

**Next academic year**

Practicals could be back | **p.5** |

**It is called... Aurora**

New education building | **p.7** |

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# RESOURCE [EN]

For everyone at Wageningen University & Research

no 17 – 14 May 2020 – 14th Volume



## Multitasking student parents

'You can't study when looking after a baby' | **p.18**

**INTERNATIONAL  
EDITION**

# Els + coronas screen

WUR researchers work with all kinds of equipment. Meet Els Roode from the Laboratory of Virology.



## WORKING SAFELY ON A CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

So this is what lab work looks like in coronavirus times: workstations separated by Perspex screens. Els Roode is pretty much the first: she is culturing insect cells for producing coronavirus antibodies. This is literally coronavirus work. A screen has now been installed to allow sufficient physical distancing in the small culture lab over the next while as restrictions ease. The screen was designed and made in the Tupola workshop. © RK, photo Sven Menschel

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in coronavirus times

## A LIE-IN

Student houses are often not the best insulated buildings, and so it is that my boyfriend and I are occasionally woken up by the sound of a crying baby. When that happens, we look at each other and count ourselves lucky with our carefree weekends with long lie-ins. Imagine having a baby. On top of your degree programme and everything else that's on your mind. Yes, what would that be like, actually?

The curse of the journalist. If you ask a question, you answer it, if you can. So off we went in search of students who have to fit in courses and internships around the nappies and the creche. It takes quite a lot of discipline, but it is possible. Impressive! You can read about it on page 18.

And in other news: we can get a haircut again, but we must go on working and studying at home. Is the atmosphere still friendly in student houses now everyone's cooped up together (page 24)? Do researchers still get round to publishing (page 22)? And do we ever want to come back to the campus, actually (page 20)?

Coretta Jongeling, editor

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>> Help wanted! In these difficult times, *Resource* keeps WUR connected. Help us reach colleagues and students who aren't on campus and follow us on social media, where you can leaf through a PDF of the magazine via Issuu. *Resource*, now more than ever!



PHOTO: ROELOF KLEIS

## SPORTS BACK AT DE BONGERD

**Outdoor sports are allowed again at De Bongerd under strict conditions. But indoor sports are still banned for now.**

The playing fields around De Bongerd Sports Centre have been deserted for nearly two months. Organized sports have been forbidden ever since the 'intelligent lockdown' started. Now that the national lockdown is cautiously easing, De Bongerd is reopening. The student sports clubs will be holding classes again outdoors while observing the rules on distance, hygiene and contact.

According to the head Henri ten Klooster, the sports in question are athletics, tennis, football, survival, Frisbee, lacrosse, quidditch, mountain biking, archery, boot camps, cycling, korfbal and rowing. The protocols for this have been approved by the WUR Executive Board. One of the conditions is that the participants must register beforehand for the sports classes so that instructors have control over the group size. None of the facilities in the sports hall

can be used except for the toilet. 'So you have to change and shower at home,' says Ten Klooster. 'The instructors will provide the materials and be in charge of disinfection, for example of the Frisbees. People should also park as close as possible to the site to minimize the risk of contact.'

### INDOOR

Detailed protocols are also already available for indoor sports but indoor activities are not yet allowed. Ten Klooster doesn't actually expect a huge demand for the outdoor sports at first. Many students have left Wageningen and are back with their parents. Students will get compensation for the period when they were unable to use their sports card. Staff with sports rights also don't have to pay anything during the lockdown. **IK RK**

## SUPPORT FROM WUR FOR PHD STUDENTS IN NEED

**WUR will give some foreign PhD students who have got into problems because of the coronavirus crisis a gift of 1250 euros a month.**

The recipients are 10 to 15 Wageningen PhD candidates who were not able to fly home in March and April and who no longer have a grant. As a result, they had no income to cover the costs of food and rent in the Netherlands.

The WUR science groups have given these students compensation in the form of a gift. 'The rules didn't allow the PhD students to be given support through other channels. We had to act quickly because the students were facing urgent problems,' says Dean of Research Wouter Hendriks. There are other foreign PhD candidates whose grants end in May and June and who are also unable to return home as yet.

### COST OF LIVING

WUR is also supporting a group of five or six foreign PhD candidates who were supposed to start their PhD research in Wageningen and had therefore given up their jobs in their home countries. The coronavirus crisis means they are now unable to start their PhDs in the Netherlands and are left without any income. They too are getting a contribution from WUR towards the cost of living.

Hendriks is assessing whether other PhD candidates are experiencing delays in their research because of the pandemic. 'A PhD student at the writing-up stage will be less affected by the coronavirus measures than a PhD candidate who can't continue their experiments.' The university hopes it will then be able to offer tailored solutions in its compensation measures for PhD candidates. **AS**

## BIG DROP IN STUDENT REGISTRATIONS

**Preliminary registrations for the academic year 2020/2021 are lagging far behind those of last year. According to the latest prognosis, 12 per cent fewer students will be starting on a WUR BSc degree programme.**

On 4 May 2020, there were 1735 preliminary registrations at the university. On the same day last year, 1974 students had registered, 239 more. This difference is mainly due to a fall in the number of Dutch secondary school pupils registering. Nationwide, 12 per cent fewer have applied to university.

Henk Vegter, head of Quality & Strategic Information: 'Dutch pupils normally have to have registered by 1 May. This year, be-

cause of the coronavirus pandemic, they have until 1 June to register, so there might be a small surge to come. We'll have a bit more certainty in the first week of June.

How many new students will actually start on a Bachelor's degree is anyone's guess at the moment.'

### GAP YEAR

Vegter expects that this year, secondary school pupils will be more reluctant to embark on a university degree. 'There won't be the usual introduction week, for instance, and the chances are that new students will have to start on their programme online, at least partially. The exact reasons will vary from one person to the

next. But it's possible that starting a degree will not be so popular next academic year, and that more school pupils will be taking a gap year.' **LZ**



PHOTO: MARTE HOFSTENGE

## PRACTICALS MIGHT BE ON CAMPUS NEXT YEAR

**For the next few months, the university will only be teaching online, but rector Arthur Mol says the campus may open next academic year, particularly for practicals and perhaps also for teaching in small classes.**

For the rest of this academic year, only online education will be offered, says Mol. So, like period 5, period 6 will be 'online only'. Teachers are working continuously on designing and delivering online education, says the rector. As a result, 263 of the 275 courses in period 6 are being run online, and 12 courses have been cancelled.

### 'Online education demands different approaches'

First-year MSc students are already looking forward to their internships and theses next year. But due to the lockdown in many countries, most of the planned overseas internships cannot go ahead. So many Master's programmes now have the option of doing a second thesis instead of an internship, says Mol.

### GRADUAL TRANSITION

The university also wants to support Bachelor's students who are not able to finish their degree when they expected to. Staff are putting the finishing touches to a system in which Bachelor's students can make a start on a Master's programme next year even if they haven't quite finished their Bachelor's degree.

Meanwhile, in the face of all the uncertainty, the Executive Board is making plans for education at the university next year. As far as circumstances permit, the university is going to offer practicals and education in small classes in the new academic year. The education department is working on adapted plans with fewer students in laboratories in line with the 'one-and-a-half metre society' the Netherlands is aiming at. The university also hopes to offer all thesis students access to the laboratories. And if circumstances allow, there will be more on-campus education.

### TEACHING METHODS

Mol: 'We are working continuously on developing online education and supporting teachers in implementing it. We want to build more flexibility into the education system, to make it easier in future to switch between online and on-campus education. To make this possible, the Executive Board also wants to invest in the methodology of online education. Online education demands different approaches to face-to-face education. We will have more time for training in that next academic year.' The Wageningen approach ties in with those of the other Dutch universities. Together, the universities have started a campaign to make clear to prospective students that university education will continue in 2020/2021, with the slogan: 'On campus if we can, online because we can'. **AS**



PHOTO: GUY ACKERMANS

## COLUMN|VINCENT

### Digital field trips

I reckon WUR is seen as the real excursion university in the Netherlands. Students are always out and about somewhere, especially during period 6. In the five years since I first started taking courses here, no period 6 has gone by without a field trip.

That's all very different now that face-to-face education is out of the question. For fieldwork, like everything else, smart alternatives are being thought up and no doubt a lot of material is being digitalized. They say that's one of the good things about this crisis. That the long-expected digital revolution is finally getting off the ground. 'We'll soon start plucking the fruits of that.'

### 'Gathering oysters on the sandbanks and eating them with the teachers'

I just hope that the digitalization of fieldwork doesn't put an end to the real thing. Field trips are often costly to organize, and if it turns out that 'you can do it perfectly well digitally', that might be used as an argument against them. Especially once the university starts to feel the financial after-effects of this crisis.

The nicest moments during my five years of courses happened during field trips. Weeks spent looking for plants in the Pyrenees and eating nothing but fish soup with baguettes and aioli (BIS-21306). Trying to do grazing experiments with a cow with a mind of her own who kept jumping over the electric fence, right into the middle of another group's grazing experiment (REG-30306). Gathering oysters on the sandbanks of the Wadden Sea during a break from fieldwork, and eating them that evening with the teachers (AEW-23306). Things like that. And those are things you can't digitalize. So secretly, I hope the digital alternatives to the field trips will be a bit disappointing. So that the digital revolution will pass fieldwork by and it will soon be back in its old form. **B**

**Vincent Oostvogels (24)** is exploring the delicate interface between nature management and food production through his two Master's programmes, Forest and Nature Conservation and Animal Sciences



# LIVING IN SAHARAN HEAT

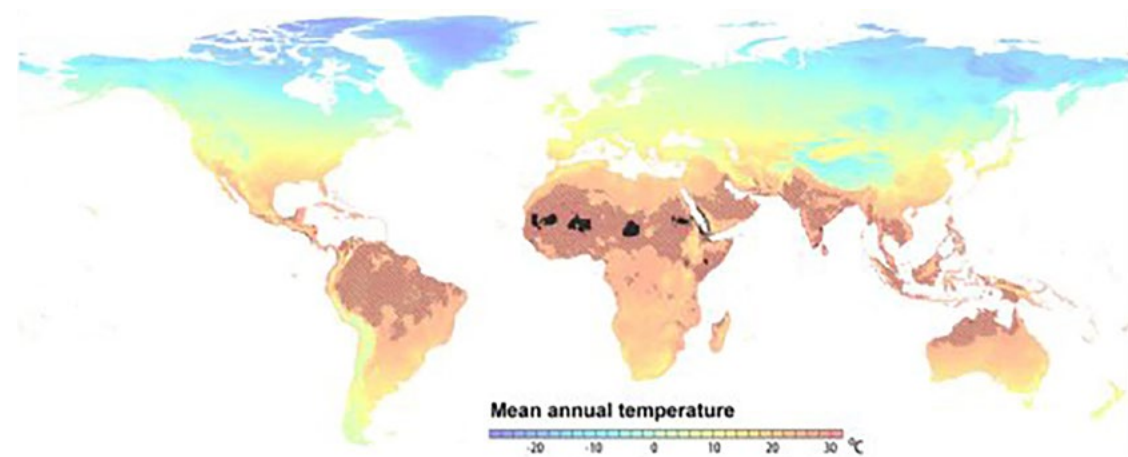
**If global warming is not brought under control, in 50 years' time 3.5 billion people will be living in Saharan temperatures, shows a study by Professor Marten Scheffer.**

An article about this in *PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences)* has attracted a lot of attention internationally. The study documents the shift in the zones on the Earth where humans feel most comfortable and perform best. Thanks to global warming, the human species' 'niche' is moving. And that could lead to mass migration.

## BELL CURVE

Scheffer hit upon the idea of mapping the human 'comfort zone' during a conference in the Mexican city of Merida, where it was hot and humid. 'Is that good for a human being?' Scheffer asked himself. The thought led to a study of the limits for human habitation and the link between the average annual temperature and human habitation. Plotting that link gives a classic bell curve with an optimum of around 13 degrees Celsius.

That optimal temperature and the range around it (-11 to +15 degrees Celsius) does not appear to have changed for the past 6000 years. This led to the next question, of



▲ The expansion of hot zones by 2070. In brown: the zones where it is too hot to live.

what impact global warming will have on that human habitat. Scheffer and his international team (which includes an archaeologist, a social geographer and a climate scientist) are looking 50 years ahead.

**'We have calculated a kind of social sensitivity to global warming'**

Without a big reduction in greenhouse gases, 19 per cent of the Earth's surface will have Sahara-like annual average temperatures of over 29 degrees Celsius.

And one third of the world population will be living there: the north of South America, Australia, Africa, India and South-East Asia. Scheffer: 'India is already at the limit of what is viable.'

## SOCIAL SENSITIVITY

But even the less extreme climate scenarios produce worrying figures. Even if the rise in temperature can be limited through various measures, we shall still have 1.5 billion people living in zones that are too hot. An alarming message, but Scheffer prefers to see it positively. 'You can also say that for every degree less warming, one billion fewer people get into difficulties.' That core message is the strength

of this study, says Scheffer. 'The impact of climate change is often expressed in dollars. This makes more of an impression on people, and it hasn't been done before. We have calculated a kind of social sensitivity to warming.' As far as Scheffer is concerned, it is a given that global warming will lead to mass migration.

Scheffer dismisses the criticism that working with the worst case scenario is pessimistic. 'A lot of measures are being taken, but for the time being, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are still rising. What is more, there are more and more signs that the Earth is much more sensitive to those emissions than we thought.' **RK**

# BIOLOGICAL APPROACH IS HARMFUL



**Biological treatments for the oak processionary caterpillar are not as harmless as they seem. They also kill other caterpillars, says professor by special appointment Michiel Wallis de Vries of the Dutch Butterfly Society.**

Many municipalities use bacterial preparations and nematodes to tackle the oak processionary caterpillar. The preparations, which contain bacterial toxins, also kill the caterpillars of about 100 other species of moths that are on oak trees around now.

According to Wallis de Vries, the use of organic preparations has really taken off, with two out of three municipalities using such treatments. 'That's worrying. The preparations are even being used in the countryside.' The professor also has doubts about the effectiveness of the preparations. 'This has never really been researched.' Wallis de Vries says a more uniform approach is needed. 'We sent a letter to the Agriculture minister, Carola Schouten. A more cohesive policy and better monitoring are required.' **RK**

# SUN CREAM FOR TREES?!

**In the Dutch town of Doetinchem last month, nature managers rubbed sun cream into the bark of beech trees. Is that really called for? Trees have managed without sun protection for millions of years.**

Bart van der Sluis, a researcher at Open Teelten in Randwijk, has been studying methods of protecting trees from the sun. 'Sunburn in trees has been a problem for 10 years,' says Van der Sluis. 'But it hardly happens anywhere except in tree nurseries and in urban areas.'

## SHADE

Trees with large root systems are especially sensitive to sunburn. They absorb water from the soil through their roots, and then it flows through their trunks, cooling them down. 'The problem for nurseries is that trees get trans-

planted and it is impossible to transplant the whole root system.' Sunburn in trees means damage to the growth tissue. 'That affects the growth negatively because the tree invests a lot of energy in recovering from that damage,' says Van der Sluis.

## HESSIAN, TEXTILES AND CREAM

That is the reason for protecting young, newly planted trees along an avenue. There are several materials available for this, including strips of hessian fabric, reed matting and textiles. The method used in Doetinchem works fine too, shows research by Van der Sluis. The white coating reflects the sunlight, keeping the tree cool. 'Sun cream doesn't break and can't be vandalized. What is more, the coating slowly wears off, so the tree can gradually get used to the heat.' **NvtWH**



Photo: Omroep Gelderland

# AND THE WINNER IS ... AURORA

**The new education building will be called Aurora, after the Roman goddess of dawn. Student Annemiek van Kessel came up with the name.**

Kessel says the name refers to the open character of the new teaching building, which is being constructed on the western edge of the campus. 'I think it's an appropriate name as a defining feature of the building is the daylight in all the rooms. Aurora makes sure that the

sunlight can reach as many parts of the new building as possible,' she writes in her supporting argument. Van Kessel was not the only person to suggest Aurora; this name appeared in 16 of the 840 approved entries. 'Two of the four jury members chose Van Kessel's submission independently of one another when drawing up their shortlists,' explains jury secretary Eddy Teenstra. The name scored well in the following rounds of voting too



# WUR DOCUMENTARY ABOUT TEXEL WHALERS

**A documentary by WUR researchers about whaling museum 't Walvisvaarders Huisje on Texel is due to premiere online on Monday 18 May.**

The ethnographic documentary was made by Loes Witteveen and Pauline van Tuyl of the Environmental Policy chair group. The production is part of the European Pericles project, which aims to explore new ways of preserving and sustainably governing maritime heritage. Witteveen specializes in developing and applying visual methods in teaching and research. Film and photography play a key role in this. She and her colleagues decided to film the story of whaling on Texel. The documentary centres on the recently discovered history of a cottage in the Texel village of Den

Hoorn, which has now been turned into a private museum. That history is illustrated with the stories of the current owner Annetje Capitein-Bendien and the Texel fisherman's wife and historian Ineke Vonk. Vonk discovered the history of the house and its occupants during research for her degree. The emphasis on the two women's stories is what makes the film an ethnographic documentary. Witteveen: 'The two women bring their own perspective and the focus is on their stories. Ethnography is all about observing and describing the situation.' A nice detail: Vonk found out that she too had whalers' blood as her distant ancestors had hunted whales. **RK**

*The documentary will be available from Monday on the Kaap Skil museum website: [www.kaapskil.nl](http://www.kaapskil.nl)*



and ended up as one of the final two. The jury put these two names to the Executive Board, who made the final choice. The runner up is not being announced. 'That will only cause trouble,' says Teenstra. 'Anyway, we only need the one name.' Incidentally, the 15 losing Auroras will get an email with an explanation of the

decision. Van Kessel gets 250 euros and a certificate. **RK**

## BETTER PENS MEAN 'BETTER' PIGS

**Pigs that grow up in an enriched environment – a bigger pen with straw and sawdust, for example – grow faster, have better immunity, and can cope with disappointments better, concludes PhD researcher Lu Luo.**

Luo's study is the first to compare the long-term effects of an enriched pen with those of a standard bare pen. Luo assessed not only the pigs' behaviour but also their growth, their immune systems and their emotional state.

Luo discovered that pigs from enriched pens had different levels of natural antibodies than pigs from conventional pens, which probably makes them respond more effectively to infections. Her discovery ties in with earlier research findings by Ingrid van Dixhoorn, who found that pigs from enriched housing had better resistance to the PRRS virus.

Another significant benefit is that the pigs from enriched environments coped better with being weaned. After weaning they ate

better and grew faster than pigs in a bare environment. What is more, they displayed fewer stress symptoms and could cope with disappointment better.

### PLAYING

Luo did her research on the Wageningen campus with 32 groups of pigs. One quarter of the pigs were housed in either an enriched or a bare pen, one quarter were moved from a bare pen to an enriched one after seven weeks, and one quarter were moved in the opposite direction. The pigs that went from an enriched pen to a bare one seemed to become more stressed and began to display harmful behaviour such as tail- or ear-biting, which the pigs in the enriched environment hardly ever did. It



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

also became apparent that pigs that moved from an enriched environment to a poor one were worse off than the pigs that stayed in a bare pen all the time. And the pigs that were 'promoted' from bare pens to enriched ones showed lasting signs of improved wellbeing, playing and exploring more. **AS**

## HUNGER INCREASES WITHOUT SCHOOL MEALS

**Now that schools are locked down in most developing countries due to the corona crisis, children have lost their access to school meals. According to Wageningen development experts, this is causing an increase in malnutrition in many countries.**

The Wageningen research team interviewed colleagues in 18 developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America on how the corona crisis is impacting the food supply in their countries. The results show that the corona-mitigating measures do not directly impact food production. However, the emerging food crisis in the Horn of Africa caused by the locust plague is exacerbated by the corona crisis.

### FRUIT

Many people's access to food is under threat, the researchers note. The corona measures hamper the import of staple foodstuffs such as



PHOTO: CRS PHOTO / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

### Many young men and women in urban areas are losing their jobs

grain, rice, maize and potatoes, reducing the food security of many African countries dependent on food imports. Furthermore, the availability of fruit and vegetables in urban areas is diminished, leading to a less varied diet. Small and

medium businesses are bearing the brunt of the corona crisis, as are informal markets in developing countries. Many jobs in the informal sector are disappearing, and many young men and women in urban areas are losing their jobs.

### FOOD SUPPLY

The corona crisis could stimulate regional food production and lead to shorter food supply chains in developing countries,

the researchers state. But, if the crisis persists, rural areas may also face the threat of reduced food production due to lack of access to seeds and fertilizers, as well as a shortage of labour.

Several Asian countries are attempting to counter the problems by distributing food and money. But this form of support seldom reaches the most vulnerable groups. Support measures such as these are mostly absent in Africa, which is likely to cause a rapid and substantial increase in the number of people suffering from hunger in the slums, the researchers expect.

The study was conducted by development economists Els Lecoutere and Marrit van den Berg, nutrition expert Inge Brouwer, and professor of Impact Analysis of Food Systems Ruerd Ruben. They interviewed 31 experts in 18 developing countries. **AS**

## FIRST LURE, THEN KILL: BEATING THE MALARIA MOSQUITO

**PhD candidate Victor Mwingira has discovered a new method of combating the malaria mosquito, using a combination of baits and organic pesticides: the lure and kill system.**

Mwingira's method of fighting malaria targets female mosquitoes and their eggs. Female mosquitoes choose a site for laying their eggs very carefully, on the basis of smell. Mwingira succeeded in identifying the smell that attracts the mosquitoes and using it to lure them to lay their eggs on a site covered in pesticide. 'Then the larvae don't hatch out and we can control the larvae population,' says Mwingira's supervisor Willem Takken, professor of Entomology.

### BEATING BACK THE CARRIER

Malaria mosquitoes spread a parasite that causes the disease malaria. Globally, more than 400,000 people die of malaria every year. Scientists expect this number to go up as a result of climate change and the malaria parasite's growing resistance to current treatments. So beating back the disease vector, the malaria mosquito, could be the solution.

A female mosquito lays her eggs in water and the way it smells tells her whether a site is safe and suitable. Mwingira discovered that a site where there are already other mosquito eggs or young larvae is attractive. Young larvae emit a certain attractive odour that lures the mosquitoes. The odour of adult larvae (five days old), by contrast, repels female mosquitoes. 'That is because adult larvae eat the young ones,' explains Takken. 'So no mother wants to lay her eggs there.'

### ATTRACTANTS

Mwingira identified the odour ingredients in the laboratory. He raised mosquito larvae in a sterile tub of water containing fish feed. Using absorbent material Mwingira obtained the odours produced and identi-

fied their chemical composition. That turned out to consist of well-known, commercially available chemicals. A behaviour study of mosquitoes in captivity in a laboratory proved that they responded to the chemical odour. 'With that we demonstrated for the first time that these insects respond to this substance,' says Takken. Mwingira then travelled to Tanzania for a field study. He created a mosquito breeding site with tubs of water in a village where there were a lot of malaria mosquitoes. Some tubs contained the attractant odour and others the repellent odour of adult larvae. As expected, the mosquitoes laid their eggs in the tubs with the attractant odour and avoided the tubs with the repellent odour.

In a follow-up study, Mwingira added an organic pesticide to the tubs of water with attractant odours. 'We saw that the mosquitoes still laid their eggs in the water with the bait in it, even when it also contained pesticide,' says Takken. The first results from the field trial in Tanzania are hopeful. 'Now it is important to start a follow-up study in a larger area,' says Takken. 'Then we can measure whether the mosquito population actually declines.' **NvtWH**

*Victor Mwingira is due to receive his PhD while in Tanzania, in a Skype call on 19 May. His supervisors are professors of Entomology Willem Takken and Marcel Dicke.*



## VISION

### 'Quarantine baking is catching'



**It's like the great Dutch bake-off. Suppliers are struggling to keep up with the demand for flour and yeast. 'Quarantine baking is catching,' says WUR consumption sociologist Hilje van der Horst.**

#### Why are we baking bread like mad?

'This was probably triggered by the requirement to minimize our trips to the shops. As a result, people are buying food for a longer period. One of the things you miss then is freshly baked bread. Home baking is a practical solution, and yeast and bread-making machines were sold out in no time. Then the finished products were shared on social media. People like to project a positive image on Instagram and Facebook, for example with holiday photos or sports photos. If you are home baking, you are saying: look at me doing the right thing. I'm at home but I'm also keeping active and saving on shopping trips, so that's good. Baking bread also costs time, which many people don't normally have.'

#### Wasn't home baking a trend already?

'The general trend is actually that we want our meals to be ready quickly, which is what the bread mixes key into. There is also increasing interest in artisanal products and local produce. Back-to-basics products without additives — people want to know what's in their food. But we don't necessarily want to make the products ourselves. You can see these trends among the home baking crowd too. Some do it mainly for practical reasons: they use bread mixes and a bread machine. Others buy sourdough and knead the bread themselves, which is time-consuming and difficult. These people enjoy learning a new skill, and it could boost their status as well because producing high-quality bread is not that easy.'

#### Have you seen other effects from the coronavirus outbreak?

'There have been drastic changes in how we spend our time. I will be interested to see whether this has an effect in the long term. We had got used to propping our lives full with stuff, activities and experiences. Now we are being forced to slow down and develop new routines. Perhaps this is a good moment to ask ourselves how happy those overfull lives really made us.' **TL**

## 'DON'T FOCUS ONLY ON FOOD SAFETY'

Improving food quality means finding a good balance between food safety and quality, argues Tiny van Boekel, emeritus professor of Product Design & Quality Management, and his co-authors.

'Over the past century, the food industry has concentrated on microbial safety,' says Van Boekel. 'Which is understandable: food spoilage and food poisoning have been the main problem historically. Food safety has become the gold standard. But nowadays, we have made food very safe and we know more about other aspects of food quality, such as health, nutritional value and sustainability.'

### CONSERVATIVE

Yet Van Boekel sees a fairly conservative attitude in the food sciences and industry. 'That is understandable: if something works, why would you fix it? But it's a pity as well. Take the fermentation of products to stop the growth of bacteria. It works, but you then have to add sugar to make it taste OK, and that is not so healthy.'

Van Boekel and his colleagues argue for taking this kind of consideration into account so as to arrive at a balanced decision about innovation. They think food safety is too often prioritized at the expense of other aspects. Scientists and the industry should consider the options for improving these other aspects of food quality without affecting the safety of the food. The opinion piece setting out these views was published in *Current Opinion in Food Sciences*.

### LEGISLATION HAMPERS INNOVATION

The heart of the problem, says Van Boekel, is that legislation does not keep pace with reality, so it hampers new developments. 'One example is the entrepreneur who is working on a new technology for pasteurizing milk. This pulsed electric field technology kills micro-organisms but, unlike heating processes, leaves proteins and vitamins intact. Because it's so time-consuming to measure bacteria in milk, an alternative method is used to see whether milk has been heated sufficiently: measuring certain enzymes which get broken down by heating in the same way as bacteria. The pulsed electric field technology doesn't work with enzymes, so the test is pointless, but it is compulsory. It is difficult to prove the value of new conservation methods as long as heating remains the legal standard.'



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Legislation is important, but it can be too rigid.'

### FOCUS ON SAFETY

Food safety should always come first, says Van Boekel, but there is scope for optimizing other quality aspects of food. 'It is im-

### Legal standards get in the way of innovations

portant to develop new models which integrate aspects such as nutritional value and sustainability. We have better techniques and powerful computers with which we can model a lot more aspects of food quality. We ought to integrate those models better and link them to each other. I don't think that possibility has got through to companies, nor to universities. The primary focus on

food safety is still reflected in textbooks, and students are still being taught to think that way.'

### NEW WAY OF THINKING

Van Boekel and his colleagues appeal to scientists, the business world and legislators. 'Companies, for example, could share more data. They don't do that much at present, which partly has to do with company secrets, whereas the public interest is at stake here. It is perfectly possible to collaborate at the pre-competitive stage, as the Top Institute Food and Nutrition has already demonstrated.' Legislators could review the rules in the light of new scientific insights, suggests Van Boekel, and actively help think through how to build in innovative ideas. No easy task, says Van Boekel. 'The belief that food quality is all about safety is deeply rooted. But, to paraphrase Einstein: We need to find new ways of thinking to deal with the problems caused by the old way of thinking.' TL

## COMPOUND IN BASIL, FENNEL AND ANISEED HARMS DNA

Estragole, a compound that is found naturally in various herbs and spices, including basil, star anise and fennel, can damage DNA and possibly lead to cancer, according to PhD candidate Shuo Yang in the Toxicology group.

'Previous studies showed that estragole can cause tumours in rodents,' says Yang. 'It has been banned since then as a food additive but it is still found naturally in various foodstuffs.' Estragole is metabolized in the liver to form 1'-sulfoxyestragole. This metabolite binds to DNA, thereby forming what are known as DNA adducts. Yang: 'If the adducts can't be repaired in time by the cell, they accumulate in the DNA. That affects cell division, which can lead to cancer.' However, Yang only looked at the effect on the DNA in her study, not at tumour formation.

### NOT REPAIRED

It is known from previous research that these DNA adducts remain for a while and that they may not be recognized by the cell's repair mechanism. Yang studied the structural changes that occur in the DNA's

double helix. To do this, she exposed rat liver cells to 50 µM of estragole. 'This dosage is high enough to produce adducts but still low enough to be biologically relevant.' In addition to cell analysis, Yang also used computer simulations to predict what would happen to the DNA if adducts were

### 'Estragole can cause tumours in rodents'

formed. 'The simulation results were in line with the results from our cell experiments. We found that most of the adducts that were formed did not cause any obvious changes to the DNA structure. That may explain why the repair mechanism misses them.'

### TIP OF THE ICEBERG

So no more basil on our pasta? The dosages Yang used in her experiments were much higher than the average daily intake. Even so, changes in the DNA can accumulate over

time, especially if they are not being repaired. What is more, we are not talking about just one food component. Yang thinks this might be the tip of the iceberg. 'We now know that estragole has a possible carcinogenic effect on liver cells. But our food has far more components that could trigger or inhibit the formation of adducts. I would like to investigate that interaction further.' TL



## Cabinet's nitrogen policy produces 30 per cent less ammonia

The Cabinet's nitrogen measures could cut ammonia emissions on dairy farms by 25 to 30 per cent, says researcher Gerard Migchels of Wageningen Livestock Research.

The measures for diluting manure with water in barns and when muck spreading in particular will reduce ammonia emissions. Migchels' colleagues are currently carrying out measurements to find out what the ammonia benefits are when spreading manure on sandy soil. Earlier research by Migchels himself on peat soil where one part water was added to two parts manure reduced ammonia by 40 per cent. He expects a reduction of 25 to 40 per cent on sandy soil. This measure does require water, which could be a problem given the current dry conditions. Migchels therefore advises farmers to invest

in water storage. 'Each cow has 21 square metres of roof, which you can use to collect rainwater.' The ministry of Agriculture is going to make money available for water storage in agriculture. The water is also needed for spraying the slurry grids in the shed, a measure for reducing ammonia emissions in barns.

### 'You appeal to their professional skills'

The ministry also wants to restrict the amount of protein (nitrogen) allowed in feed so that less ammonia is produced. Migchels thinks this is a good idea but he is less impressed with the approach chosen. 'The ministry wants guarantees that the ammonia targets will be achieved and therefore

wants to reduce the nitrogen content of feed by law. There is a better method: the Kringloopwijzer tool lets farmers figure out themselves how they can cut the use of nitrogen. You appeal to their professional skills but you don't have any firm guarantees beforehand.' Migchels believes an average reduction in ammonia of 10 per cent is possible through this 'feed route'. 'There are farmers who use nitrogen efficiently but there are also lax farmers who feed the animals too much protein just to be sure. They could reduce ammonia by 20 per cent.' The ministry's third measure — encouraging cows in the field — will help to reduce ammonia emissions, says Migchels, but this too differs per farmer. He is curious to see how the Agriculture ministry incorporates the guidelines in legislation and regulations. TL AS

# ‘Giving money is surprisingly effective’



Professor Ruerd Ruben does research on the question of which policy improves the world food supply. Just before retiring, he gives his assessment of which interventions make a difference. ‘Giving governments and poor people blank cheques is surprisingly successful.’

*text* Albert Sikkema *photo* Harmen de Jong

**T**he corona crisis is causing a lot of suffering but it also holds out opportunities for scientists who study the impact of policy, says Ruerd Ruben. ‘If a system comes under great pressure, due to an epidemic or a war for instance, history starts moving faster. Then governments make decisions faster and you see the impact of measures sooner. We often have to wait a long time to see whether an intervention works, but in this corona crisis, you see the effects of a lockdown very fast.’

Ruben is extracting other lessons too from the corona crisis. ‘This is a health crisis which has implications for our food policy too. It is mainly obese people who die from the coronavirus. The virus attaches to fat. So food has started playing a bigger role in public health and health insurance packages.’

Ruerd Ruben, who retires in June, has been doing research on the global food supply for 35 years. He mainly studied the effects of policy on issues such as poverty, malnutrition and the environment. He is professor of Impact Analysis for Food Systems at Wageningen University and leads research programmes at Wageningen Economic Research.

#### Why should food play a role in public health policy?

‘We have researched this in a joint programme involving WUR and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington. For every one dollar you invest in improved nutrition, you save 16 dollars on health care.’

#### Why is that?

‘An important benefit is less malnutrition in infants under five years of age, because malnutrition in young children leads to poor attainment levels at school and later to low labour productivity and more overweight – undernourished people run a greater risk of overweight later in life. So the health policy should aim at improving the diets of children and mothers.’

## ‘For every one dollar you invest in improved nutrition, you save 16 dollars on health care.’

### So they mainly need better food rather than more food?

‘In the 1980s it was believed that we didn’t have enough food for the growing world population. Now we think: technically speaking, we can produce enough food to feed the world. So why aren’t we doing that? That is where behaviour and policy come into the picture. We know, for example, how we can improve agricultural production in East Africa with climate-smart agriculture. The farmers can improve production by using new cultivation methods, but these are labour-intensive. In that case, farmers would rather look for a job outside the agriculture sector, because they can earn more. So our advice does not fit with their farming practice and survival strategy.’

### How do you solve that?

‘The technology needs to be appropriate for local behaviour, but government policy is very important too. It makes a big difference whether the government builds roads and provides electricity or leaves development to the market, which has been a popular approach in many countries for the past 30 years.’

### You argue for an integral development policy. Do you have a good example of that?

‘The biobased group at WUR did research on the big post-harvest losses of tomatoes in Nigeria. They provided good crates so that fewer tomatoes rotted during transportation to the city. That helped, but the crates had to be returned from the city to the countryside. So a project was set up with vegetables traders, so that a deposit was payable on the crates. When that worked as well, the tomato growers said: great, more tomatoes are being sold in the city. We want to benefit from that too. So then came supply contracts with the farmers, with better conditions. Only then was the project finished. In one year, they had organized the technology, the system and the value distribution.’

### You work on one problem with several disciplines?

‘Exactly. We are now working with the IFPRI on a study on overweight, with nutritionists and food technologists. They have never worked particularly well together, because they have different views on the pros and cons of

processed food. Now we are getting them to collaborate, with help from the social sciences. The aim is to find out together when processed food has health benefits, and how much people are prepared to pay for that.’

### Yet there are still just as many malnourished people in the world as ever.

‘That is not the case. Twenty years ago there were still 1.6 billion malnourished people in the world, and that number has been halved. Chronic poverty has gone down around the world too. We have made tremendous progress.’

### What made that possible?

‘We always think in terms of more food. But when we researched that at the ministry of Foreign Affairs, the most important factor turned out to be clean drinking water. With clean drinking water, you prevent diarrhoea and people digest their food and absorb the nutrients they need. Secondly, budget support works. We did that for a while in the Netherlands, giving 10 per cent of the development budget to the governments of developing countries. With no strings attached. Most politicians opposed it vehemently, thinking the money would end up in the pockets of corrupt rulers. But the funding turned out to be very effective; most of it ended up in the health and education sectors. But Dutch politicians closed their ears to that, so budget support was scrapped.’

Another surprisingly successful approach was the cash transfers to poor people. You give people who don’t have enough to eat money for a few months. Those people don’t spend all the money on food, but use some of it to improve their business or their roof, so they don’t fall ill so easily. This World Bank programme in northern Ethiopia was highly successful and is now being rolled out in more than 30 countries.’

### And what doesn’t work?

‘Land reforms. We encouraged them in Latin America: you divide the land of the big landowners among the small farmers. It didn’t lead to better incomes for the small farmers. The landowner lost his land, but not his power. He went to the farmers and said: you need me for trade and credit. So most of the money still disappeared into the

## ‘You need a well-oiled food supply chain, and that begins with infrastructure’

landowner’s pocket. Land reform is not enough, our evaluation showed. You need to set up farmers’ cooperatives and reform the banking system at the same time, so the small farmers can obtain credit. And sometimes you need to buy out the landowner. They’ve got to disappear from the scene.’

Another thing that doesn’t work very well is ethical labels. I was involved in the launch of the Max Havelaar Fairtrade label and later on I did large-scale field research on its impact on farmers. Initially, farmers’ incomes went up, but that initial gain soon got lost. Before long, the non-certified farmers started making the same improvements to their cultivation methods. What is more, so many farmers were certified that there wasn’t a market for all their products. So the Fairtrade farmers’ incomes went down again.’

### Hasn’t the global reduction in malnutrition and poverty come from the tremendous development of China?

‘That’s right. The number of hungry or malnourished people has gone down by 800 million, and half of those people live in South-East Asian countries such as India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Malnutrition in Africa has hardly gone down at all. What China has done is to create the conditions for a more efficient food supply by building roads and supplying electricity on a large scale. That is key. In Nigeria, food chains involving refrigerated food do not get off the ground because electricity is scarce and unreliable. The Chinese government strengthens the market, whereas in Africa business people have to pay for everything themselves. That weakens entrepreneurship. Which is very important.’


### Why?

‘Combatting poverty is largely a matter of building entrepreneurial capacity. The struggling small farmer, who produces a bit of food and does odd jobs here and there needs to be galvanized into action. Such a farmer needs to be able to expand, whether in food production, repair work or something else. The small farmers, who many Wageningen folk have such sympathy for, need to become enterprising, to expand and to mechanize. You can’t feed a city of 10 million inhabitants like Lagos with small farmers alone. You need a well-oiled food supply chain, and that

begins with infrastructure, as the development of China shows.’

### Does Wageningen focus too much on agriculture?

‘It used to. In the past, researchers were much more compartmentalized than they are now. I’ve noticed that the young generation is better at thinking at the food system level. They can switch quickly between disciplines and they understand the importance of the interactions between sectors.’


The older generation sometimes lacks that broader perspective. Wageningen experts tend to seek cooperation with ministries of Agriculture in developing countries. But that happens to be the least important ministry in a lot of countries. You should sit down with the ministry of Finance, Infrastructure or Health, because that is where the money is, and the power to arrange smart interventions, with a role for food as well.’ 

## RUERD RUBEN

Ruben works for VU University Amsterdam, Wageningen University, Radboud University and the ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is currently professor of Impact Assessment for Food Systems at Wageningen University & Research, and leads research programmes at Wageningen Economic Research. He is also a fellow at the international institute IFPRI in Washington. Together with Professor Eric Smaling, Ruben is writing a report on food transitions for the UN Food Systems Summit which will take place in 2021. Ruben is seen as an international expert on development issues.



## CAMPUS PLAZA WAKES UP

Since the lockdown started, all the catering outlets on campus have been closed down by the coronavirus crisis. All the outlets? No, a small artisanal chippie has kept going, undaunted. Derk Joosten has been frying chips for anyone still left on campus from Wednesday to Saturday. He is gaining quite a following. And now Doppio and Subway are open again too. Besides Joosten, the Ako bookshop stayed open throughout the lockdown.  RK, photo Guy Ackermans





▲ Bent and Antonia Elvers and their daughter Nanda.

# The multitasking student parents

Raising a child while you study for a degree is not for the faint-hearted. *Resource* talked to four students who embarked on this adventure, and who now sometimes come to class feeling rough due to a screaming baby rather than a great party. Bringing up a baby and getting through uni – can you do both?

text Coretta Jongeling

**B**ent and Antonia Elvers, Master's students of Organic Agriculture and Environmental Sciences respectively, had a baby eight months ago: Nanda Elias. Antonia: 'Luckily I had an easy pregnancy and I was on an internship until two months before Nanda was born, which went fine. Now I am doing a morning course and I keep the rest of the day free. Bent is working on his thesis. 'At first we thought: we'll just divide the day in two, so we can both work for four hours. But that turned out to be impossible. Working at home is less productive: you are busy cooking, cleaning, and there is swimming for babies. I regularly work at the weekend.'

## CRAZY

Bachelor's student Remi (who doesn't want his surname in *Resource*) became a father nearly a year ago. He alternates studying and childcare too. 'For us, the birth of the

baby at the end of May worked out perfectly. The summer holiday was just around the corner and we had two months to enjoy him. Now my girlfriend and I take it in turns to study. I'm doing two periods fulltime now, but in periods three and four I stayed at home. I only had some resits. Revising was hard work, mind you. It's an illusion to think you can look after a baby and study at the same time. We both got behind with our studies.' Tshering Choden came to Wageningen two

## 'You can't look after a baby and study at the same time'

years ago with her daughter Dechen, who was six at the time. She finished her Master's in Plant Sciences at the end of last year, in less than two years. 'In retrospect, it was crazy. I don't know how I did it. I am disciplined by nature, and I've never yet failed a course. And I worked on my thesis through the summer. But often I was running all day, from the creche to class and back, and once Dechen was in bed at eight thirty, I had to study. Time management is an essential skill for a student with a child, and you've got to be very highly motivated.'

## GETTING HELP WITH CHILDREN

WUR has a website for students with children, which offers information about getting guidance and financial support such as child benefit. 'If you fall behind with your studies because of your pregnancy, you can apply for financial support (FOS),' says student counselor Nadja Schiemann. 'That is a question of a maximum of four months, but only if you have fallen really behind.' Dutch students have the option of taking a temporary 'study break' during which they don't pay tuition fees, and they can start again whenever they like. It is a lot harder for foreign students to take a break because they lose their visa if they do. Tshering: 'When I wanted to apply for my visa I was immediately told that the university would not help me to arrange a visa for my child. Not exactly welcoming. My husband is Dutch and he helped me, but a lot of other students don't get any help. I know students who can't bring their child with them because of that, which is very tough.'

Remi hasn't had many problems. 'The univer-

sity is very flexible. After the first year you can plan your timetable yourself, and the communication with teachers is very good. My girlfriend experiences more problems in her degree in dentistry. She has a lot of practicals and isn't allowed to miss anything. I don't want to badmouth dentists but er... they are a bit less considerate there.' Schiemann: 'Moving deadlines or adapting courses is not usually much of a problem here



▲ Tshering Choden and her daughter Dechen.

## 'For students they have nowhere you are allowed to live with a child'

in Wageningen and you can discuss it with the teacher directly. I rarely come across students who meet with an unhelpful response. The biggest problem I see here is that the Forum still doesn't have a suitable room for mothers who need to express milk. The room we have now is tucked away in the cellar behind the bike racks.'

## NO APARTMENTS

When you are expecting a baby, finding accommodation can be quite a challenge. It's hard enough to find a single room, let

alone a space for several people. Bent and Antonia were faced with this issue. Bent: 'We went to Idealis, but we didn't feel at all supported there. If you are doing a PhD you can apply for a family apartment, but if you are a Bachelor's or a Master's student, they don't have any accommodation at all where you are allowed to live with a child. They told us straightaway that they couldn't help us and we would have to look for something on the private housing market.'

'In general it's true that we don't have suitable accommodation for families,' says Marisca Wind of Idealis. 'We are a student housing provider, so most of our rooms are for one person. If a tenant gets pregnant, we help her look for an appropriate alternative. We also call on other parties such as the Housing Association to help. We are sorry these students had such a bad experience; that is not like us, we think. We try to do everything in our power to help in these kinds of cases.' The university says it does not help students look for accommodation. Its advice is to start looking as early as possible.

## STUDENT LIFE?

Sharing your student life with a baby requires hard work and good planning, it seems. Do you get to a party now and then? Tshering: 'Not really! Evenings and weekends are mainly for my family. We do invite friends round to our house.' For Remi, not much has changed. 'We were living together before we had the baby, and we didn't go out three times a week then either. I had done my exploring of student life before that'. Antonia: 'Our life is not like that of the average student. But we are happy that we have a baby now, and we are really enjoying it. When you are young you are a lot more flexible than you are when you have a job.' ①

# DO WE EVEN WANT TO BE BACK ON CAMPUS?

Working from home will probably remain the rule until September. So WUR employees will need to keep going at the kitchen table, in the attic or in their study a little longer. Which might be tricky, or it might be nice. Do we even want to go back?

text Tessa Louwerens, Albert Sikkema, Roelof Kleis illustration Henk van Ruitenbeek

## Hilje van der Horst



assistant professor of Consumption and Healthy Lifestyles

'I normally work at home two days a week. It is great being able to work in peace and have the house to myself. But now working at home gets disrupted because my partner and kids are there. What I do like is that I've developed new routines. In the past I always planned to go on a daily walk but often didn't get round to it. Now I go jogging at lunchtime. And I don't have to rush to get food on the table in 20 minutes in the evening because my kid has to get to sports class afterwards. **That relaxed pace is nice; I am afraid I will lose these new routines when everything goes back to "normal".** I do miss my co-workers and I find online meetings tiring. I normally don't have any difficulty seeing a student every half hour all day long, but I can't manage that on Skype. But I like the fact that our team regularly has online coffee breaks together, with different people turning up each time. I've got to know a lot of colleagues much better as a result.'

## Marloes Kraan



researcher at Wageningen Marine Research

'Working from home isn't new for me as I was already doing that one or two days a week. I normally work one day a week in IJmuiden, one day in The Hague and one day in Wageningen. Now that I'm working from home

permanently, I have more time as I'm not spending time travelling, which is nice. But it is becoming more difficult than ever to keep my work for the different WUR units separate. My feeling that I'm constantly juggling has only increased, in part because now I've got my husband and children "in the workplace" every day. **So I'd love to be back to the normal situation. I like alternating going out to work and working from home without my family there.** I miss my colleagues and meeting up with fishers, people from the ministry or NGO staff, for example. It is easier to keep up to date when you see and speak to one another. Now you hear less about what's going on, it is more difficult to coordinate things and you are less likely to intervene or respond to developments.'

## Fred Albers



controller in the Plant Sciences Group

'I have found working from home full-time surprisingly OK. The WUR facilities are fine and as a controller I can easily do all my work at home. But I miss the social contact and the informal meetings. Normally I drop in on colleagues in Radix to discuss issues and how to streamline things. You do that best by chatting to one another, not in a formal email. That is why I used to go to Bleiswijk once every two or three weeks, to show my face and coordinate matters. That was valuable but it isn't possible now. Even so, I don't need to go back to campus fulltime; I would be happy to work from home some of the time. **I think the Executive Board should change the accommodation plan to have us working from home more.** Our financial department already has flexible working practices — a large office with loads of paper is a thing of the past.'

## Clemens Driessen



assistant professor of Cultural Geograph

'Give me the campus any day. Period six has just started. I have an intensive teaching programme with 40 students who are going to be doing great things. It should be the high point of the year. But it's different now. You can do a lot online but you don't get that group feeling, that sense you are creating something together. When you give a lecture, you don't get the reactions that let you see whether they understand what you just said. It's tricky. Of course I miss my colleagues too, the chance encounters, meeting new people. **I look forward to catching up with people properly. Online is never quite the same.** On the other hand, these are fascinating times. We are getting new insights. Students in our Landscape Architecture and Planning studio would always do projects on the Netherlands, but that restriction doesn't apply online. Now they are doing projects on the thawing permafrost in Siberia, for example. There are a lot of possibilities online that had not been exploited before now, which is interesting.'

## Myrthe Gilbert



researcher in the Animal Nutrition group

'Working from home is going better than I expected. I started with my laptop on the kitchen table but that's changed now. I can do a lot of work online and the chair group keeps in contact via Skype, where we talk about the social aspects too. I always worked on campus before the coronavirus crisis but I think I'll spend a day working at home more often from now on. **However, I still often need to be on campus for my work as I do research with animals.** One of my scheduled experiments has been postponed because it was no longer feasible with the coronavirus measures. Fortunately I was able to supervise another experiment online that a PhD candidate was doing. But the basis of my work is still on campus.'





# KEEP CALM AND WRITE

The number of academic publications is peaking due to the coronavirus. But not everyone can get round to writing at home. A gender difference is looming.

text Roelof Kleis Illustration Yvonne Kroese

Entomologist Rob van Tol (Biointeractions and Plant Health) is having a good year. He has never produced so many publications – seven so far this year, six articles and a chapter. ‘And three of those articles are certainly down to the coronavirus,’ he says. Meaning that normally, he wouldn’t have found time for them because he would have been busy developing insect traps based on light. ‘To write an article, you need to be able to focus,’ explains Van Tol. ‘One of the articles is about work I did in the period 2008-2016, and it got shelved. So I gathered up the data again and used it all for a single article. That involves a mountain of reading that keeps you busy for weeks. You don’t normally have a run of time like that.’

## PROS AND CONS

A quick round of Wageningen editors of academic journals reveals that Van Tol is not the only person who suddenly has plenty of time to write, thanks to the corona crisis. Soil biologist Jan Willem van Groenigen (*Geoderma*) reports an increase in submitted articles of 20-25 per cent. ‘Some of that increase is due to the coronavirus. I would guess, roughly half. The rest is just the normal expansion the journal is going through.’ Sociologist Robert Fletcher (*Geoforum*) has seen an increase of 20 per cent compared with last year. Food scientist Vincenzo Fogliano (*Journal of Functional Foods*) talks of an ‘explosion’, without mentioning any precise figures. ‘It’s partly a matter of juggling with time: those articles would have been written anyway. But there are definitely also papers that wouldn’t have been written if it weren’t for the corona crisis. So that’s a positive consequence of the pandemic.’ Wageningen Academic Publishers reports a 30 per cent increase in articles for some journals in the first four months of this year.

But not everyone finds time to write articles at home. Women write less at home than men,

shows an article in *The Lily*, the *Washington Post*’s online medium by and for women. Jan Willem van Groenigen read the piece and found it hard to believe. So last weekend he took a look at the data from his journal *Geoderma*. He compared 125 articles submitted in April with 125 articles submitted exactly a year earlier. He recorded the sex of the first and corresponding authors of each article. A devilish job, because for privacy reasons, the sex of authors is not routinely documented. ‘And with Chinese names especially, it is difficult to find out if it’s a man or a woman.’ Relying heavily on Google, Van Groenigen figured out that the proportion of female first

‘The proportion of female first authors has dropped dramatically’

authors had gone down from 38 to 32 per cent. The number of corresponding authors fell similarly. These are not shocking figures. But the picture changes if you zoom in. ‘Nearly half of our articles come from China,’ says Van Groenigen, ‘where the pandemic peaked earlier.’ Focusing on the sub-group of European and North American articles provided a clearer picture. ‘The contrast was much bigger. The proportion of female first authors turned out to have dropped from 48 to 26 per cent. And the proportion of female corresponding authors from 41 to 17 per cent.’

The other Wageningen journal editors cannot confirm this picture, mainly because they do not have the relevant data to hand and it would be a big job to collect them, as Van Groenigen did. Plant physiologist Henk Hilhorst (*Seed Science Research*) does have figures, but they do not show a significant gen-

der effect. The proportion of female first authors went down from 43 to 38 per cent between late 2019 and early 2020. According to plant scientist Paul Struik (*Potato Research*), the number of manuscripts submitted since the lockdown started is too small to see any gender-related changes.

Van Groenigen is cautious about explaining the figures he found. Traditional role divisions could be a cause of the gender effect. ‘But age plays a role as well. It makes a big difference whether you are working at home with young children around you or not. I looked specifically at the first authors, many of whom are PhD students, so they are young.’ Van Groenigen knows what he is talking about, as he has a five-month-old daughter himself. ‘My mother-in-law just picked up the baby. She is invaluable; no work would get done without her.’

## YOUNG FATHERS

Besides gender and age, how much teaching people do plays a big role too, says Van Groenigen. ‘Teaching is far more time-consuming now than usual. Suddenly, everything has to be done differently and you’ve got to learn how to do it all too.’ Turnhout mentions this too. ‘Teaching and supervising PhD students take priority over research. I do think there is a gender and age pattern to how the corona crisis affects the working day in homes. I think you can safely say that the current situation is more likely to increase inequality than to decrease it.’ Van Groenigen thinks the corona crisis should be taken into account in people’s annual evaluations this year. ‘Some people are more disadvantaged by the corona crisis than others. And there’s more to that than gender alone. Young fathers are extra affected by the corona crisis too. But I’m not at all biased when I say that, of course,’ he laughs. ‘In the evaluation for tenure track, say, you could ask people how the crisis has affected their work.’

# Dinner for sixteen

How is the corona crisis affecting life in student houses? Three students talk about it.

text Luuk Zegers

## Marijn van der Meer

BSc student of Environmental Sciences

'There are 21 of us living in Duivendaal. Four of our housemates have gone home to their parents, and the rest are in Wageningen. Due to the corona crisis, we've got to know each other better. Your housemates' little habits become more noticeable. The way a person comes into a room, and the way they eat their breakfast. You are all cooped up together more.

We keep the atmosphere nice by keeping up "normal" activities. Before the corona crisis we had a party at the house roughly once a month, and now we sometimes throw a thematic party just for ourselves. Last week, the theme was Singapore, because one of our housemates had been there on an exchange. The time before that, it was "gender swap": the women had to come as men, and the men as women. Last week we even organized a graduation ceremony for a housemate. His parents attended on Skype. In that way, we try to maintain a nice atmosphere and celebrate an important moment like that.

Some housemates study in their rooms, while others like to use the living room like a library. I prefer to work in the living room too, because you have some contact with other people. But if I want to be on my own for a while, I go and sit in my room. Everyone needs a bit of time to themselves sometimes.

We have always had dinner together. We used to ask who was in for dinner on our WhatsApp group, but that's not necessary anymore. We just assume there will always be 15 or 16 people at the table. That's quite a job, so you need two people to go shopping. The division of tasks goes very easily: everyone knows when it's their turn to go shopping. Nowadays we have one long shopping list, and everyone adds what they need. That way not everyone has to go to the supermarket. There is hand gel by the door, so you can disinfect your hands as soon as you come home.

We do exercises out of doors together three times a week. We do fitness training to music. We are a household, but outside we still maintain social distancing. We don't want to worry our neighbours.'



**'The corona crisis is making us get to know each other better'**

## Ellen Willigers

BSc student of Business and Consumer Sciences

'I've been living in a Ceres house on the Lawickse Allee for more than a year and a half now. We are a mixed house with four men and three women. One of our housemates is at her parents' house, writing her thesis. During the exam week I was at my parents' sometimes, because the Wi-Fi isn't too good in Wageningen. But when I'm at my parents' I can't meet my friends from here. That's why it's really chill to be in Wageningen.

We have a living room and a very large garden. That is really lovely in the summer. We study in our own rooms, or sometimes in the garden. The living room is the place where you can have a natter. It isn't chill if someone sits there studying, so we keep things separate. It's not a rule, it's just the way it goes.

We have agreed on a number of corona rules. Everyone is at home most of the time. People who have a boyfriend or a girlfriend can visit them. And you can arrange to meet friends for a walk.

Normally I would eat with my year club every Monday, at home on Tuesday, with friends on Wednesday and Thursday, and on Friday some housemates went home to their parents'. Suddenly now, we eat together every evening, even at the weekend – which is really fun.

I don't get the feeling we have really got to know each other better. We did a lot together even before the corona crisis. Now there is actually nothing to do, so we are not suddenly getting to know each other better. Except in terms of living together, but in that respect we knew each other already.'

## Livia Franssen

BSc student of Environmental Sciences

'I live with five others at Droevendaal. Half of my housemates are international students: an Italian, a Catalan and an American. They have stayed in Wageningen, which made it a lot more attractive for me and the other two Dutch housemates to stay here too. We've got a big garden, good company, and a studying routine.

It is weird, from one day to the next, to find yourself sharing a space with the same group of people for an unspecified period of time. At first, we were talking about the corona crisis so much that we started using a "corona counter", to make us talk about other things as well. But now we've forgotten to keep the score for a couple of weeks. If we don't have another good subject to talk about, we watch a film.

There is friction sometimes, for example when we discuss when the shopping should be done, who gets to go where, or how close we are allowed to get to our friends. Tricky, because who really knows what's the right thing to do? Luckily you can go outside if you don't want to see your housemates for a while.

But precisely now, in a time when all the routine and structure has disappeared from our lives, and our busy uni lives are all happening on our laptops, making a breakfast smoothie with a housemate at eight thirty in the morning, or sitting in the kitchen in your pyjamas till three o'clock in the morning are not bad ways of getting through these endless days. And if anyone isn't feeling too good, you are here for each other. I think this situation brings housemates closer together.'

## IN OTHER NEWS

## HAND-WASHING

Regular hand-washing reduces the risk of all infections by 50 per cent and the need for antibiotics by 30 per cent, says the Global Hygiene Council. Thirty-five per cent of all common infections are resistant to antibiotics, and in low-income countries that figure goes up to 90 per cent. As a result, 2000 people a day die of infections. So wash those hands.

## SHOWER

During a hailstorm in Argentina two years ago, hailstones of 23 centimetres across came out of the sky. This conclusion (based on photos and radar images) was drawn by meteorologists at Pennsylvania State University. That must be a world record. A new category has even been created for these spectacular stones: giant hailstones. Original.

## LLAMA (1)

Belgian and America researchers have made the first antibodies against the coronavirus. The antibodies are processed samples taken from a llama called Winter. They bind to the spike proteins on the outside of the virus, thus preventing the virus from penetrating a cell. The llama in question, a four-year-old, lives in a field in Flanders.

## LLAMA (2)

The llama was used in 2016 to research antibodies against SARS and MERS, COVID-19's older cousins. It now turns out that one of those antibodies is weakly active against the new coronavirus too. With a bit of cut-and-paste work, an antibody against COVID-19 has been made that binds well. It is now being tested on animals.

## Who will you vote for?

Between 25 and 28 May, students can vote on who will be on the Student Council next academic year. Meet the party leaders.

## 'I identify with Christian values'

Ruth Amoako-Adusei (25) MSc student of Organic Agriculture, and leader of the Christian Student Party (CSF)



'I came to the Netherlands from Ghana two years ago for my Master's. I am standing for election for the CSF because I identify with their Christian values of integrity, sustainability and being guided by Biblical principles. I know that some people don't want to be associated with religion, but I think Biblical values contribute to a well-functioning society. I represent an international perspective and Christian values, and I want to make a contribution with my knowledge and experience. A lot of students are struggling with online education. Some have to study in the same room where they eat and sleep. I'm on an internship at present, and I'm struggling with that. Imagine if you had to take courses. Or if you started at the university in February. Is this the education you came to Wageningen for? Lectures from last year? For that, you could have stayed at home. I know teachers are doing all they can. We need to brainstorm and find out what's the best way to preserve the quality of the education.'

## 'People are not cut out to be isolated'

Lan Rajlic (25) MSc student of Management, Economics and Consumer Studies, and leader of the Sustainability and Internationalization party (S&I)

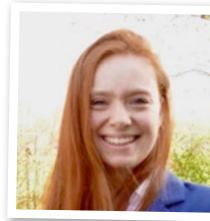


'To me, sustainability and integration are very important. My motto is: "integration through education." I believe that the best way to integrate, collaborate and share ideas is to organize "soft skill" events such as debates. If I get elected to the Student Council, I will set up a monthly event so that students can get to know us better. Then we can represent them better. It can also help

students get to know and understand each other better. At present, some students are finding the lockdown difficult. People are not cut out to be isolated. The Student Council could form a channel for organizing events. Online for now, and when the measures are relaxed, offline as well, in a responsible way. Meet and greets, where everyone is welcome to talk about anything they like. Low-threshold social events. Perhaps a picnic or a walk in the woods.'

## 'I want WUR to take part in a flexible studying pilot'

Wieb Devilee (20) BSc student of Environmental Sciences, and leader of the United Students party (VeSte)



'VeSte's core values are high-quality education, students' broad development and an active student life. I share those values. In SSR-W, the student society, I was on the social committee, which organizes activities to raise money for charity. Last year I was on the research committee of the National Chamber of Societies, and we looked at student welfare: what are the issues, and what steps could societies take to support their members with wellbeing problems? I spent the last six months on an exchange in Guelph, Canada.

I stand for three main points. I want to help make sure that online education doesn't harm the quality of the education. You can see problems arising with practicals and tutorials now. Solutions have to be found for those things. Secondly, I want WUR to take part in a flexible studying pilot, in which students can pay fees per course. That creates more scope for students who want to serve on a board for a year, and for top sportspeople and students who are also carers. It makes it easier financially to study at your own pace. Thirdly, I want the university to allocate more funding to sustainability initiatives by student organizations.' **LZ**

## Good news in times of crisis

Since the coronavirus came along, following the news has been extremely depressing, thought student Emma de Brabander. And yet some lovely things have been happening too. So Emma and a few others started a website for positive coronavirus news.

'A lot of people are drowning in all the negative news,' says Emma, a third-year student of Nutrition and Health. 'The positive stories get a bit lost. And that's a pity, because it is nice to pay attention to positive news, and it makes you feel good.' And that is no luxury, when recent figures from the Trimbos Institute for mental health suggest that more Dutch people are suf-

fering from mental health problems such as depression than before the corona crisis.

## 'A lot of people are drowning in all the negative news'

Emma hit upon the idea of spreading good news thanks to an appeal on LinkedIn. 'Within a few days, we had a team of seven "good news collectors" and the website Pocon (positive corona news) was launched. There is a Facebook page now too.' The team roams the internet



every day to make a selection from the news on offer in newspapers and websites such as the Dutch news channel NOS. 'We are getting many enthusiastic responses. And it's doing me good too. For example, I really loved the story about a clown who climbed up scaffolding to

cheer up some elderly people. And around King's Day there were a lot of nice initiatives, such as neighbours who decorated their front gardens together. I really like seeing how people are making the best of it. This crisis is bringing some good things with it as well.' **BJ**

## MEANWHILE IN... GREECE

## 'Human life deserves proper healthcare'

With only 2,710 recorded cases and 151 deaths as at 10 May, the coronavirus has not spread widely in Greece compared to other countries. In the past few days there has even been talk of partially lifting the quarantine measures.

'Greece is perceived as a success story in Europe because of the small number of recorded cases. Indeed it is positive that not so many people got sick, but people should know that this was a success thanks to the people, not the government.

The government set extremely strict quarantine measures. In some cases, it gave the police the opportunity to hand out fines even to homeless people. Greek people obeyed the quarantine measures and they would have done that even without a total lockdown or fines, because they feel socially responsible for each other. These fines are unnecessary and give the quarantine a less democratic character. At the same time, the Greek healthcare system for which the government is responsible is unstable. There are not enough medical personnel, intensive care beds and equipment such as virus tests. We would not have been able to



Emmanouela Alexopoulou (27), an MSc Management in Life Sciences student, reflects on the current situation in her home country.

handle this pandemic if it had got any worse. Instead of investing in the public sector, the Greek government stayed passive. The situation in Greece seems to be under control for now, but we are afraid of the days that will come. Ever since the economic crisis of 2008, the situation for workers has been quite bad. With a lot of financial problems already and probably a very short tourist season (if we get any tourists at all!), the economic forecast for Greece is ominous. The main question is how the government will support the people who have lost their jobs. I believe that this is an opportunity to see what the real problem is in our society today: how important it is that we provide good and free care to everybody. Human life is important, and deserves proper healthcare.' **EM**



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



YOU

## (STILL) ON CAMPUS

'THE PLANTS JUST GO ON GROWING'



The sun is shining on the campus, and the bees buzz lazily from flower to flower. The Uniform greenhouses are buzzing away too. Standing among the plants is Tamara Kalsbeek (30), an MSc student of Plant Breeding at Plant Sciences.

On her first day of working on her thesis for her minor in Entomology, Tamara collected about 200 plant samples from seeds sown earlier, so she could research their resistance to aphids.

In spite of the global lockdown, the plants just go on growing, and research continues. Tamara: 'It was not clear whether I could start at first, and I'm pleased that it could go ahead. We have adapted the way we do research. I do as much literature study as possible so that only what is strictly necessary has to be done in the lab. We have also had to plan applied research more tightly, and it would be nice if

everything went well the first time because there is not much room for manoeuvre in the planning. That means I check everything I do even more carefully than usual. You switch the automatic pilot off. The supervisor schedules everything to make sure everyone keeps to the

**'I do as much literature study as possible so that only what's strictly necessary has to be done in the lab'**

rules and everyone gets to do their research'. Communication is being tightened up too: 'In some spaces, only one person is allowed in each compartment, so you have to coordinate everything precisely before you go in.'

Tamara is conscious of the uncertainty of the situation. 'No one knows what they can expect. You don't know if the measures will be tightened further, and access could be denied if people don't stick to the rules. So it's nice that there are such frequent updates by email from WUR.'

She hopes to finish at the end of August. 'For my own research proposal, I'm trying to pay more attention to back-up strategies. And it is also a good idea for everyone to ask themselves whether an experiment is really necessary or whether you're just doing it because you enjoy it.' **AdH**

## 'The flames leapt metres high from the roof'

## DIARY OF A CARETAKER

Eugene van Meteren works for Idealis as a caretaker. He writes about his experiences for *Resource*. You can read all his columns on [resource-online.nl](http://resource-online.nl).

**A lovely spring day reminds Eugene van Meteren of a hot summer's day in 2007. It was a Friday afternoon in June and Eugene was working peacefully in the office at Hoevestein. Until...**

There was a thunderstorm brewing and big, dark clouds hung over Wageningen. Suddenly I heard an almighty bang. I jumped out of my skin and I realized lightning must have struck somewhere. Less than a minute later, I saw dozens of residents running out of the block in panic, pointing and looking up. I stood up and sprinted over to the crowd. One resident came up to me crying: 'Eugene, look up, this is terrible, the roof is on fire.' It was a scary sight – the flames leapt at least 15 metres into the air. Gas bottles exploded. They were standing there because of repair work on the roof. Lightning had struck the Hoevestein complex: that much was clear.

Meanwhile, it was getting busier outside. The atmosphere was chaotic and panicky. In the distance I heard the loud sirens of fire engines and police cars rushing to the scene. The lifts were out of action because of the fire and the fire officers took the stairs up to the

16th floor. From there they would be able to get onto the roof to put out the fire. They had told me to go up with them so that we could see if there were any residents left in the building. We were on the 14th floor when there was another loud bang. That explosion blew out the windows in the stairway, and pieces of glass flew around us. I felt as though I was in the middle of a scene from an exciting action film, but I wasn't enjoying it at all.

**'There I stood, knees knocking, in my summer clothes'**

The fire officers were wearing protective clothing and there I stood, knees knocking, in my summer clothes. One of the fire officers shouted at me: 'Go downstairs, it isn't safe here!'

It took hours to extinguish the fire. Luckily none of the residents were harmed. The staff of Idealis worked all through the weekend to find everyone temporary accommodation elsewhere. And after one and a half weeks and some repairs to the building, all the residents could return. Peace returned to Hoevestein, just as though nothing had happened. **AdH**

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.

## 'Here you build a greenhouse yourself'

I was eager to go abroad for my thesis, and I thought Uruguay would be a nice country, and one where I could brush up my broken Spanish. I chose this project because I was interested in learning more about biological pest control. Alongside fieldwork in tomato greenhouses with insect traps, I held interviews with local farmers. The varied work made it a nice project to work on.

## CHATTERBOX

I did the interviews with my supervisor, a Uruguayan PhD student. It didn't go the way it goes in the Netherlands. One of the farmers was a real chatterbox, and the interview with him took two afternoons of four hours each. My supervisor was too polite to interrupt him, whereas the interviews with the other farmers took one hour in total. The tomato greenhouses amazed me too. In the Netherlands we have very advanced greenhouse technology, so that's the image of it I took with me to Uruguay. But their simple greenhouses turned out to work fine in their climate, and the farmers can build them themselves as well.

## RELAXED MENTALITY

Some weeks were quite busy with fieldwork, so I was still processing the measurements at the weekend. My Uruguayan housemates didn't understand that at all. They said weekends were for doing nothing and drinking maté on the beach. Maté is a hot drink they take with them everywhere they go and drink all day long.

## STUDENT LIFE

I enjoyed the collaboration with the PhD students and professors in the chair groups. Everyone has lunch together and chats, and there is often an asado (barbecue). I got on well with Paloma, a Uruguayan student who helped with the fieldwork. After the fieldwork we often went for a beer or a maté, and I went to parties and on

weekend breaks with her and her friends. Through Paloma I learned a bit about local life.

## CHRISTMAS IN SUMMER

Celebrating Christmas Eve with Paloma and her family was very special. In Uruguay there is a tradition of setting off fireworks both at Christmas and at New Year, and of partying in the afternoon of Christmas Eve. There had to be an asado too, because they do that on every special occasion, really. On Christmas Day, my Dutch housemate Gerbrich and I went to the beach. That was really chill, but Christmas does feel different when it's 30 degrees Celsius. **MvS**

THE WORKS



**Who?** Lotte Demmink (22), MSc student of Plant Sciences  
**What?** MSc thesis on biological pest control in tomato greenhouses  
**Where?** Universidad de la República in Montevideo, Uruguay



# Fewer students see student psychologist

Since the corona crisis, the student psychologists are not nearly as busy as before. 'Not much is happening, so fewer people experience FOMO. This eliminates one of the problems from before the pandemic,' says student welfare manager Door van der Sloot.

While January was so busy that a temporary stop was put on new appointments, the workload is more manageable now. 'The team has expanded, which makes a big difference, but fewer students are coming to us as well,' says Van der Sloot.

## How come it's quieter?

'The first few weeks of the corona crisis were hectic. There was a lot of uncertainty and a sense of panic. Will plane tickets be refunded? Will I keep my part-time job? What is allowed and what not? Some students cancelled their rental contract and moved back in with their parents. Even now, there is still uncertainty. How long will this last? What will happen after the summer? But despite the uncertainty, people have now become used to the situation and you see students are starting to settle down. Not much is happening, so there is no FOMO (fear of missing out, Ed.). This eliminates one of the problems from before the crisis. The feeling of having to do everything — work *and* study *and* have a thriving social life — is much less now.'

## Do students experience different issues now than before the corona crisis?

'I asked the student psychologists about this but there are no marked differences. Naturally, the current situation causes uncertainty and some additional stress. But these are mostly issues that were already present and are current-

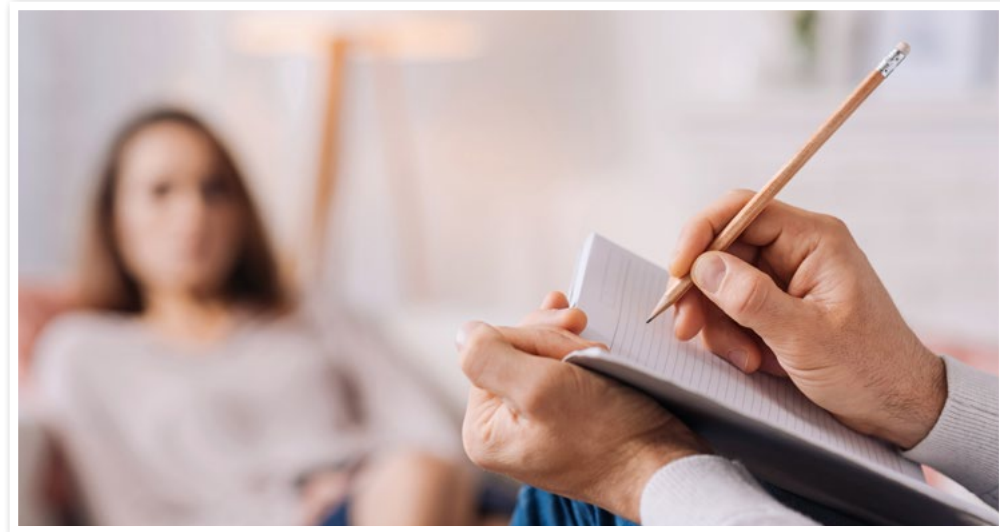


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## 'There are more reports of loneliness and homesickness'

ly exacerbated. What we have noticed is a few more reports of loneliness and homesickness, as well as concern for distant family members, particularly among international students. We have recruited a temporary Spanish psychologist specialized in these issues. She will be offering online training on homesickness and loneliness. We have also launched an online platform where students, study associations and student societies can reach out to each other and inspire one other.'

## Some students feel that the study load could be reduced in these uncertain times. Is it fair to keep the study load unchanged?

'That is a difficult question. It's not for me to pass judgement on course workloads as I am not involved in the education side. We are trying to keep as much going as possible so students don't get behind. I feel that teachers are taking the current situation into account. Still, at the same time I see students struggling to find a new structure. Doing everything from home takes some getting used to for everyone. Some teachers are very empathic while others leave the students to their own devices. That was always the case but when you lose the normal structure, this causes problems.' **OLZ**

## In memoriam

### Pieter de Waard



Pieter de Waard, who worked in the BioNanoTechnology chair group and was daily manager of MAGNEFY, passed away on 30 April at the age of 63. Pieter studied Biology at Utrecht University, and then did a PhD in the Bioorganic Chemistry department there, where his research was about 1D, 2D and 3D NMR spectroscopy of sugar molecules (Utrecht, 1990). Pieter

went straight on to a position as senior researcher at the Agrotechnological Research Institute in what is now AXIS. His work shifted gradually towards the academic branch of WUR and he became a much appreciated colleague within the NMR (Nuclear Magnetic Resonance) Centre and the Biophysics chair group at the Dreijen campus. Always a distinctive figure with his long beard, Pieter was a fount of knowledge about NMR apparatus and applications. Among the groups he worked with a lot was the

Food Chemistry chair group. In 2016, Pieter moved back to AXIS with the BioNanoTechnology group, and worked a lot in the NMR centre in Helix. Pieter helped countless students, PhD and postdoc researchers, and fellow academic staff with their NMR research. He also provided support for many courses and was a valued coach for ACT students. Pieter was a treasured member of the team in the BioNanoTechnology group, with his dry sense of humour, and his encyclopaedic knowledge of

classical music. He was a skilled pianist himself. We are grateful for the great collaboration with Pieter and his extensive contribution to both research and educational activities. Our thoughts and condolences go to his family; we wish them strength at this hard time.

Aldrik Velders  
BioNanoTechnology chair group

## In memoriam

### Jan Klijn



Just after Liberation Day, we heard that our ex-colleague Jan Klijn has passed away. Many of us have good memories of Jan, who was a people connector and an innovator, and above all, an incredibly friendly person. In the 1980s, Jan was head of the Department of Soil, Research, Landscape and Applications at the Foundation for Soil Mapping. When the Staring Centre was founded, he became head of the Landscape department. As a result, he faced the difficult challenge of bringing together a group of independently

minded landscape researchers from the three institutes merging to form the Staring Centre. Discussions could get heated, and Jan's capacity to bring people together was sorely needed. A memorable occasion was his performance as Winand Staring at one of the first meetings of the brand-new Staring Centre. In the course of time, Jan left management and opted to dedicate a few years to his passion: landscape research. That was an unusual step, because officially it was a step backwards. It was typical of Jan to take no notice of that and to do things his way. Jan used the opportunity he gained to focus on his academic field to argue for a broadening of his subject, landscape ecology, to landscape science. The impact of this

innovation continues today, influencing the journal *Landschap*, among other things. Jan's interest in landscape did not wane after he retired. He wrote a few books, including the beautifully illustrated 'A river...?' 'The river,' corrected the *Rat*, about his beloved river landscape. He also produced a beautiful translation of the poetry of the Irish poet Francis Harvey, in which nature and the landscape are prominent. We will continue to remember Jan fondly and our thoughts are with his family and friends; we wish them strength to bear their loss.

Former colleagues

## In memoriam

### Ada Wiggerman



On Tuesday 28 April, Ada Wiggerman passed away at the age of 62. Ada worked as a secretary for the Animal Breeding and Genomics Group for many years. Ada had been ill for quite some time, and we knew she would eventually have to give up her fight against cancer. Ada started as a secretary at the then 'Landbouwhogeschool Wageningen' in 1980. In the nearly 40 years she worked at the Animal Breeding and Genomics group, she was the secretary for all the chairholders of the group: Rommert Politiek, Pim Bras-

camp, Johan van Arendonk and Martien Groenen. She was diagnosed with cancer a couple of years ago, and because of her illness, Ada left the group in 2019. Ada was highly committed to the ABG secretariat, where she strongly supported the group as a whole, and kept the group together, with her sociable personality, her exceptional sense of responsibility and the way she took care of her colleagues like a mother. Ada's legacy was an impressive historical archive of staff dossiers, which has now been digitalized because of new privacy legislation. Ada was a much appreciated colleague for all of us at ABG. Our thoughts are with her husband Gerard and the rest of her family. Let us

remember her as the well-organized and highly motivated secretary she was for all these years. And above all, let us remember her as a kind and loving person. Ada embraced life to the last moment. We hope we can support and comfort each other to bear this loss. The funeral and memorial ceremony have taken place in private. An online memorial place has been created on [intranet.wur.nl/Project/AnimalBreedingGenomics](http://intranet.wur.nl/Project/AnimalBreedingGenomics). Feel free to write your message of condolence or share some memories of Ada here.

On behalf of all her colleagues,  
Lucia Kaal and Martien Groenen  
Animal Breeding and Genomics

## Announcement

### Student Council 2019/2020 – changed membership

Student Council member Xiaoxiao Peng (S&I) has resigned from the Student Council with effect from 1 May 2020. According to the Student Council regulations, the Council should appoint as a successor the candidate who qualifies next according to the results of the last election (May 2019). Malik Dasoo (S&I) is the

first to qualify and accept the seat, and he has now been appointed a member of the Student Council as of 11 May 2020. A copy of the Student Council's decision will be available for inspection at the office of the Student Council Secretary. Any person concerned may lodge a notice of objection to this decision up to and including 22 May 2020 with the Secretary of the

Student Council Election Committee, Hermijn Speelman, Droevendaalsesteeg 4 (Room B.103), PO Box 9101, 6700 HB Wageningen, or [secretariat.sc@wur.nl](mailto:secretariat.sc@wur.nl).

## Colophon

Resource is the independent medium for students and staff at Wageningen University & Research. Resource reports and interprets the news and gives the background. New articles are posted daily on [resource-online.nl](http://resource-online.nl). The magazine is published every fortnight on Thursday.

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# >>TYPICAL DUTCH

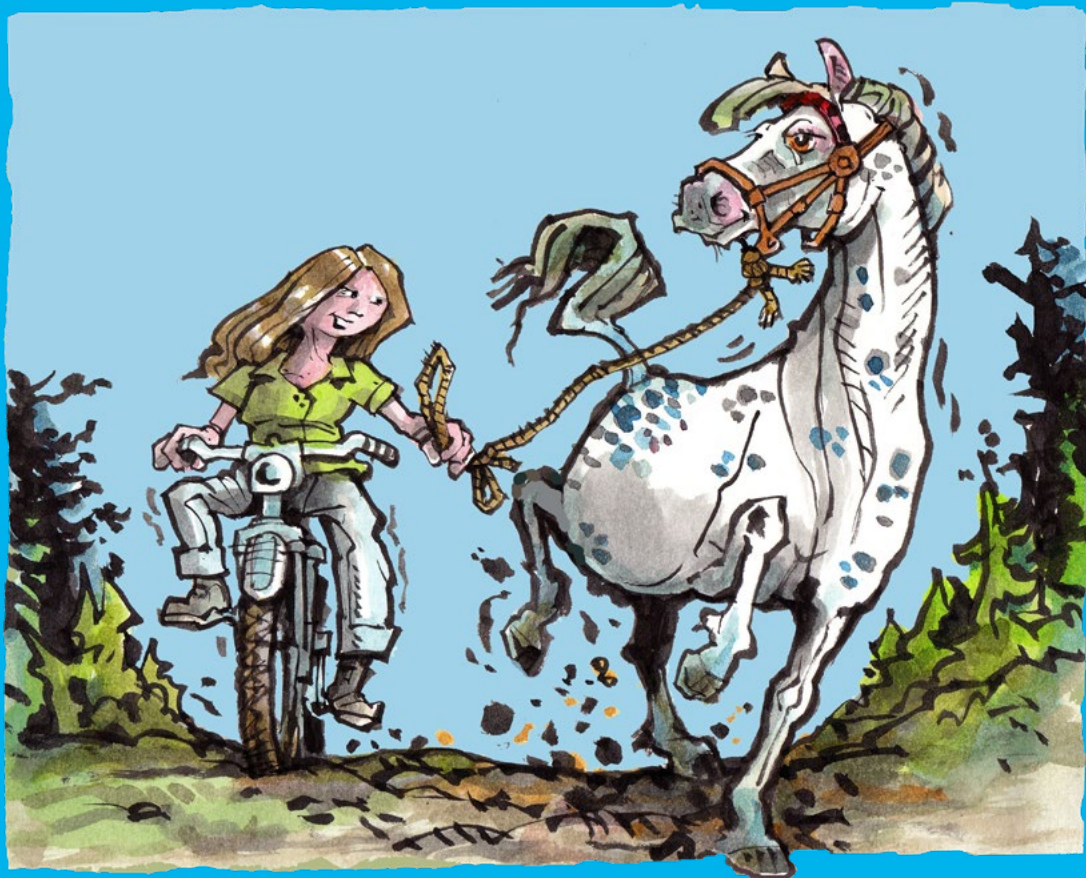


ILLUSTRATION: HENK VAN RUTENBEEK

## The metal horse

**I knew the Dutch love their bikes, even before I moved to the Netherlands. And I had also heard about the love of horses in this country. But I had no idea that one could possibly combine the two.**

After I settled in Wageningen, I wanted to take up an old hobby again and I looked for a riding school. I quickly found one and signed up for a trial riding lesson. When I received an email that advised me to come by bike, I was not surprised. In the Netherlands, everyone goes everywhere by bike. But when I arrived, I learned there was another reason. 'First, we have to get the horses, they are still in the paddock. It's a bit far, so we get them by bike,' a girl from the riding school told me. Huh? Bike plus horse? I was surprised and could not imagine leading a horse while riding my bike. However, although it sounds strange at first, it actually worked. These horses were used to this procedure and (with one exception) trotted meekly beside us while we cycled to the riding hall. After the lesson, the horses had to be brought back to the paddock. It was dark outside, so we were provided with bright yellow safety vests before the adventurous return journey began. The riding teacher realized that I was entertained and summed it up nicely: 'You know, Dutch people are born on bikes.' **📍 Johanna Sanke, an MSc student of Food Technology, from Germany.**

**'These horses trotted meekly beside us while we cycled'**

*Do you have a nice anecdote about your experience of going Dutch? Send it in! Describe an encounter with Dutch culture in detail and comment on it briefly. 300 words max. Send it to [resource@wur.nl](mailto:resource@wur.nl) and earn 25 euros and Dutch candy.*