DUTCH



ILLUSTRATION: HENK VAN RUITENBEEK

Don't be too happy

When I told my friends back home I would be moving to the Netherlands for my studies, they were supportive and happy for me. Having lived abroad themselves, they gave me tips on how to survive in a foreign land and not to embarrass myself, something I have proven to be good at. Their advice helped for a while. However, some time after my arrival, I was invited to a get-together. Apparently, I was too perky. A Dutch friend became suspicious and asked: 'Why are you so happy? Are you on drugs?'

I had a difficult time digesting what had just happened. There's nothing in my background and education that teaches me how to deal with someone who associates happiness with weirdness, to say nothing of this full-throttle directness. Growing up in a village in Indonesia, I was raised to be courteous and friendly to people, even strangers. Pinching babies' cheeks you see on the street is considered normal and a form of appreciation. In the Netherlands however, this will probably earn you a ticket straight to police office desk. So, at that moment, I did what many Indonesians would do: I smiled, followed by a simple 'huh?' The next day, I asked another Dutch friend, who said: 'Yeah, don't be too happy, it's weird!' I guess it's not just the liquorice, the mayonnaise and the weather that take some getting used to. It'll take a while for me to adjust to the stoicism too. So, straight face, your weirdo!  **Isti Hanifah, Master's student of Environmental Policy from Indonesia**

My friend became suspicious and asked: Why are you so happy? Are you on drugs?

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.