
In the red

More jobs to go at
Environmental Research | **p.4** |

Divided

Students for, teachers against
English-taught BSc | **p.5** |

Vote!

Student Council candidates
introduce themselves | **p.24** |

RESOURCE [EN]

For everyone at Wageningen University & Research

no 18 – 11 May 2017 – 11th Volume



Electric fishing

Is it more eco-friendly than beam trawling? | **p.12**

**INTERNATIONAL
EDITION**

MALARIA HUT

Hard work and dirty hands at a fun activity run by Wageningen entomologists at World Malaria day. Jeroen Spitzen ordered 250 kilos of clay to do up the malaria hut on the patio of Radix West. The hut demonstrates how people in Africa can protect themselves against malaria mosquitoes. Spitzen said its reed walls were not realistic. So volunteers smeared them with clay to give them a more traditional African look

® DdV, photo: Guy Ackermans



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One and a half million cetaceans in the North Sea



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Students and staff express concerns

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OPINION MAKERS

So what is an anonymous opinion really worth? That is a question I'm faced with every now and then in relation to our website. Of the thousands of visitors who read our stories on resource-online.nl, every day a few leave a comment behind. They usually say something of interest but there's a lot of mudslinging too. An unsubstantiated opinion or offensive language should be owned up to. Spewing vitriol anonymously is too easy. So I am considering setting limits. One option is to get people to respond via a social media account from now on: their Facebook page or LinkedIn profile, for instance. But some students say they don't want that because then their views remain visible for ever. Someone literally told me he is scared that in ten years' time his reaction will be outdated and could even be used against him. He argued for anonymous commenting because you never know whether what you say now could end up influencing a future job application. Anonymity seems to have a different value on the web than in the 'real world'. I am still willing to defend – or at least to explain – opinions I expressed in the past. But I admit that most of them can no longer be found anywhere now.

Edwin van Laar

>> **Tiny van Boekel: 'Deep-frying in hard fat is healthier' | p.8**



ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH SHRINKS AGAIN

Wageningen Environmental Research has got to axe another 40 jobs to stay afloat, on top of the earlier loss of 60 jobs. ESG director Bram de Vos announced this to the staff at the end of April. Last year the institute made a loss of millions of euros, and it is running at a severe loss this year again.

The Nature & Society team, which consists of more than 20 people, is being dissolved. Jobs are also going in the Biodiversity & Policy, Climate Change and Water & Food teams. The 'From job to job' approach is being taken with all four teams, with their members being consulted on whether there is any possibility of keeping them on, or whether they will have to look for internal redeployment or a new job elsewhere.

Last year Wageningen Environmental Research embarked on a recovery plan consisting of new, market-oriented programmes, aiming for research projects with more of a margin, a reorganization of the research teams and a loss of 60 jobs. Of these, 38 have already gone but that has not sufficed to get out of the red.

Most of the cutbacks have been achieved over the last year through early retirement and natural staff turnover. But in the coming year ESG director Bram de Vos wants to make more strategic cuts, looking at the market potential and competencies of the teams. At the beginning of last year Wageningen Environmental Research had a staff of 350, and it will soon have 100 fewer.

The institute's Employees' Council meets on 11 May to discuss the revised recovery plan and



PHOTO: SVEN MENSCHER

hopes to come up with recommendations within six weeks. The Employees' Council is pleased that the ESG directors are applying the

'from job to job' system, says chair Paul Hinssen. **AS**

Read too the interviews on p.18.

ANALYSIS

HOW TO UNDERMINE PUBLIC RESEARCH INSTITUTES

The undermining of government-funded research institutes (TO2 institutes) in the Netherlands continues unabated. The latest triumph: Wageningen Environmental Research is scrapping 100 of its 350 jobs.

There have been dismissals at other institutes already, most of them gradual and inconspicuous. Wageningen Plant Research, for instance, has shrunk over recent decades from a staff of 1500 to one of 600. And outside Wageningen, applied research has suffered too. Ten years ago TNO was still a strong research institute with over 6000 staff. After reorganizations and split-offs, there are now about 2500 left.

This undermining of the government-funded research institutes has already been discussed at length in various reports. WUR's Thin Ice Analysis showed that the government provides too little funding to keep the knowl-

edge base for Wageningen Research up to scratch. The visitation committee of the TO2 institutes reached the same conclusion recently for all the applied research institutes in the Netherlands.

The main reason for this slow destruction is that the ministry of Economic Affairs has cut research grants. In the government agreement of 2010 the cabinet decided to stop funding R&D projects from the Economic Structure Enhancement Fund (FES). This axed at least half a billion euros' worth of public-private research per year. What is more, EZ cut back on policy support research and shifted 51 million euros of knowledge base funding from Wageningen Research to the top sectors. The idea was that the business world would double this 51 million in the top sectors through public-private research projects. That hasn't worked out, concluded the Rathenau Institute

last month in another report on the TO2 institutes. As a result, those institutes received tens of millions of euros less in 2016 than in 2010.

Yet research spending by the ministry of EZ has not gone down over recent years. This is mainly because EZ gives knowledge-based companies tax benefits. Through the Innovation box and legislation to promote Research & Development (WBSO), companies which invest in knowledge incur lower wage bills and pay less tax. These tax advantages now amount to 1.2 billion euros, 300 million more than in 2010. So the ministry has effectively transferred public research funding to the private sector by lowering taxes.

All the research institutes are victims of this, but Wageningen Environmental Research suffers from a double whammy. Not only does the institute get no more money from EZ for policy-

supporting nature and climate research, but it cannot knock on the door of a top sector for that research either.

Nowadays, if Wageningen research managers apply for research funding from the ministry of EZ, the bureaucrats respond with pictures of a pair of trousers with two empty pockets. The message is clear: the ministry has no money to spare. But those empty pockets represent a political decision. Just as calls for a better climate and energy policy, and for sustainable agriculture are getting louder and louder, EZ is wiping out the knowledge base for this policy and placing its trust in tax relief for industry.

Albert Sikkema

There are links to all the reports mentioned in this analysis on resource-online.nl

SPLIT ON ENGLISH FOR BSc DEGREES

The WUR Council is sharply divided on the introduction of English-taught BSc programmes. Staff are overwhelmingly against the move while most students are in favour, it transpired on 3 May.

The staff members of the WUR Council believe that fully English-language education in Wageningen will increase the work pressure and reduce the quality of education offered. Teaching in English may well improve students' English and their chances on the international labour market, but it will have a negative effect on their Dutch language proficiency and competitiveness on the home market, say staff. They put a question of principle to the board: Is WUR a Dutch University with international students or an international university based in the Netherlands?

They favour the first option.

Most of the students in the WUR Council see it differently. WUR focuses on global problems and should be able to see issues from a global perspective. Therefore all Wageningen BSc programmes should be taught in English in an international classroom, say the students.

The students do see practical problems for the implementation, including the increase in work pressure and the additional influx of international students. So either way, the WUR Council proposes postponing the move. The board wants to introduce five English-taught BSc programmes from September 2018, but the WUR Council wants to see a thorough impact analysis first. **AS**

Read too Opinion on p.22

COLUMN|STIJN

Mineral water

She runs her hands gracefully through her hair. I watch the foam slowly running off her shoulders. I stare at her for a moment, and then go on to observe the bathroom. I see the usual stuff: some bottles, a piece of soap, a shower curtain. Only a bottle of Spa Blauw mineral water seems out of place.

I've forgotten which shampoo she uses; I don't tend to remember that sort of thing. What I do remember is that she had chosen the product with care. That's what she's like: she gives careful thought to almost everything she does. I admire that. I can talk to her for hours about science, our PhD research, life in general... She never ceases to surprise me with new perspectives. But then she is much smarter than I am, and much more scientific. Contented, I look at her closed eyes. She rinses off the foam with a gentle stream of water. She opens her eyes and looks at me radiantly. 'Can you pass me that bottle?' She indicates the bottle of Spa Blauw. My jaw drops.

'I find the water too hard, so...' she begins, hesitantly. I start arguing with her. 'So you think the water is too full of minerals so you buy mineral water?' I'm teasing her but I really am amazed at her totally unscientific conduct. She gives me a guilty look. To tone down my attack I kiss her on the shoulder. 'Okay, so I'm not so rational about these kinds of things,' she says softly. 'I just wanted to make my hair a bit more beautiful. But it was stupid, I admit.' I forgive her with a grin.

I'm not going to tell her just yet that I've just found out that Spa contains much less calcium and is therefore softer than Wageningen water. **R**

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

>>SUCCESSOR TO VAN ARENDONK

Martien Groenen after all

Martien Groenen seemed the likeliest successor to professor of Breeding and Genetics Johan van Arendonk when the latter left a year and a half ago. But initially he did not apply. After a fruitless international search he has now been appointed chair-holding professor after all. Groenen has held a personal chair in the Breeding and Genetics group for 15 years. He enjoys a considerable international reputation as a geneticist, having mapped the genome of the pig and the chicken in collaboration with international colleagues. 'I am more interested in the science; management appeals to me less,' he explains. But when the international head-hunting failed to lead to an appointment, Groenen decided to apply after all. 'We need clarity and there are scientific challenges ahead.' **AS**



Martien Groenen

>>RUBICON GRANT

Nico Claassens

Microbiologist Nico Claassens has been awarded a Rubicon grant by the NWO. He will teach bacteria new tricks at the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Plant Physiology in Potsdam. He wants to build in new routes along which the bacterium *Cupriavidus necator* can efficiently convert hydrogen and carbon dioxide into various chemically interesting products. Claassens is one of the 22fortunates to have received a Rubicon in this round. **RK**

>>NEW KNAW MEMBERS

Bulte and Van der Oost

Wageningen professors John van der Oost and Erwin Bulte have been appointed members of the Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW). This is a select fraternity of scientists who advise the government. Van der Oost, personal professor of Microbiology, made his name with his research on Crispr-Cas, an immune system in bacteria which is being used as a tool for genetic modification. Bulte is professor of Development Economics and studies power relations in African villages, and the success of development projects. **VK**

**Read more on these subjects
on resource-online.nl**

YERSEKE BACK TO MAKING A PROFIT

The Wageningen Marine Research regional centre in Yerseke recorded a profit last year.

The institute has taken on two new members of staff and was able to offer a redeployment candidate a job after all. This news comes from Nathalie Steins, the programme manager for the regional centre. Last year, the future of the institute in Yerseke, Zeeland, was in doubt but then the Zeeland shellfish sector made a decision to pump half a million euros a year into the research institute. Moreover, the shellfish sector and WUR decided to introduce a new approach to managing the research. The mussel and oyster farmers now have a multi-year pre-paid 'ticket' that lets them buy research in Yerseke. The institute no longer writes proposals for studies purchased with this ticket; instead, it involves the shellfish farmers more when deciding on the research questions and carrying out the studies.

The new regional centre celebrated its first anniversary on 31 March. Last year, turnover was two million euros and it recorded a profit of 85,000 euros, says Steins. 'And we have a lot of work. We now employ 23 people. This new way of managing research is going really well.' **AS**

BOARD LEARNS LESSONS FROM DITCHING WISE

The Executive Board has learned some lessons from the failed introduction of the student information system WISE. A new Information Policy manager has been appointed, with a bigger mandate, says Board member Tijs Breukink.

In its evaluation report Sadder and Wiser, the WUR Council concluded last month that WUR underestimated what it would take to introduce WISE and dropped stitches at every stage of the process. The preparation and coordination was inadequate and there was not enough response to internal criticism.

'We have taken note of the findings of the WUR Council,' says Breukink. 'We have talked to the Council about a package of measures that we have introduced in the meanwhile so as to supervise the implementation of ICT projects better. The findings of the Council are integrated into these, as are the conclusions of an external evaluation.'

The Executive Board will expand, for instance, the role of the Architecture Board, which concerns itself with the coherence of the information systems. This steering committee looks at which sub-projects are needed and how they should be coordinated. Secondly, the role of the Information Policy manager is to be intensified. This manager will have more decision-making power during the implementation of a new information system. Maarten Brouwer has been appointed manager of Information Policy. He is also in charge of the IT department at WUR. Three 'do-



Tijs Breukink

main architects' will work under Brouwer, on education, research and operations. The idea is that they strengthen the bridge between the various departments and ICT. WUR also wants to train a pool of project managers who will gain experience of complex information projects.

Due to the failure of WISE, the current student information system AIR will stay operational for another three years or so. Then it will have to be replaced because in a few years' time the software it relies on will no longer be supported. But before a new system is brought in, an internal working group will evaluate the education system currently in use. The package offered by the provider of WISE turned out to be unable to cope with the vast number of options and exceptions included in the Wageningen education system. The committee is going to study whether the number of choices and exceptions can be reduced, to simplify the introduction of a new system. **AS**



PHOTO: ECOMARE

SEAL CALLING

The exhibition *Waddenstad* opens in Ecomare nature museum and animal rescue centre on Texel on Friday 12 May. Visitors can take a look at important marine research over the shoulders of ten scientists. Wageningen Marine Research and the NIOZ were closely involved in setting up the exhibition, which is designed like a scientific city you can wander through. At Radio Seal you can call up a seal fitted with a transmitter, and at a police station you can find out who murdered the porpoise. **EvL**

MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE WANTS CAMPUS RING ROAD AFTER ALL

A new campus ring road is the best solution for Wageningen's traffic issues after all, say the mayor and aldermen (the municipal executive).

The proposed road would run from Mansholtlaan along Kielekampsteeg and Plassteeg, then turn left along Dijkgraaf. On reaching Noorwest, it would veer off through the WUR trial fields, past the Carus animal housing, through Dassenbos and on to Mondriaanlaan, where a new entrance to the campus would be built.

The new plan is largely in line with the old campus ring road concept. That had not been politically feasible until now. However, the municipal executive says the ring road is the only option that is both affordable and a solution for the

traffic issues. In recent months, various ring road options have been compared with solutions based on widening Nijenoord Allee while leaving the Binnenveld as it is. But the municipal executive says these variants would not put an end to the congestion on Mansholtlaan and Nijenoord Allee, and they are too expensive. Wageningen has 20 million euros available, 14 million of which is from the provincial authority. The current proposal would cost 14 million euros.

'It's fine for the road to cross our grounds,' says spokesman Simon Vink on behalf of the executive board, although he notes that the road must not get too close to the Carus buildings. 'The fish can't cope with the vibrations.'

This decision by the municipal executive is not the final word. A

Campus route 1

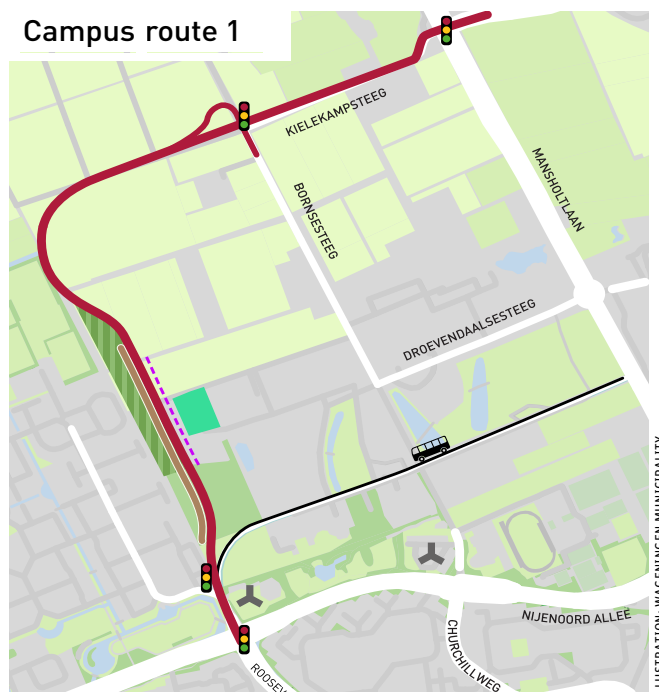


ILLUSTRATION: WAGENINGEN MUNICIPALITY

majority of the municipal council have been bitterly opposed to the ring road so far. The council will be discussing the new proposal for the first time on Monday 15 May. **© RK**

LARGE-SCALE STUDY ON HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM

Wageningen nutrition researcher Inge Brouwer will lead a 24-million-dollar food project in Africa and Asia. The aim is to analyse the current food system and reform it so it produces healthier food. The study is part of the research programme Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) run by the global agricultural research partnership CGIAR.

Anyone studying nutrition in countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Vietnam usually looks at whether there is enough grain, rice or maize available for the population. The quality and nutritional value of that food is often a secondary consideration. But this project is going to change that, putting the consumer in developing countries first rather than the agriculture sec-

tor. Consumers need access to a healthy diet so that undernutrition, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and obesity become a thing of the past. The project aims to reform the food system in these countries by gearing it to a healthy diet. First the researchers will make a diagnosis of the current diet in the above-mentioned four countries. That should reveal whether the diet is too one-sided or contains too many unhealthy elements such as sugar, salt and soft drinks. Brouwer will then work out a healthy eating index: 'A kind of food pyramid that informs consumers how to eat healthily and nudges the government to adopt a health policy.'

For this project, four million a year is available for a period of six years, with half the funding going to WUR for coordination and research. **© AS**

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FILM



ADVENTURE | FROM MAY 11

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ONE AND A HALF MILLION CETACEANS IN THE NORTH SEA

There are one and a half million dolphins and whales in the European part of the Atlantic Ocean, show counts carried out from aeroplanes by Europeans researchers in the summer of 2016.

Meike Scheidat of Wageningen Marine Research coordinated the counts and her colleagues Steve Geelhoed and Hans Verdaat were each responsible for one survey team. The researchers converted the counts into a population estimate using a mathematical formula. They came out at 467,000 porpoises, 468,000 common dolphins, 372,000 striped dolphins and another 158,000 either common or striped dolphins. They also reckoned on about 80,000 of the rarer dolphins such as common bottlenose dolphins, white-beaked dolphins and Atlantic white-sided dolphins. And in the whale category they calculated populations of 26,000 pilot whales, 14,000 sperm whales, 15,000 common minke whales and 18,000 fin whales in the North Sea.

This is the third time the researchers have counted marine mammals (excluding seals) in the ocean between Portugal and the north of Norway. The previous counts were done in 1994 and 2005. The researchers, led by British professor Philip Hammond, have not found any major fluctuations. The number of porpoises, white-beaked dolphins



Porpoises near the Shetland islands.

and common minke whales has stayed stable for the past 22 years, the researchers conclude. Before they can draw any reliable conclusions about the other dolphins and whales, they need another count.

On the basis of their earlier counts, the researchers noted that in 2005 many por-

poises had migrated from the north-western North Sea to the southern section of the North Sea. Now they observe that the population distribution has stayed the same since 2005, with many porpoises counted in the south-western North Sea and close to Denmark. **AS**

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

VAN BOEKEL: 'DEEP-FRYING IN HARD FAT IS BETTER'

'It is better to deep-fry in hard fat,' says Tiny van Boekel, professor of Food Quality & Design, in a video made by ProFi, the association for professional deep-fryers. The statement drew discussion on Foodlog because nutrition experts have been promoting using oils for deep-frying for years. So what is going on, Mr van Boekel?

Surely hard fats were declared unhealthy?

'Until about 20 years ago fats and oils were hardened in a way which led to the formation of trans fatty acids. These trans fats raise levels of LDL cholesterol. But nowadays the hardening process has been improved and hard fats can be made without any trans fats. There is hardly any trans fat in margarines and spreads for on bread either.'

Hard fat contains more saturated fat and that is not good for you either, is it?

'I've done some quick sums. If people eat a

portion of fries twice a week, they consume about 14 grams more saturated fat if they fry them in hard fat than in oil. The maximum recommended amount of saturated fat for a man is 196 grams a week. So if you eat fries in moderation, the increase in your intake of saturated fat won't be too bad.'

Why is it better to deep-fry in hard fat?

'There is a controversy in the scientific world as to whether frying in oils with a lot of unsaturated fatty acids leads to strong chemical reactions. In that case, undesirable substances are formed such as hydroperoxides, aldehydes and ketones. These substances can react with the fries themselves and possibly in the body as well. It is not yet known what the consequences could be. Hard fat is more stable; it undergoes fewer chemical reactions. If I have to choose between the negative health effects of saturated fatty acids and the potential damaging effects of the reactive substances formed when

deep-frying in oil, I am more worried about the latter.'

The health council advises otherwise.

'In general I agree with its advice, but in this case I want to introduce some nuances. Oils are not bad for your health in themselves, but deep-frying might be a special case. Imagine that this was be damaging. I think it's important that research is done on this. Until then I think it's better to use hard fats.'

Your colleague Sander Kersten responded critically on Foodlog. He is afraid consumers will get confused if Wageningen experts don't agree.

'I don't think it is at all strange that there are different points of view in Wageningen. Nutrition is a complex science. A university benefits from debate, and that helps science progress.' **TL**



INFECTED CHILD MORE ATTRACTIVE TO MALARIA MOSQUITOES

Children with malaria parasites in their blood are more attractive to malaria mosquitoes than children who are not going down with malaria, found Wageningen entomologist Annette Busula after research in Kenya.

Busula released hundreds of mosquitoes in a room where there were two tents. In one of the tents there were children with gametocytes in their blood. A gametocyte is a malaria parasite in the transmissible stage. In the other tent there hung a dispenser with a standardized control odour. Of every 100 mosquitoes, 55 opted for the tent with children with malaria parasites in their blood, and only 10 went for the control odour. The rest of the mosquitoes did not go into either tent. When Busula repeated this experiment with children without this parasite in their blood, only 26 out of 100 mosquitoes went for the tent where the children were. Once again, 10 mosquitoes went for the control odour while most of the mosquitoes chose neither, reported Busula in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*.

So children with the malaria parasite in their blood are bitten by mosquitoes

more often than children without malaria, concludes research supervisor Jetske de Boer. And that has implications for the transmission of the disease. 'If children with malaria have a greater chance of being bitten, the malaria parasite will spread faster than you would expect,' says De Boer. She would also like to know which odour profile the gametocytes make to attract the mosquito, so that Wageningen entomologists can make an even better odour trap for malaria mosquitoes.

Busula's study confirms the results of a Swiss study of 2005. But because of the advanced equipment, the Wageningen researchers could now measure very low levels of gametocytes as well. That produced new data too. Children whose blood contained the malaria parasite in the non-transmissible stage turned out not to be any more attractive to the mosquitoes. Moreover, Busula could demonstrate that the malaria parasite attracts the mosquito with the odour. After the children with gametocytes had been given antimalarial drugs and were then tested again three weeks later, the mosquitoes no longer had a preference for them.

Busula receives her PhD for her study in Wageningen this month. **AS**



Participants in the malaria study in Kenya queue up to have blood taken.

VISION <<

Meat study 'taken completely out of context'

'Too much meat causes liver damage.' This was the headline with which the Erasmus Medical Centre announced research results which were said to show that excessive consumption of animal protein increases the chances of fatty liver disease. The study was taken completely out of context in the press release and later in various media, says Sander Kersten, professor of Nutrition, Metabolism and Genomics.



What was researched?

The study looked at the link between consumption of animal proteins and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. This form of fat accumulation can have a range of causes, with overweight as a major risk factor. But nutrients can play a role too.'

What do you think of the press release about the study?

'This is a typical example of reporting which does not reflect the research results accurately. This epidemiological study looked at a large group of volunteers, analysing their diet and the incidence of fat accumulation in their livers. Then a link was found between the consumption of animal proteins and fat accumulation in the liver. But you cannot then conclude that there is any causal relation. What is more, it is very difficult in a study like this to separate animal protein from animal fat and other nutrients present in animal foodstuffs.'

Can you give dietary advice on the basis of this study?

'No. But I do think you can continue research on this link with an intervention study in which you give one group of people animal protein and another group plant protein. And then you must also differentiate between animal protein from eggs, milk and meat. Because it strikes me as unlikely that all animal protein has exactly the same effect.'

Is an intervention study of that sort acceptable?

'If there are already clear indications that animal proteins lead to accumulation of fat in the liver, it will be hard to get a study like that past the ethical committee. But I think the hypothesis is still so weak at the moment that it should be possible.' **TL**



BLUE-GREEN ALGAE CONTROL GOES CASE BY CASE

A summer approaches, toxic cyanobacteria, commonly known as blue-green algae, can be expected to turn up again. But it doesn't have to like that, says PhD candidate Guido Waajen. Blue-green algae can be controlled as long as your analysis is right.

Waajen (58) is a biologist at the Brabant Delta water board in Breda, and works fulltime on the control of blue-green algae and the improvement of water quality. For the past eight years he has also been doing research on combatting blue-green algae. On 3 May he graduated with a PhD for his results.

Blue-green algae are caused by an excess of nutrients in the water. The solution seems simple: reduce the surplus of nutrients. But it is not as easy as that in practice, show tests Waajen conducted in ponds in Brabant. No two ponds are the same, which means that blue-green algae control is done on a case-by-case basis. 'And the basis for that tailor-made approach is a good analysis of the water system,' explains Waajen. 'Where does the phosphorus come from? What gets dumped in the water and how much phosphorus is already in the pond, the algae and the ground? And what about the water plants and fish? If you don't have that clear, you don't know which package of measures to opt for. And then it's a black box.'

In two ponds in Dongen and Eindhoven, the researcher created trial compartments using dams, so he could test various different measures against a surplus of phosphorus. He made sure no more phosphorus got in from outside, and then compared several combinations of four promising measures: dredging, adding a phosphorus binder (Phoslock), adding a clarifying agent, and active management of the fish stocks. Phoslock is a



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Blue-green algae are caused by an excess of nutrients in the water.

clay enriched with lanthanum, which binds phosphorus efficiently. A clarifying agent is a saline solution (poly-aluminium chloride) which forms aluminium hydroxide in water, which sinks to the bottom in flakes, capturing algae as it goes.

Both dredging and phosphorus binding work, concludes Waajen. When combined

with a clarifying agent and active fish stock management, these measures leave murky ponds clear again. As long as phosphorus runoff from elsewhere does not mess things up, that is. 'So you have to deal with both sources of phosphorus, external and internal. Otherwise you are fighting a losing battle.' **✎ RK**

TICKLING THE SENSES DOES NOTHING FOR SALES

The aroma of freshly ground coffee, and soft lighting around the wines. Retailers tickle our senses to get us to spend more. In vain, shows Wageningen research.

Over 18 weeks the researchers observed the behaviour of people shopping in a medium-sized supermarket in Oosterbeek. To do so they positioned cameras in the ceiling, enabling them to see precisely how people moved around the shop. 'The next step was to see whether we could influence this,' says René de Wijk of Wageningen Food & Bi-

obased Research. Can you, for instance, lure people to the coffee shelves with the smell of a cappuccino? And do they then buy more?

No they don't, the study showed. De Wijk was surprised by that himself. 'Marketers make so much use of these methods that you expect it to work.' But the result does not mean it never works at all, he says. 'We only tested this locally, on specific shelves and products. If you spread an odour throughout an entire shop, for example, you will reach far more people and there is more chance that it will have an effect.' Also, the

study only looked at how much of a product was bought per day, and not at what individual people bought.

The results are interesting for shopkeepers and marketing experts, thinks De Wijk. 'Because we know how people move around a shop, we can see where the bottlenecks are, for instance. Shopkeepers can use this to optimize the layout of the supermarket.' According to him, the main message is that the influence of scent, light and sound is complex. 'There is no simple one-size-fits-all formula.' **✎ TL**

MEANWHILE ON...

RESOURCE-ONLINE.NL



FOTO: REIN HEIJ

EVACUATION

WUR celebrates its centenary in 2018. Resource has been going through the archives and unearthing interesting photos. This photo shows a typical scene from the 1980s. Two groups face each other: squatters and the police. There is tension in the air. This is the Cuneralaan in Rhenen just before the evacuation of nine houses occupied by squatters including many Wageningen students. Photographer Rein Heij took this picture in 1984. Were you one of the squatters? Or does another photo from the series *100 years... own opinion* trigger memories for you? Let us know. Drop in on the editors in Atlas or email vincent.koperdraat@wur.nl.

See the photo series
100 years of... our own opinions
on resource-online.nl

CATCHING WORMS

Who can get the most worms out of the ground in half an hour? That was the challenge at the first Dutch Worm Charming Championships in Wageningen. It was a festive and creative occasion and the winners were PhD candidates from Plant Ecology and Nature Management. They drummed up 122 worms in 30 minutes. Participants had dressed up wackily and used all sorts of objects, including badminton rackets, to vibrate the ground.

Watch the video
on resource-online.nl



seen mosquitoes too. All these separate initiatives are now joining forces. Read more about this on resource-online.nl.

VAGUE PROTEST MARCH

Resource-blogger Leonardo Medina Santa Cruz was not impressed by the March for Science. He thinks people's reasons for participating were vague. *'Was it a march for science? Scientific thinking? Did we march because we hate Trump? If the goal was vague before, it is much more so now.'*

Read the whole blog
on resource-online.nl

Narcisi of Erasmus MC in Rotterdam was the winner.

Watch the video
on resource-online.nl



SPOTTING MOSQUITOES

The Wageningen Mosquito radar is to become part of the Global Mosquito Alert intended to monitor mosquito populations worldwide. The Muggenradar in the Netherlands, set up by Arnold van Vliet and others, is a successful example of 'citizen science'. But citizens in other parts of the world report where they have

PHD CANDIDATES AT FAMELAB

WUR researchers Sophie Le Hesran and Sabine Vreeburg pitched their research at the national finals of Famelab in Utrecht. In this competition young researchers explain why their research is relevant, in English in a maximum of three minutes. There were 12 participants and Roberto



Is pulse fishing the future?

Pulse trawling — fishing using electric pulses — has advantages over beam trawl fishing: it is kinder to the seabed and saves energy. But is it also safe for the environment in the longer term? And is it animal friendly? In a major project, researchers at WUR and NIOZ are trying to find answers to those questions.

text Tessa Louwerens *photo* Hollandse Hoogte

Two electrodes suspended in a bucket of water send electrical pulses through the water. It tingles a bit if you put your hand in, but there is no pain. 'Now it's at about half strength,' says Pim Boute, PhD candidate in the Experimental Zoology group at Wageningen University & Research.

Boute is researching the effect of electric pulse trawling on various sea creatures. Pulse trawling is a method that can be used to catch flatfish, for example. Flatfish such as sole and plaice bury themselves in the seabed so they first have to be flushed out before they can be caught in a net. Traditionally, this is done with a beam trawl that drags 'tickler chains' across the seabed. These chains plough up the seabed, causing a lot of other creatures to end up in the net as well, including starfish, crabs and shellfish.

Scientists and fishing businesses are looking for more sustainable methods for catching flatfish and are therefore experimenting with pulse trawling. This method involves replacing the tickler chain by electrodes that emit electric pulses — the pulse trawl. Boute: 'The electric pulses induce brief convulsions in the muscles of the fish, making them rise up from the seabed and get caught in the net.'

BANNED

The pulse trawl does not churn up the sea floor to the same extent, which means fewer creatures living on the seabed end up as bycatch. The ships also use less fuel because the pulse trawl is lighter and has less drag resistance. This means lower CO₂ emissions and lower costs for fishermen. The fish that are caught are also better quality on average because they have suffered less damage.

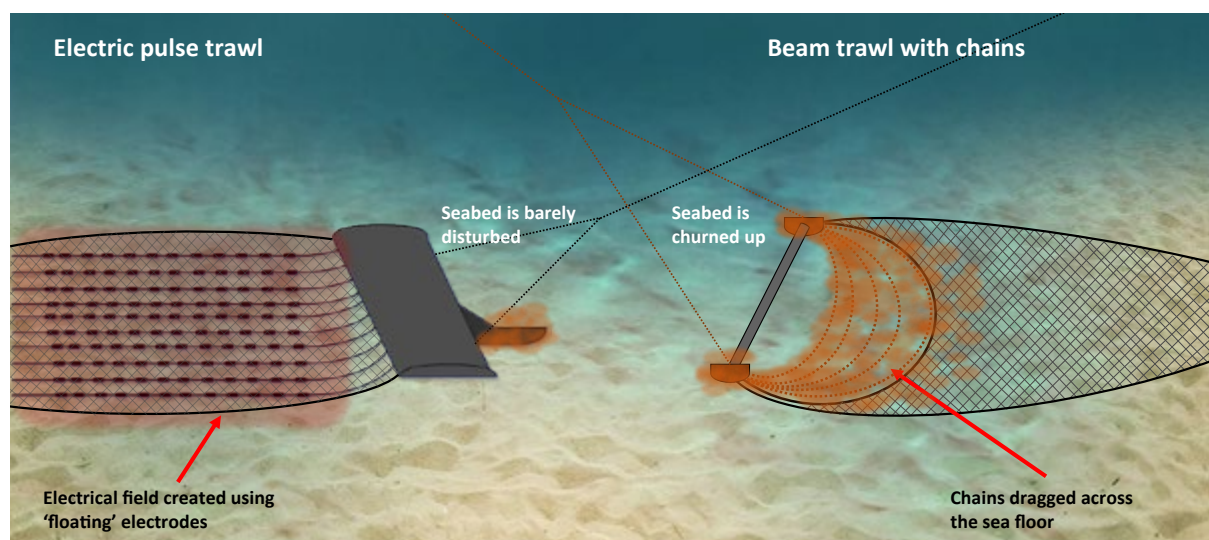
The initial impression is therefore that pulse trawling should be a good alternative to beam trawling. But there is a lot of opposition to the method and it is currently largely banned in Europe (see text box). Since 2009, Member States have been able to obtain an exemption for the southern part of the North Sea for up to five per cent of their fleet. The Netherlands has arranged for 84 such exemptions.

In early 2016, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs commissioned a major research project to investigate the long-term effects of pulse fishing in the North Sea. 'We want to use that research to predict the effects of large-scale pulse fishing,' explains project manager Adriaan Rijnsdorp of Wageningen Marine Research. 'We are expecting this technique to be an improvement, but it's important to investigate the possible downsides thoroughly so that we can make a well-considered decision.' The research is being conducted in partnership with the Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) and the Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO).

ANAESTHETIZED FISH

Pim Boute's experiments in the Zodiac lab in Wageningen are part of that project. He has created a setup that will let him accurately measure the effects of exposing fish to electric pulses. 'Some fish are affected by the pulse trawl but not caught in the net, for example, so we can't examine them on board a fishing boat.' By simulating the real-life situation in the lab, Boute can still see what the pulses do to the fish.

A tangle of cables connects an aquarium full of electrodes to the computer. The aquarium is about one and a half metres long and wrapped in a thick layer of polystyrene. 'The fish we are investigating live in the North Sea and it's colder there,' explains Boute. 'We keep the tank



Flatfish have to be flushed out to get them in the net. In beam trawling, this is done using chains dragged along the sea floor; in pulse trawling, electric pulses are used.

‘Fishermen may be able to use specific pulse settings to fish more selectively and primarily catch the fish they want to catch’



PHOTO: GUY ACKERMANS

In Zodiac, Pim Boute studies fish that have been exposed to electric pulses.

cold to stay as close as possible to the natural situation.’ The fish will be anaesthetized first to prevent any distress. Then Boute will measure their muscle activity under different settings for the electrical pulses. At least, he will get permission from WUR’s Animal Experimentation Board — he is still waiting for that.

In the Zodiac basement, Boute shows us the X-ray room. The stairs down to the basement are concealed behind a zip-up plastic door but even when the zip is closed, you can immediately tell what kind of research goes on here. ‘Sure, we get a few complaints about the stink but we’re working on that,’ says Boute apologetically. X-rays are taken here of fish that have been caught by a pulse trawl. Some photos show breaks in the bones. That is because fish can break their backs if their muscles convulse powerfully. Boute: ‘And that leads to blood in the fillets, which reduces their value. It’s not very animal friendly either. Previous studies showed this happening to cod, for instance, but the results weren’t consistent. That’s why we want to investigate more broadly how often this occurs in commercial catches.’

FISHING MORE SELECTIVELY

The aim of Boute’s study is to determine the sensitivity of different species of fish and fish of different sizes to the pulses. That is because previous research has shown that the effect of the pulses depends on the size and species of fish. Boute: ‘The landing obligation means that fishers now also have to bring back undersized fish and species that are worth less. It might be possible to fish more selectively by choosing the right settings in a way that will let fishermen mainly catch their target fish.’

If the experimental setup works well, Boute will be able to investigate the effect of different pulse settings on different fish species while using relatively few lab animals. He wants to use this data to develop a model that can make predictions for various species of fish.

He also wants to look at the behavioural effects of pulses on sea creatures that are not being fished. ‘Sharks and rays, for example, can sense electricity. In theory, the pulses could either attract them or repel them, so they could equally well end up in the net. Or not.’ Invertebrates such as beach crabs react to the electricity too. ‘The pulse makes them stiffen. Then they are unable to

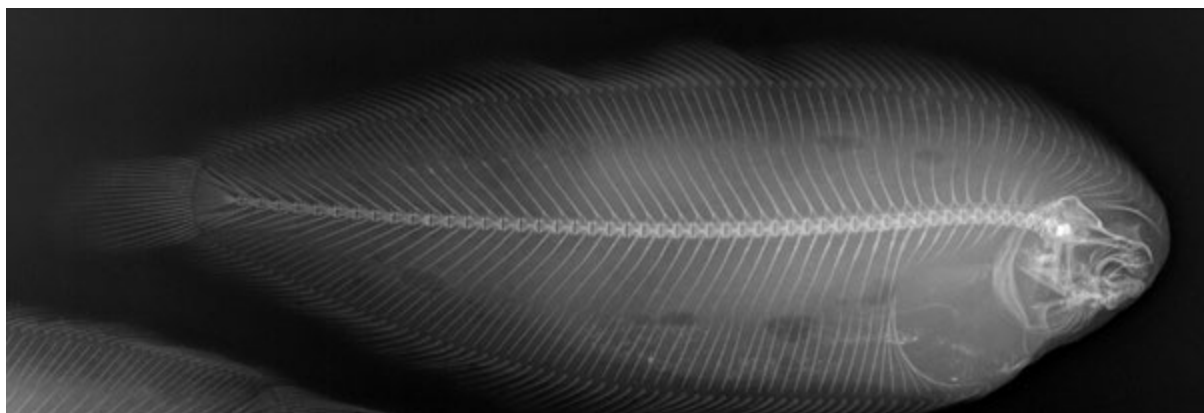


PHOTO: REMCO PIETERS

An X-ray of a plaice that was caught by a pulse trawl.



PHOTO: PIETER VAN RIJSWIJK

Justin Tiano on a field trip. He is researching the effect of pulse trawling on the seabed.

feed properly and run a greater risk of being eaten. You don't always see them in the nets but what happens to these creatures could well affect the population and the ecosystem.'

LUGWORMS

PhD candidate Justin Tiano at NIOZ is also investigating the effects of pulse fishing on the marine ecosystem, and in particular life in the sediment. That is because the electrical field from the pulse trawl permeates the top layers of the seabed.

Tiano does his research in a lab at the other end of the country, in the coastal village of Yerseke in Zeeland. He has a row of glass test tubes with sediment samples about 30 centimetres deep. He took those samples from the seabed using a hollow drill. A tiny tunnel runs through the sand in one of the test tubes. Tiano explains that it was made by a lugworm. 'It eats sand, then excretes it at the other end as the worm digs deeper. That process mixes up the sediment.'

Lugworms and other creatures on the seabed play an important role in the exchange of nutrients and oxygen between the sea floor and the seawater, explains Tiano. They also help remove nitrogen and phosphate from the water. 'Too much nitrogen can lead to excessive algal growth, making oxygen levels fall in the water. This then affects the entire ecosystem.'

Tiano is comparing the effects of beam trawl fishing and pulse trawl fishing on the seabed. First, he disturbed his sediment samples to simulate the effect of the chains on the beam trawl. Then he measured the impact this had on the biochemical processes in the sediment. He is currently working on the data analysis. 'I haven't got far, but it looks as if disturbing the sediment leads to a temporary increase in the uptake of oxygen by the seabed.' He plans to carry out another test in which he exposes the sediment samples to electrical pulses to see what happens. That will

let him determine which method of fishing is least disruptive for the marine ecosystem.

THE FUTURE

The researchers don't spend all their time in the lab. Tiano will soon be going out to sea to take samples in the wake of the pulse trawlers and beam trawlers. He will then compare them with samples from unfished areas. Afterwards, he also wants to investigate the long-term effects of pulse fishing. 'To do that, we want to use a fishing area where beam trawling is prohibited. Various zones will be designated within that area for fishing with different pulse settings.'

Boute is collecting fish that were caught by commercial boats, and assessing the damage. Comparing the results with the outcomes of his lab experiments lets him determine how reliable those experiments are and whether his predictive model is right.

The WUR, NIOZ and ILVO research project is scheduled to run until 2019. The researchers still have a lot of work to do. 'To have sustainable fishing, it's important to find out what method and which settings should be used to catch the fish as efficiently as possible, with minimum damage to other creatures and the environment,' says project manager Adriaan Rijnsdorp. The research results will eventually form part of the scientific basis for a future decision by the EU on pulse fishing. **B**

TENSION

The Netherlands has made use of the option of granting up to five percent of its fishers an exemption to the EU ban on electric pulse fishing. Many other EU Member States have not done so and are critical of this method. Earlier this year, the French Minister for the Environment called on the European Commissioner for Fisheries to maintain the ban on electrical stimulation in fishing and revoke the exemptions that have been granted. According to the minister, there are too many ships taking part in pilot projects, not enough is known about the impact and risks, and there is insufficient monitoring. VisNed, the Dutch trawlers' association, is working on getting pulse trawling accepted in Europe. The organization feels that the opposition is fuelled in part by other countries' desire to strengthen their competitive position.



A JOKE OVER COFFEE


He covers quite some ground with his trolley, stopping at 46 coffee machines in Gaia (like the one in the photo), Lumen, Atlas and Radix. Cleaning and refilling them, mainly. And cracking a joke if he feels like it. Which he quite often does. Because that is

Theo Hooft all over. Don't be surprised to hear him singing Lionel Ritchie's 'Hello, is it me you're looking for?' to a couple of Chinese students. For no other reason than that he's in a good mood. 'But I know who I can do that with and who I can't, you know.'

Hooft has been doing his rounds on the campus for the coffee supplier Maas for the past year and a half. Much to his own satisfaction. 'I have never had such a nice workplace as here. The people you see around, the colleagues.' He's been working for Maas for 16



years and at numerous different locations. 'But I've never had such a relaxed and enjoyable time of it as here.' He has even moved to Ede for this job, to cut his commuting time. All the walking does take it out of him and he has a limp, due to an arthritic hip. 'At

the end of the day I'm broken.' He shows me the strip of painkillers that helps him get through his day. But he stays cheerful. 'I've already had to bury a couple of mates. They didn't get to be as old as I am now. I can't complain at all.'  **RK, photo Margriet van Vianen**

Do you know someone – or are you someone – with an interesting workplace at Wageningen University & Research? Send an email to roelof.kleis@wur.nl.

‘We’ve got to present ourselves in a more client-centred way’



ESG director Bram de Vos: ‘The top sectors hardly ever ask for nature or climate research – and EU projects often make a loss.’

Wageningen Environmental Research has not managed to get out of the red yet. The institute is now scrapping 40 jobs on top of the 60 which went last year. Staff numbers will then have dropped from 350 to 250 in a short time. Bram de Vos, director of the Environmental Sciences Group (ESG), explains.

text Albert Sikkema *photo* Guy Ackermans

How did the big shortfalls come about?

‘Our main client, the government, gives us fewer and fewer assignments. The ministry of Economic Affairs has transferred millions to the top sectors, but they hardly ever want nature and climate research. To compensate for that we have started doing more international projects, especially in the EU. But most EU projects only cover 70 percent of the research costs: they don’t break even without co-financing. Many EU projects at our institute made a loss last year.’

Are the researchers just too expensive?

‘Wageningen Environmental Research has the highest hourly rate at WUR. So, yes, we are relatively expensive. Since the launch of the Recovery Plan in 2016 we have saved on overhead costs. And a management layer has disappeared from the organization. What is more, we are going to cut our accommodation costs. We are looking into whether we can leave Atlas. But we can’t

solve all the problems with lower rates, you know. We cannot and don't want to compete with consultancy bureaus. We are still too expensive for advisory assignments. We can only earn our added value with our quality and by solving complex integral research questions for which the combined knowledge of WUR comes into its own. We are going all out for that now with five externally oriented research programmes. But we might still have a problem even then. We have to compete with European research institutes which do get good core funding from their national governments and therefore do have co-financing for their EU projects.'

The Nature & Society team is disappearing, and the Biodiversity & Policy, Climate Change, and Water & Food teams are going to have to shrink drastically.

'Yes, those are teams which work in the area of nature and do a lot of international projects which do not cover their costs. The government has decentralized nature research to the provinces and there still aren't enough research questions coming from there. And there is no top sector in the field of climate studies. We are working hard on a relationship with the ministry of Infrastructure & Environment, and expect this ministry to become a more important source of research funding for us in future. But that doesn't solve the financial problems in the short term. There are other things going on at Wageningen Environmental Research too, though. There are opportunities in both the private and government markets for all the teams, but we need to get out more and become more client-centred and enterprising. In recent years we've focused largely on the individual staff productivity. Now we want to change tack. We've got to look more at what staff can contribute to team performance.'

Just in this phase Operations director Inge Grimm left quite abruptly. When she was appointed last year precisely to implement the Recovery Plan.

'Inge found a great new job. Her quick exit is a personal issue which I can't say anything about. There is a good handover dossier, and we must look for a successor fast.'

Is the ESG still a nice place to work?

'These cutbacks are not nice at all, but I do believe in taking this route to get the institute back on its feet again. The content and relevance of our professional field, and the tremendous commitment of our staff give me energy. And in the organization I sense a lot of understanding for the steps we are taking.' ①

'MAINLY YOUNG, GOOD PEOPLE ARE GOING'

How do the staff in Gaia and Lumen see the persisting financial problems and the implementation of the Recovery Plan at Wageningen Environmental Research? Resource asked Tia Hermans and Marieke de Lange.

Hermans works in the Regional Development and Spatial Use team and watched last year as seven of her teammates left voluntarily. 'And the awful thing is: it is mainly young and good people who are leaving. They have all found a nice new job.'

Meanwhile financing from the ministry of Economic Affairs (EZ) is still diminishing, notices Hermans, who works a lot in The Hague. 'We are looking for alternatives, which is not easy. I have tried involving businesses in a project but the response was: come back when it's up



'Involving businesses is not easy'

Tia Hermans

and running. They want to know what the business model is before the research has been done.'

It did become clearer last year that to make a recovery the institute will have to change the way it works. Like the way researchers present their work in The Hague. Hermans: 'Now we usually produce a report, but what the civil servants want to hear is: what was the result and what does it mean for EZ? And we don't put that in the report.' And WUR needs to be more assertive, Hermans thinks: make clear in The Hague that research teams are going to stop if there is no EZ funding.

Making a fuss

Marieke de Lange, who works at Animal Ecology, wholeheartedly agrees. 'We are not businesslike enough.' She knows staff who carry on updating their multiannual databases during working hours, even though EZ has stopped financing them, 'because it is so important'. De Lange: 'That's not on, from a business point of view, but nobody confronts them about it.' It would be better to go to the client and make a big fuss, she thinks.

Last year De Lange took a training course called 'The Choice: steering and letting go', in which staff discussed how they could work more effectively. 'Many staff have grown up with individual performance evaluations and targets. During the training course we talked about ways of collaborating and how we could



'We are not businesslike enough'

Marieke Hermans

help each other with that. That is now being taken up by the HR department. But these cultural changes go slowly. This is a tough organization.' But she does notice changes already, for example with the introduction of programme leaders. 'Every programme now has a leader who goes out to see the clients. And keeps an eye on whether enough profitable projects are being acquired, so that there is also space for strategically important projects which are not cost-covering. That is very much needed because until recently everyone said that loss-making research must go on regardless.'

Top thanks to smart publishing

WUR is high in the rankings because of the demonstrably big impact of Wageningen research. And this is largely due to a smart publishing strategy, say information specialists.

text Roelof Kleis illustration Pascal Tieman

Getting published is vital for research. A matter of survival, in fact, for the individual researcher: 'publish or perish'. And no other Dutch university is as good at getting published as Wageningen University & Research. The institution's international success can largely be put down to this.

So say information specialists Peter van der Togt of the Forum library and Philipp Fondermann of Elsevier Information Systems in an article about the Wageningen publication strategy in *Procedia Computer Science*. That strategy is straightforward. Van der Togt sums it up: 'Make sure you get published in Q1 journals, because that gives you the greatest chance of a big impact.' Q1 stands for the best 25 journals, based on their impact in their research fields. Q2 to Q4 stand for the other quartiles.

This publication strategy is based on the work of erstwhile information specialist and bibliometrics guru Wouter Gerritsma. Scientists' impact can be measured by the number of times their articles are cited by colleagues, but it takes a few years for an article to prove its worth. Gerritsma discovered that the Q value of the journal in which an article is published is a good predictor of the impact the article will have. 'So publishing in a Q1 journal is a good indicator of a

big impact,' explains Van der Togt. 'The impact assessment of tenure trackers is based on this.'

RELATIVE IMPACT

The emphasis on smarter, more calculated publishing has got through to all the branches of the organization, and has borne fruit, according to Van der Togt. The figures bear out the claim (see the graphs). The number of Wageningen articles in Q1 journals has risen over 10 years by nearly one quarter to 63 percent. The number of articles that belong in the top 10 percent most frequently cited articles went up by 10 percent in the same period. Well over 25 percent of all Wageningen articles get into the top 10 percent nowadays. The relative impact of the average Wageningen article went up from 1.75 to 2.75. That means that a Wageningen article is cited 2.75 times as often as the average article in the same field during the same period worldwide. No other Dutch university can match that impact.

IN-HOUSE JOURNAL

Richard Visser, head of Plant Breeding and Dean of Research, confirms that the attitude to publishing has changed. 'We have started looking more consciously at the impact of journals. Previously, 90 percent of our articles

were published in *Euphytica*. That was the best journal in the field of breeding. Many institutes had their own 'in-house journals.' With the rise of impact factors for journals, people here started saying we should publish in other journals too, journals with a higher impact. Nowadays we publish most often in *Theoretical Applied Genetics*. And we have also deliberately started publishing in journals like *Plant Cell* in order to reach a different readership.'


Yet Visser is alert to the dangers of letting impact factor play too dominant a role. 'What you want first and foremost is to reach the audience which is closest to your research. That means you sometimes publish in journals with a lower impact factor because they are the ones your readers read. We publish in *Profyta*, for instance, a periodical for the ornamental plant sector which doesn't have an impact factor at all. It's about passing on information to the sector as well.' According to Visser, PhD candidates have a big say in the choice of journal as well. 'Some of them just want to publish seven or eight articles and it doesn't matter much where. But others only want to be published in *Nature* or *Science*, or the like.'

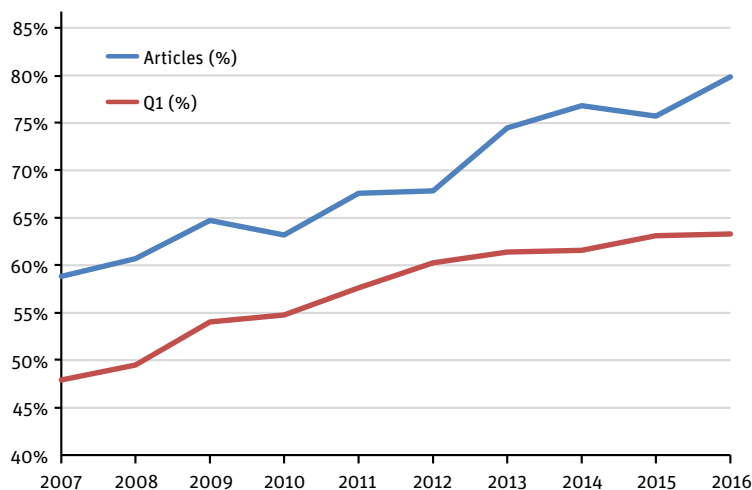
MORE ARTICLES

Besides more targeted publishing, Wageningen researchers have also started publi-



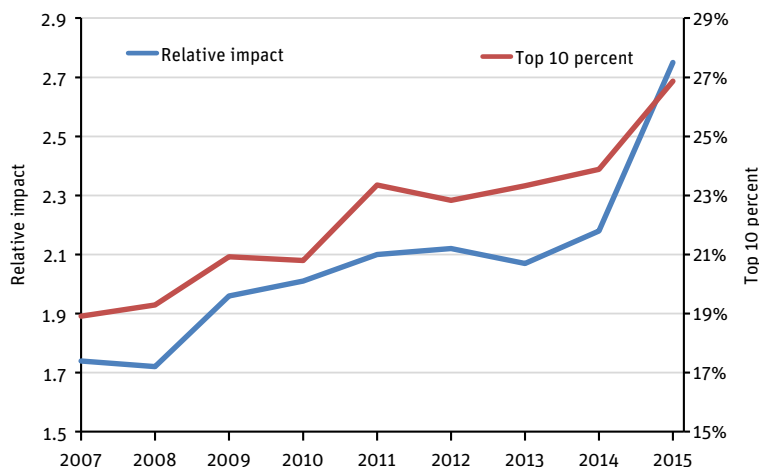
shing more. That is to say: more peer-reviewed articles. Van der Togt: 'You can see a clear shift from writing in the form of proceedings, reports and books to articles. Ten years ago, 60 percent of Wageningen's academic output was articles, and that is 80 percent now.' Van der Togt puts all these developments down to the new publication strategy. 'But you cannot prove that 100 percent of course. There is no baseline measurement: we cannot compare the situation with a WUR without that strategy. What we can do is to carry out these bibliometric analyses, because then our metadata are in order. In the old days people only used to look at the number of articles, but now they look at the quality too. On that score Wageningen is ahead of the game.'

But does the increased impact of Wageningen researchers actually mean the researchers themselves have got better? 'Well, they have certainly got better at publishing,' says Van der Togt cautiously. 'But to publish in those better journals, you have to put more effort into your articles. So the articles are better and that's quality too.' Professor Visser agrees with him. 'If you aim higher, your data have to be better and you have to present them in a better way. By publishing better you become a better scientist.' 



Wageningen output

Peer-reviewed articles as a proportion of the total academic output in top journals as a proportion of the total number of articles.



Wageningen impact

The relative impact of WUR articles and the proportion of Wageningen articles among the top 10 percent most frequently cited articles.

ARE WE READY FOR INTERNATIONAL BSC PROGRAMMES?

If the WUR Council agrees, five BSc programmes will go to English only from September 2018. At that point a new group of students will arrive in Wageningen: international Bachelor's students. Will there be enough opportunities for them to join in student life? Will something have to change at the student societies?

text Teun Fiers illustration Pascal Tieman

Doret van Muilekom



President of IxESN Wageningen

'As president of an international organization, I don't think that the largest student associations should necessarily switch to English. However, the international Bachelor's students do mean a significant change. Our association is already aware of this group of new incoming students and would like to grow into a bigger association which is able to provide a welcome to all of them, both international and Dutch students. **One of the things we already do is to organize integration activities together with the larger student associations.** In this way, I think we are providing a good opportunity for the international students to participate in student life at Wageningen.'

Yanina Willet



Student council member for Sustainability & Internationalisation

'**English-taught Bachelor's programmes are a great idea; I see them more as a solution to current problems than as a threat.** I notice that many issues stemming from the internationalization of the university, like integration problems and cross-cultural misunderstandings, are difficult to tackle. I believe one of the reasons for such problems is that internationals stay for a shorter time and are therefore not able to shape Wageningen as actively as Dutch students. Besides, I think it will become more attractive to form transnational friendships anyway once we are to-

gether from the first year of our studies. Nevertheless, the university needs to facilitate guidance and social support for this new group of students.'

Lotte Dopheide



Board member at WSV Ceres

'In our society we're already aware of the internationalization of the university. **We recently took action on the plan to figure out the feasibility of an international membership of Ceres.**

That would give international students access to the society at other times than just open parties. The aim is to have this in place before the next AID. We also have a committee which organizes activities for international students at our clubhouse so they can take part in Dutch student life. The first activity run by the international activities committee is planned for Friday 19 May. With this sort of thing I am convinced that all the student societies will cater for the growing numbers of international students in Wageningen.'

Vera Sham



MSc student of Plant Sciences from Cameroon

'Student life for Master's students is great as it is. People come here from so many cultures and are really open towards each other's differences. **I never felt excluded from an activi-**

ty by Dutch students. Even when I meet groups of Dutch students at an event they switch to talking English quite smoothly. For international Bachelor's students, I think



it is even easier to adapt because they are younger. The only challenge I see is that despite the official language of Master's programmes being English, Dutch is still sometimes spoken in class, like during laboratory group work. This does create feelings of exclusion among internationals sometimes. Maybe further integration in student life could contribute to solving this problem.

Jasper Wouters



BSc student of Environmental Sciences

'The first question that occurs to me on this subject is: do international students feel the need for a strong involvement in student societies? After all, participation in the Dutch societies is not without obligations, as it can be at international activities. And I don't think internationalization will just happen by itself because **lots of traditions and mores are strongly linked to the Dutch language, as is the case at my rowing club Argo.** The only international students there at present have a hard time getting in-

to club life. They manage it best at competition rowing, when they are part of a fixed team and have fixed training times. Of course the sport itself doesn't depend on language.'

Florine Kremer



MSc student of Management, economics and consumer studies

'If I'm honest I don't see Dutch first-years speaking English from the start. It's not easy when they've only just come from secondary school. But I do think things can change quite fast; before you know it there will be branches of the societies for international students. I expect international students will feel some need for social clubs, especially those from southern Europe. They will probably organize more parties at weekends. **In the end I think international students will be capable of organizing a good time for themselves.** I don't see any need to start planning for it in advance.'

Read too the report 'Split on English for BSc degrees' on p.5.

**Got an opinion too?
Have your say
on resource-online.nl**

Which party gets your

The Student Council elections are coming round again. Between 29 May and 1 June you can help decide who will defend your interests on the Student Council from September. Get to know the three parties and their candidates.

text Didi de Vries

United Students (Verenigde Studenten: VeSte)

United Students (*Verenigde Studenten: VeSte*) represents students with an active student life. Long breaks and evenings off are important to personal development, so the party is actively engaged in discussions about evening lectures and a new timetable. VeSte does not want shortened lunch hours, for instance.

On the insistence of the party, the course evaluation system EvaSys was replaced last year by PaCE. Filling in the evaluation doesn't take as long now, and it is nicer to do. VeSte is also involved in the plans for renovating the Forum library, adding 170 work stations. One disappointment last year was WUR's decision not to waive tuition fees for students joining a board for a year.

In the coming period VeSte will be studying the introduction of English-taught Bachelor's degrees. The party feels that September 2018 is too soon to launch a pilot with five programmes. Their reasoning is that it is important for international students to be able to integrate well and that needs to be facilitated better, for example with a student society with an international social network. What is more, the standard of English among teachers and in the course material must be up to scratch.

Members of VeSte also run training courses for students, on how to run effective meetings, for instance.

Three candidates tell you why you should vote for them in a video. Watch it on resource-online.nl



1

Bregje de Regt (21)
Degree programme: BSc Business and Consumer Sciences
Societies: Mercurius, Ceres



2

Jaap Kerr (20)
Degree programme: BSc Economics and Policy Societies: Mercurius, SSR-W, WSKOV



3

Lisanne Kruiswijk (20)
Degree programme: BSc Forest and Nature Management Societies: Sylvatica, SSR-W



4

Isa Vroom (23)
Degree programme: BSc Biology Societies: Biologica, Ceres, Wageningen Warriors Lacrosse



5

Menno Kasteleijn (22)
Degree programme: BSc Nutrition and Health Societies: Di-Et-Tri, KSV



6

Matthijs Harmsen (23)
Degree programme: MSc International Development Studies Societies: Ipso Facto, KSV



7

Tim van der Kuijl (20)
Degree programme: BSc Soil, Water, Atmosphere Societies: Pyrus, SSR-W



8

Giulia Homs (21)
Degree programme: BSc Environmental Sciences Societies: Aktief Slip, Argo

Sustainability and Internationalisation (S&I)

High quality education, sustainability and an international organization are the key issues for Sustainability & Internationalisation (S&I). Last year S&I approached the executive board with proposals by various student organizations. On the initiative of Fossil Free Wageningen, the party looked for possibilities for the university to switch to a sustainable bank.

S&I is in favour of English-taught BSc programmes, but emphasizes that there is more to this than just introducing English. Teachers need to realize that building good communication between students from different cultures takes time. For this reason, the work pressure should not be too big, especially at the start.

S&I will do some research next year on depression among students, prompted by a few suicide attempts and concern among students. The party also wants to contribute to better preparation of international students for their arrival in Wageningen. They should have some idea beforehand of what group work entails here, and how they can build up a social network.

The party has an open meeting every Monday, at which all are welcome.



Amit Choudhary (22)

Degree programme: MSc Management, Economics and Consumer Studies **Society:** Mercurius and hockey club WHMC



Yinru Li (22)

Degree programme: MSc Organic Agriculture **Society:** Chinese Association (CASSW)



Zhimei Li (21)

Degree programme: MSc Molecular Life Sciences



Yuan Yuan (23)

Degree programme: MSc Plant Sciences **Society:** Chinese Association (CASSW)



Miriam Pater (23)

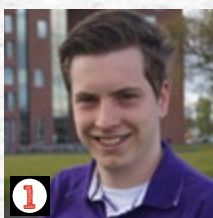
Degree programme: BSc Biotechnology. **Society:** Codon

Christian Students' Party (CSF)

The Christian Students' Party (CSF) believes all students should be treated equally and fairly, and should be educated to be critical. The party is open to students from different backgrounds.

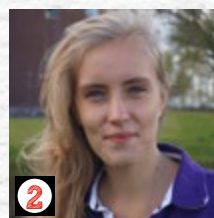
One of the CSF's biggest achievements last year was the new refugee policy at the university. The CSF asked the executive board what WUR is doing for refugees who want to study. The board responded with the plan to offer an additional five refugees per year a place on a degree course, to donate 5000 euros a year to the Refugee Students' Foundation (UAF), and to create positions for two refugee researchers. It was a big blow to the CSF that it only got one seat in the last elections.

With the impending introduction of a new timetable, the CSF wants to draw attention to the problems for students living at home, who benefit from having classes timetabled consecutively rather than spread out. In the debate about growth, the CSF will argue the case for preserving the small scale of Wageningen teaching, with short communication lines between students and teachers as a key feature. The CSF would also like to see more classes on ethics in the degree programmes.



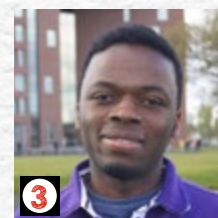
Jan van de Pol (21)

Degree programme: BSc Business and Consumer Sciences **Society:** Navigators Wageningen (NSW)



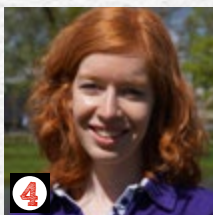
Joanne Rink (21)

Degree programme: MSc International Development Studies **Society:** Navigators Wageningen (NSW)



Cito Gilbert Kawenge (24)

Degree programme: MSc Management, Economics and Consumer Studies **Society:** United Community of African students (UCAS)



Dorien Oostra (22)

Degree programme: MSc Nutrition and Health **Society:** Ichthus Wageningen



Frederike Bleijenberg (21)

Degree programme: BSc International Land and Water Management **Society:** C.S.F.R. Wageningen



Nico van Maaswaal (20)

Degree programme: BSc Economics and Policy **Society:** C.S.F.R. Wageningen

THROWING...

Do you chuck a ball of paper into a waste paper bin four metres away overarm or underarm? Overarm is better, shows mathematical research at Harvard. Aiming at a target below shoulder level leads to fewer mistakes when throwing overarm. For targets above shoulder height, an underarm throw works best. So korfbal players throw underarm and baseball players overarm.

... AND HURLING

For throwing further and faster, overarm is always the best option. With an overarm throw, a slight deviation in the trajectory results in the smallest deviation at the target. And another thing: you throw most accurately if the speed of the throw is just fast enough to reach the target. Good news for lazy people: minimal effort, maximum result.

JAWS

People with slender jawlines are more likely to be left-handed. To be precise: 25 percent more likely. This finding comes from large-scale research at the University of Washington. There is also a link between a thin face and tuberculosis. The researchers have a hunch that these things may be linked genetically. Well, yeah.

FAT

Scientists at the Salk Institute in California can turn ordinary mice into long-distance runners by feeding them with the substance GW1516. The substance stimulates fat-burning, and therefore increases the stamina of mice on a treadmill by 70 percent. This brings top sport within reach without training. But the researchers themselves are more interested in a cure for obesity.



Better insurance for international students

International students will no longer have to pay a deposit at the Gelderse Vallei hospital. WUR has arranged a broad insurance policy with AON that covers all healthcare costs.

On 1 January 2016, the hospital in Ede started demanding a deposit of 300 euros from foreign students and PhD candidates because their AON health insurance did not cover all costs. The costs of chronic conditions, pregnancy care and mental health problems were often not reimbursed. The hospital spent a great deal of time collect-

ing payments as a result, which is why it introduced the deposit. That gave international students problems because they had to pay a lot of money up front for a simple test, for example, and then had to figure out themselves how and whether they could get it refunded. International PhD candidates had this problem too at first but they were able to arrange a better policy with AON back in September last year.

WUR has now reached an agreement with AON on a new health insurance policy for all international PhD candidates and students that covers pre-existing conditions,

pregnancy care and mental health problems as well: the Complete+ package for 58.80 euros a month. The Gelderse Vallei hospital thought this was such a good move that they are no longer asking international students for a deposit as of 1 May.

The comprehensive insurance policy is available for all new international Master's students and PhD candidates who start at WUR as of 1 September. The students and PhD candidates who are already enrolled will keep the old insurance policy, AON Complete. **AS**



People attending the Student Council's evening debate on the extended schedule.

PHOTO: GUY AVERMANS

Concerns about new timetable consequences

Students, lecturers and support staff are concerned about the consequences of the new Extended Daytime Schedule that the WUR Executive Board wants to introduce in September.

That became clear in an evening debate organized by the Student Council on Monday 1 May. The Executive Board says the extended schedule (with lessons from 8.20 to 19.00, lecture blocks of 40 minutes and shorter breaks) is

the best way to deal with the growth in student numbers. But there are concerns. 'My working day starts at 6.45 am,' says Orion caretaker Herco van Gelder. 'With teaching going on to seven in the evening, I don't get home until eight. We don't have enough staff to fill all the extra hours.'

Jessica Duncan, lecturer in Rural Sociology and Teacher of the Year, thinks the breaks in the new timetable are too short. 'Lecturers use the lunch break

for meetings and social interaction with one another or students. Students and lecturers also use the breaks between lessons for more detailed explanations, for example, or discussions.' Students are mainly afraid that the new timetable will leave less room for social activities such as study association lunch meetings, or activities organized by student societies and sports clubs in the early evening.

DDV

Judoka and swimmer get sports scholarships

Two Wageningen students have been given a sports scholarship this year from the Niels Smith Fund. Judoka Hilde Jager, a first-year Bachelor's student in Health and Society, and open water swimmer Dèlenn van Oostrom, a third-year Bachelor's student in Biology, will each receive 1500 euros.

On Tuesday 25 April, Marianne Remmers handed the two their scholarships in De Bongerd. Remmers is the mother of Niels Smith, a talented young footballer who committed suicide in 2009 at the age of 15. In 2011, she established a fund in his name for talented sportspeople studying at Wageningen University & Research who just miss out on support from the Dutch sports federation NOC*NSF.

Hilde Jager plays judo at the national training centre at Papendal. In 2016, she won two Eu-

ropean Cup medals in the juniors and a European Cup silver medal in the seniors. Next season, she aims to qualify for the junior European and World Championships. Hilde wants to use her sports scholarship to help pay for the costs of Papendal.

Dèlenn van Oostrom came second in the Dutch Marathon Championship over 22 km in open water in 2016, third in the Open National Championship over 10 km and first in the World Cup Openman selection competition over 9.3 km. She hopes to make the team for the European Championship. Dèlenn wants to use the scholarship to fund her participation in competitions abroad.

Dèlenn and Hilde bring the total number of Wageningen sportspeople who have enjoyed the support of the Niels Smith Fund since 2011 to twelve. **LdK**



Open water swimmer Dèlenn van Oostrom (left) and judoka Hilde Jager.

PHOTO: GUY AVKERMANS

MEANWHILE IN... THAILAND

'Street food isn't healthy most of the time'

A month after Bangkok was voted the world's best destination for street food for the second time by CNN, the Thai capital's administration has announced that all of the city's food vendors will be swept from the streets. Master's student Nutthaya – 'Peach' – Siri-Udomrat tells us both sides of this story.

'It is a story with two sides to it. On the one hand I don't think the government will be able to banish all the street vendors from the streets and a lot of people do not like this decision. That is really understandable, because the food is very nice and cheap. I like it a lot, and also the fact that it is available all day and all night. On the other hand I understand why the government would want to prohibit this. When you walk through Bangkok, street food is everywhere. Not only in the small streets, but also in the shopping areas.



Nutthaya – 'Peach' – Siri-Udomrat, Master's student of Landscape Architecture and Planning from Thailand, tells us about current events in her country.

Restaurants also put their tables and chairs out on the pavement. Because of that, pedestrians begin to walk on the streets. So for the traffic it is definitely not ideal. Besides, they probably want



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

to make Bangkok cleaner. This makes sense too. While street food is the trademark of Bangkok, the people who live there are the only ones who have to deal with the litter. Tourists can just enjoy the food here and then go to their clean homes.

A final important issue is hygiene and health. Street food tastes good, but most of the time it isn't healthy at all. The vendors are eager to keep the costs down and therefore buy low quality ingredients. There is also a lack of money for facilities to guarantee hygiene. For example, my colleague once got diarrhoea from street food and an Indian food vendor near my high school didn't care about hygiene either. Some friends said that he didn't even wash his hands after urinating somewhere around the corner.' **AB**

YOU ON CAMPUS

Claire Borst (20) is a student of Business and Consumer Science, and a real 'WaYo' (Wageningen Youth). She has lived in this town all her life. Well, almost. 'For the first two years of my life I lived in Bennekom.'

Claire began her school career at the G.J. van den Brink school in Wageningen. Then she had a choice between two secondary schools in Ede and the only secondary school in Wageningen: the Pantarijn school. It was not a difficult choice. 'I didn't really consider going anywhere else because both my brothers were at the Pantarijn.' And in the end she didn't even leave the town to go to university. And she hasn't regretted that for a moment.

Ten students in Claire's year at the Pantarijn went on to Wageningen University – 'quite a

lot!' – but all her friends went to Utrecht, Amsterdam, Groningen and elsewhere. Claire admits that in terms of the city she would have preferred to go to Amsterdam, but it was her choice of degree programme that kept her here: the degree in Business and Consumer Studies is only offered by Wageningen University.

'It's only five minutes by bike to my parents'

Once Claire had decided to go to university in Wageningen, she was determined to develop her own student life. The first step, of course, was to move into her own accommodation. 'As far as possible from my parents of course. But that is still only five minutes' bike ride away, haha!'

When she was younger, Claire always promised herself she would get away from

Wageningen as soon as she could. Now she thinks differently, and she is even going to stay here for her minor next year. 'I realize how much I have here that I value. So I'd rather go abroad when I've finished in Wageningen.' **AB**



PHOTO: ANNIE BERENDSEN

PARTIES

In the party mood? Wageningen Party Promotion (WUP) tells you where to find one. See too www.wageningenup.nl.

THE SPOT - PERUVIAN PARTY

Saturday 13 May from 20:30 to 03:00

Peruvian students are throwing this party to support flood victims in their country. It costs 5 euros to get in, and that is your donation. Enjoy a performance by the great Chilean student band Saonda and let your hair down for a good cause!

CERES - CAPTAIN MORGAN AT STUPÉFÊTE

Thursday 18 May from 23:45 to 01:30

The famous Ceres party Stupéfête takes place again on 18 May. The theme this time is Captain Morgan. Not to be missed, always a success.

BONGERD - THYMOS SPORTS NIGHT

Thursday 1 June from 21:00 to 02:30

During the sports night – on the theme of 'A Night in Vegas!' – you and your team can take part in unusual sports such as archery tag and laser gaming. There'll be nice music and you can grab a beer between events at the Sport-pub. **B**



PHOTO: AART-JAN VAN DE GLIND

The sixth Techno Breakfast took place at the Haarweg on the morning of Liberation Day.

Wageningen Master's students do internships and thesis research all around the world, getting to know their field and other cultures. Here they talk about their adventures.

The guest is god in India


'There is loads of fun to be had here. Dance festivals can go on for ten days! With singsongs, feasting and fireworks. People are very friendly. They have a saying: 'The guest is god'. As a visitor you are valued highly and you come in for a lot of attention. People want to shake your hand, have their photo taken with you, or invite you for a cup of tea. One of the most important things I take away from this experience of living abroad is that travelling puts your own life in perspective.

The coastal villages where I am doing research are closely linked but they are remote from the rest of the world. The groundwater is salty, which makes the communities dependent on freshwater ponds in the villages. The water from these water tanks, as they call them, is important for all sorts of things: irrigation, livestock, drinking water, washing, spiritual purposes and biodiversity. By raising awareness, we hope it will be possible in future to use these ecosystem services more extensively to improve life for the villagers.

EMPTY ATMS

In order to document the value people place on the water tanks, I first needed to go into the field. Most people only spoke the local dialect so I went with a researcher from the institute. I made a list of questions beforehand, which were translated at the office to make communication easier on the spot.

I live in an apartment at the institute, together with other international interns. It is nice that I can share my experiences with people who are in the same boat. When it was decided from one day to the next that a lot of Indian banknotes were no longer valid currency – to combat corruption – there was chaos in the city. It wasn't unusual to wait for over an hour to change money. Before long all the ATMs were empty and the banks had run out of banknotes. We were lucky ourselves because the ATM we went to happened to have just been filled. I mainly hung out with the other international students. The work culture at the institute was

disappointing. My colleagues assume everyone does their own thing and they don't explain much. I have to do everything myself. That has advantages and disadvantages.' 



THE WORKS

Who? Wietse Wiersma, MSc student of Earth and Environment
What? Five months' internship at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
Where? Anand, India

Read all the interviews on resource-online.nl

BECOME A VOLUNTEER IN THE AID 2017!

I want to guide new students in their first week and help them to get to know Wageningen.

↓ NO ↓ YES


I want to get to know students from different countries and make international friends.

↓ NO ↓ YES


I don't want to miss a single program part during the AID!

↓ YES ↓ NO

MSC REGULAR




MSC LIGHT



I want to be part of a group of hard working students to make the AID a succes!

↓ YES ↓

CREW!



Register now at www.aidwageningen.nl!

BUDDY MENTORS WANTED



Become a buddy mentor and make friends from all over the world! Join the Summer AID and give a warm welcome to the new students.

The groups will be formed of 10-15 students and 2 or 3 buddy mentors.

DO YOU WANT TO DISCOVER THE WORLD IN WAGENINGEN?

JOIN THE SUMMER AID OR START IN PERIOD 1



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
BUDDY@IXESN-WAGENINGEN.NL

ixesn Wageningen
@ixesn_wageningen
ixesn-wageningen.nl


30 May

WeDay

Sign up from **24 April** to **22 May**

Join us again for this year's edition of the afternoon filled with sporty activities for all employees! Want to try your hand at Escape Room, strength training or a pole dancing class? Check the We Day intranet page for more information and registration details.

We Day location: Wageningen Campus, Sports Centre de Bongerd



Science Cafe Wageningen

www.sciencecafewageningen.nl

Evolution and neurobiology of altruistic behaviour and conflict resolution skills

Thursday, May 11
19:45 - live music
20:15 - Science
Café Loburg
FREE ENTRANCE



Prof. Elisabeth Sterck
Utrecht university

Prof. Alan Sanfey
Donders Institute

Partners:

Sponsored by:






RESOURCE

announcements

WAGENINGEN WRITING LAB WORKSHOPS

In the coming study period the Writing Lab and Wageningen University Library will once again organize a series of lunch workshops. On 18 May: Plan for success, on how to start your writing assignments. On 23 May: How to search efficiently in databases, and on 1 June: Optimizing your writing style. The workshops start at 12.30. More information: info.wageningenwritinglab@wur.nl.

TRAINING IN PRESENTATION SKILLS & NERVES

The course is for students and PhD candidates who get nervous when having to present work. Marloes Harkema, an experienced skills trainer, will teach you strategies for feeling more at ease when standing up in front of a group. We practise non-verbal communication, structure and interaction with the audience. Three Monday evenings for students in period 6. PhD workshop on Thursday evenings, 11 and 18 May. See Facebook, or email marloesharkema@gmail.com.

agenda

Thursday 11 to Wednesday 24 May 4 FILMS FOR STUDENTS

American Honey: Riveting road movie about a girl who crosses the US with a group of young magazine sellers, in a journey full of eccentricities and pulsating music. *After the Storm*: Gentle Japanese family drama about a failed novelist who lives with his mother, ex-wife and young son. *Life Animated*: About an autistic boy who learns to speak again through cartoons. *Dancer*: About the tragic life of the celebrated Ukrainian dancer Sergei Polunin. Venue: Wilhelminaweg 3A, Wageningen.

WWW.MOVIE-W.NL

Saturday 13 May: 11.00 RUW FOUNDATION: LECTURE & VISIT TO A TINY HOUSE IN WAGENINGEN

The Tiny House movement was projected to be one of the major trends of 2017. Our event 'A big day full of

Tiny houses' went viral. Although the afternoon programme is fully booked you can still join the morning programme: a free lecture by tiny house pioneer and blogger Marjolein Jonker and a visit to one of two tiny houses in Wageningen. Venue: room K137 at Generaal Foulkesweg 37 (the building with the clock). Don't forget to bring along your bike (or car).

STICHTINGRUW.NL

Saturday 13 May, 11.00-14.30 SEVENTH EDITION OF THE EUROPE AROUND THE CORNER OPEN DAY

Take a look behind the scenes of projects funded with EU money. WUR is organizing presentations in Orion together with Friesland Campina.

EUROPAOMDEHOEK.NL

Sunday 14 May, 10.00-16.00 COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE WORKSHOP

This physical, comic theatrical tradition has had a huge impact on modern comedy. It uses archetypes such as the old miser. The characters constantly get into problems that result in strong emotions, action and acrobatics. In the workshop, you will get the chance to act in short scenes yourself. No theatrical experience required. Cost: €25/students €17.50 (cash). Bring your own lunch. Venue: the Wilde Wereld theatre, Burgtstraat 1, Wageningen. Register via stichtinglens.nl.

Sunday 14 May, 16.30-19.00 JAM SESSION IN DE ZAAIER

For both experienced musicians and beginners. Keyboards, guitar, bass and drums are provided. Register via jamsessie@jazzinwageningen.nl. Venue: Café De Zaaier, Herenstraat 33, Wageningen.

JAZZINWAGENINGEN.NL

15 May, 19.30-01.00 VAN UVEN FESTIVAL

The Van Uven Stichting was founded in 1970 to stimulate students in Wageningen to make music together. It is a chance to play or sing for an audience! Your chance to shine! You can make music, dance or do anything else. Venue: The Spot.

VANUVEN.NL

Monday 15 May, 20.00 ST. OTHERWISE: TRANSITIE NL & THE WECONOMY: HOW TO HACK AN ECONOMY

The WeConomy is characterized by a new set of business models aimed at literally disrupting 'business-as-usual' and allowing entrepreneurship that combines idealism and pragmatism and enables entrepreneurs at the local level to take over. We invited Transitie NL to talk about the WeConomy and how you can join the movement. Venue: Forum.

Friday 19 May, 12.15 ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES COMPANY DAY

A day that BSc, MSc, and PhD students won't want to miss out on. Many companies and organizations will be present to make you aware of all the possibilities after your student days. The day, organized by Pyrus, Nitocra, Aktief Slip and Sylvatica, will start with the company market, followed at 13.30 by presentations and workshops. Subscribe free of charge at bedrijvendag.wur.nl. Venue: Forum, ground floor.

Thursday 25 May, 23.00-02.00 LOBUURLIVE INDIE: NIKO AND WRITIST

The coolest new indie acts are coming to town! Niko, a Hague supergroup formed around the former F. frontman, plays indie rock reminiscent of Mac Demarco. Writist performs folk songs in the style of Fink and Ben Howard, accompanied by subtle electronic music. The indie disco afterparty will continue into the wee small hours. Free admission. Venue: Café Loburg.

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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>>TYPICAL DUTCH

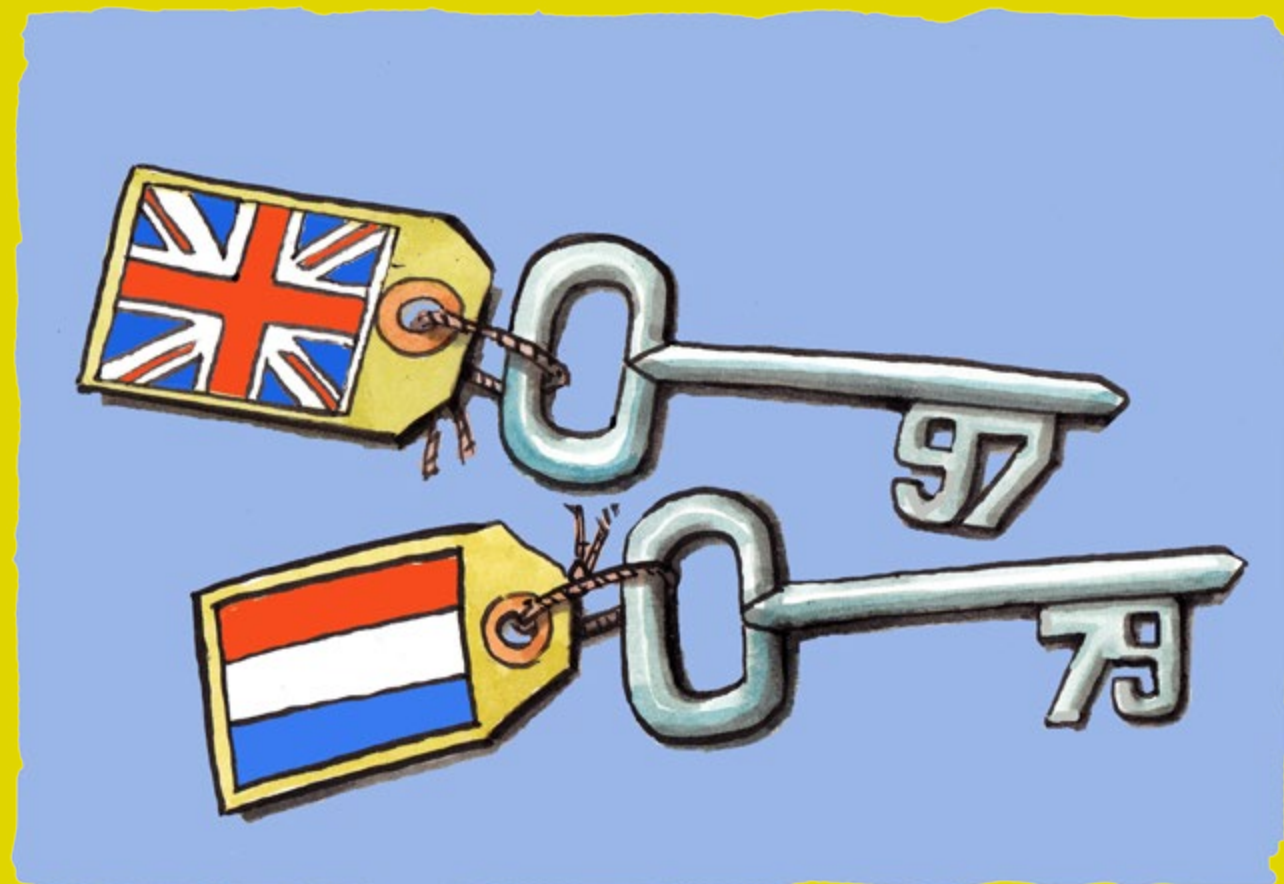



ILLUSTRATION: HENK VAN RUITENBEEK

Number confusion

When I arrived in the Netherlands, I couldn't wait to pick up my room key. I was curious to see whether I had a nice view from my window and who my corridor mates were. But the process of getting into my room wasn't as smooth as I imagined. It involved some funny confusion about the room number.

Shortly before I came to the Netherlands, I was informed that I had room number 97 in a student apartment. In Wageningen I met the caretaker to introduce myself and collect the key. He was friendly and gave me some brochures about the regulations and living in the building. When it came to the key, he handed me a key with number 97 on its keyring. However, he told me (in English) that my room was number '79'. I showed him the number on my keyring and told him it was '97'. But he said: 'No, your room number is 79.' We argued a bit but he insisted that my room was 79, so I decided just to try my key in the doors of both rooms. It fitted the door of room number 97.

A month later, the puzzle was solved over lunch with my colleagues, when we talked about Dutch ways of saying things. Apparently, the Dutch way of saying numbers is the other way round to the English way. For example, in number 97 in English the 'ninety' comes before the 'seven', just as it is written. In Dutch, however, this number is described as 'zevenennegentig', which means 'seven and ninety'. So next time I experience number confusion in the Netherlands, I will know why.  **Sri Sunarti, PhD Researcher in Plant Sciences, from Indonesia**

'Ninety seven' is 'seven and ninety' in Dutch. So next time I experience number confusion I will know why

Have you had an interesting encounter with Dutch culture? Send your anecdote (in 250 to 350 words) to resource@wur.nl and earn 25 euros and a jar of Dutch sweets. The editors reserve the right to shorten and edit the contributions before publication.