

Resource

SEPTEMBER 2020 VOLUME 15

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for your thesis dips

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because of Covid

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'Needlessly complex'

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Read the latest news and background stories at resource-online.nl

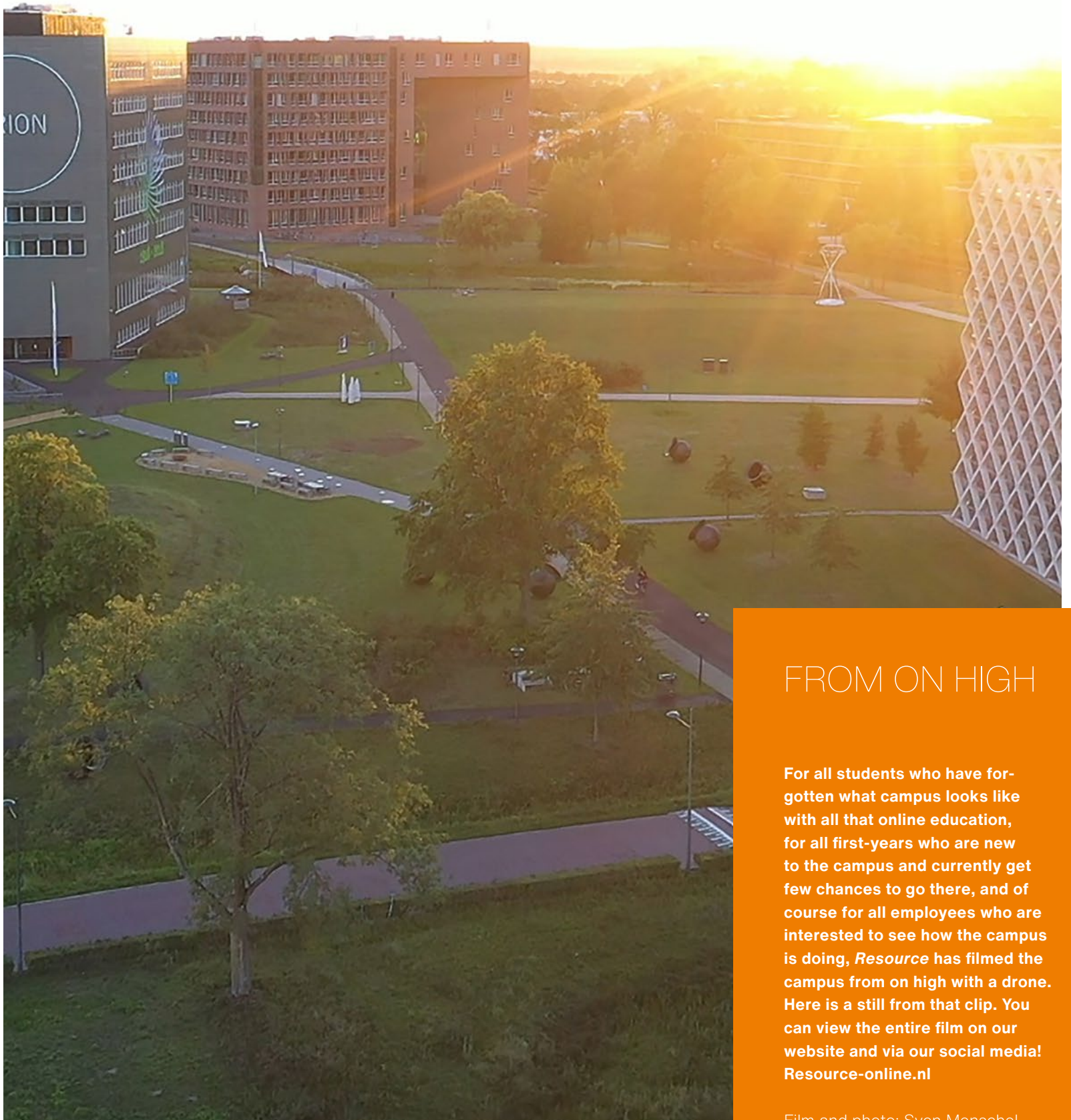


Onwards

Life is gradually returning to normal. The campus has definitely become livelier since the start of the new academic year. Traffic has increased on Mansholtlaan and the caterers have returned to work. The Veluweloop cross-country run is going ahead. But the coronavirus is still very much with us, and that's reflected in this magazine. The caterers may be back but services have been cut and staff have lost their jobs (page 4). The Veluweloop is going ahead but with a completely different format (page 5). Students are studying, but mainly online. A *Resource* survey shows that a large proportion of first-years prefer to live at home for now for that very reason (page 18). On the other hand, student societies are flourishing as never before. Students hope to find the social contacts there that they are not getting through their studies. Incidentally, you can do fun things at home too, like Wilson Westdijk did: during the epidemic, he went looking for 1000 different species (page 22). And found them. Another inspiring story is Dolf Weijers' career, which shows how you can go from being a laboratory technician to WUR's youngest professor (page 12). Onward, ever onward, I would say.

Roelof Kleis
science editor





FROM ON HIGH

For all students who have forgotten what campus looks like with all that online education, for all first-years who are new to the campus and currently get few chances to go there, and of course for all employees who are interested to see how the campus is doing, *Resource* has filmed the campus from on high with a drone. Here is a still from that clip. You can view the entire film on our website and via our social media! Resource-online.nl

Film and photo: Sven Menschel

Jeroen Dijkman new ASG director

Jeroen Dijkman, who started as the new Animal Sciences Group director on 1 September, wants to clarify livestock farming's contribution to sustainable food systems. Dijkman worked on food systems for years at FAO, the UN's world food organization. 'I see the development of sustainable agri-food systems as the biggest challenge facing humanity. It covers everything from combatting poverty to stopping climate change and from preventing zoonoses to improving biodiversity.'

Read the interview at www.resource-online.nl.



Caterers offer reduced service

The caterers on campus have opened again, but there has been some fallout. Good Food Catering, the organic caterer at Leeuwenborch, has gone bust. Sodexo (Impulse) will take over that service. Sodexo's Wageningen team of 11 people is still complete but 14 of the 25 people working for Cirfood (previously Cormet) in the Forum have gone, and 19 of the 25 jobs with OSP (Orion) have been cut. If you want a lunch, you have to order it. At Sodexo, you can order online (order.bysodexo.nl). At Cirfood, the Grand Café is temporarily being used as a canteen. Lunch has to be ordered at the cash desk and can be collected further along. At present, OSP in Orion is the only outlet serving hot meals, in The Spot café. For more info on campus catering, see resource-online.nl. Text & photo: Roelof Kleis



Why only online degree ceremonies?

The coronavirus has changed graduation too: WUR is organizing online degree ceremonies for Master's students. Some graduating students are disappointed that nothing is being organized offline; other academic and applied universities are arranging in-person ceremonies.

Dean of Education Arnold Bregt understands their disappointment. 'We hoped for a long while that we would be able to organize an in-person graduation ceremony in the Aula in the autumn, by which time we thought the coronavirus crisis would have subsided. That turned out to be too optimistic. Because you can only have a few people per session, you would need a lot of sessions. Unfortunately that's not feasible.'

Logistical challenge

So it will be online ceremonies. 'Six hundred of the 1280 graduating students have registered. They will all get a graduation session in groups of up to 12 students, divided up according to degree subject. Each graduation is a live stream in

which the students' thesis supervisors also say a few personal words. That means a total of 434 teachers have to log in at the right moment to give their little speech. That is a huge logistical challenge. But you can keep it personal that way.'

An online ceremony has advantages too, says Bregt. 'Normally, a lot

Plans for an in-person degree ceremony have been shelved. 'Unfortunately it wasn't feasible.'

of international students will have already left Wageningen by the time of the ceremony. Now they can still attend. You also now get a personal address from your thesis supervisor, which isn't normally the case.'

The online Master's degree ceremonies will be from 21 September to 1 October. No ceremony is being organized as yet for students who got their Bachelor's. They will be sent a small gift via email with a video message from rector magnificus Arthur Mol. LZ

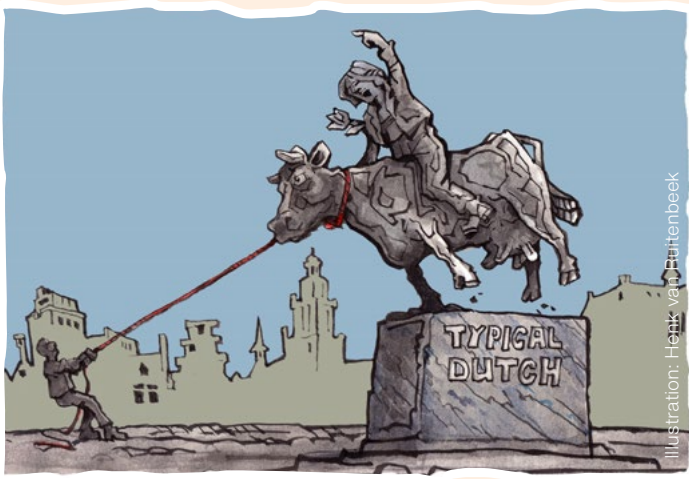
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The new-style Veluweloop

The 39th edition of the annual Veluweloop running race on 10 October will ditch its traditional relay form and will be more like the team time trials for the Tour de France. The new-style Veluweloop will have only two laps rather than the usual 12. The start and finish will be moved from De Bongerd sports park in Wageningen to the Vredenoord grounds in Arnhem. In the new format 60 teams can take part, split into four groups that start at different times. Each group has two hours to run the race, and must then make way for the next group. Chair Thomas Vogelaar acknowledges that the new race is very different to the old one. 'But it is still the Veluweloop: you still run across the beautiful Veluwe.' RK

Wageningen University has fallen from position 59 to 62 in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. The Netherlands still has 11 universities in the global top 200, putting the Netherlands as a country fifth. The top-ranked university is Oxford in the UK. THE, a British organization, bases the rankings on factors such as scientific achievements, reputation and international outlook.

Typical Dutch Typical Dutch? Diversely Dutch!



It's almost a year since I arrived in Wageningen and I thought I could reflect on my own experience of 'typical Dutch'. As a new student, this mantra was a key feature of my cultural orientation. I sincerely appreciated the information I was given, but I wish to reflect on its 'side-effects' on me. The more sessions we had where we

someone said 'I am Dutch', I would take out my list to check if they were tall, spoke frankly or even bluntly, and were always busy and rushing around. For we had been told not to be offended (in group work) when the Dutch state their opinions frankly to our faces. 'That is typical Dutch – we speak our minds.' And we were told always to be on time! 'Time is mon-

were told about Dutch people and culture, the more a list of what to expect of the Dutch was developing in my mind. I would subconsciously carry this list with me into every encounter I had with Dutch fellow students. So every time

ey for the Dutch!' Not far from the truth, perhaps, but that list influenced my mind, which formed a picture of formal, serious, intimidating, unfriendly and rude people. Have I not met smiling and relaxed Dutch people? Those who greet me when I am running or cycling in the woods? Those who invite me to dinner? Don't I have Dutch friends who go by 'African time' (showing up late)? Of course, my experience of typical Dutch is diversity. So, for now I'm giving up the 'typical Dutch' list.

'My mind formed a picture of formal, unfriendly and rude people'

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

This Typical Dutch comes from **Matthew Ncube**, an MSc student of International Development Studies from Zimbabwe.



'Claiming travel expenses is needlessly complicated'

New WUR employees are now required to claim travel expenses separately for each journey, much to the annoyance of the WUR Council.

The tax authorities have withdrawn the automatic travel allowance for new WUR staff during the coronavirus crisis. A needlessly bureaucratic move, says the WUR Council.

In June, the tax authorities decided that WUR employees whose contracts started after 12 March are not eligible for a fixed travel allowance for commuting, since the government encourages working remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic. New employees who come to the office anyway must now keep a record

and claim for each journey separately.

Tax authority withdraws automatic travel allowance for new staff

Daniël de Jong, interim chair of the WUR Council: 'On the one hand, the gov-

ernment is spending billions on keeping jobs; and on the other hand, they scrimp on about 100 euros a month in travel expenses.'

The WUR Council is going to ask the Executive Board to take a flexible approach to travel expenses. 'This regulation creates inequality,' says De Jong. 'The majority of employees receive a fixed travel allowance, while only new employees must specify their travel expenses. The system is needlessly complicated.' WUR spokesperson Annet Blanken says WUR will 'accommodate new employees with a relatively simple expenses claim form'. AS

100,000th test

Since April Wageningen Bioveterinary Research has been carrying out coronavirus tests for people and minks at a rate of about 1400 per day. The total number of tests will reach 100,000 in the coming week.

The WUR institute in Lelystad normally tests about 300,000 samples a year for animal diseases and zoonoses. But since April, the institute has also been testing 1400 human and mink samples daily, says Eefke Weesendorp, head of Diagnostics and Crisis Management at WBVR.

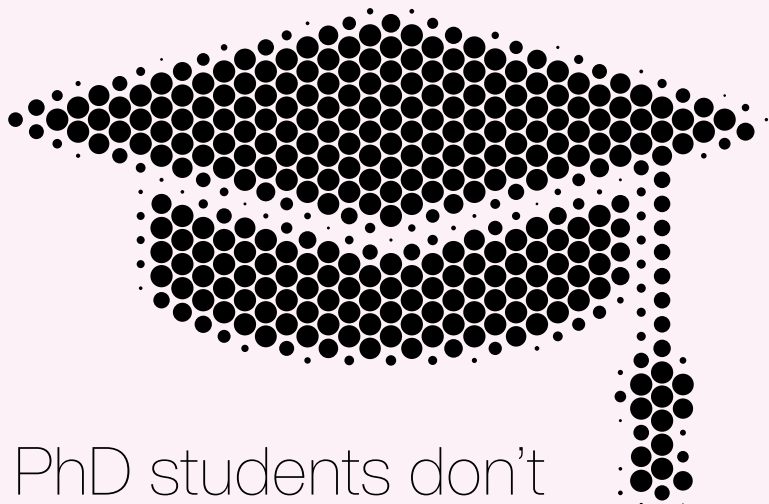
This week the institute will carry out its 100,000th coronavirus test. That is 5 per cent of the total number of tests in the Netherlands. At 2 to 3 per cent, the number of positive test results in Lelystad match the national average.

'It poses a challenge for our insti-

tute', says Weesendorp. Forty employees work continuously on the testing process. The vast majority of the tests are done by permanent employees of the institute, who are now supported by 10 temporary workers. The team works long hours from 7 am to 8 pm, seven days a week. At weekends, work goes on into the small hours to prepare samples for testing. 'We are now making a profit from the coronavirus tests', Weesendorp says, 'but during the first few months, we had to invest a lot in testing capacity and our turnover was low. Now we are recouping our investment.' AS



'How do you read *Resource*?' we asked our readers. 'With my eyes,' replied the smartest respondent, who omitted to send a photo to prove it. Responses that did come with photographic evidence: during a break at the office, upside down... and while riding a bike. We don't want to encourage dangerous behaviour, but we did think this was the nicest photo. The sender, Iris van Hal, wins a *Resource* beanbag chair so that from now on she can recline and read the new *Resource* without risking life and limb. **Congrats!**



PhD students don't dare switch

Many PhD candidates don't dare switch supervisor if they aren't happy with the relationship

About 43 per cent have a supervisor who sometimes exhibits 'questionable behaviour'

They are afraid this would damage their career, according to a survey by the PhD Network Netherlands (PNN). The interest group organized a large survey among 1600 PhD candidates last spring. About 43 per cent of the respondents have a supervisor who sometimes exhibits 'questionable behaviour': they belittle the high

workload, put pressure on PhD candidates to take on extra tasks or insist on being a co-author despite not having contributed much.

One in eight PhD candidates has considered switching supervisor. But the survey shows that only 18 per cent of that group actually took this step. Almost half the respondents who would like a different supervisor did not dare suggest this for fear they would be unable to finish their PhD or because they were worried the switch would damage their career.

The survey by the PhD Network has implications for Wageningen because a quarter of the 1600 PhD candidates were at Wageningen. PNN calls for simple procedures and for independent ombudsmen to be appointed who can intervene on behalf of the PhD candidate. HOP

'As long as more than 10 per cent of the surface is covered with trees, the satellite sees a forest.'

Veronique De Sy, WUR expert on satellite observations, in an analysis of deforestation in the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* on 8 September.

CERES SECOND IN GREEN PRIZE

Wageningen student society Ceres has come second in the Groene Pint, a nationwide competition in which student societies do battle in the field of sustainability.

The Amsterdam society LANX came first.

Maurits Jenniskens, a member of the Ceres sustainability committee, is proud of the result. 'We scored well with the sustainability week that we organize, the 104 solar panels on our roof, the new, much more efficient beer cooling

'We scored well with solar panels and a more efficient beer cooling system'

system and the completely renovated kitchen that no longer runs on gas.' The Groene Pint is an

initiative of Students4Sustainability, a foundation in Delft. Societies have to complete a questionnaire about their policy for waste, their plans to cut consumption of water, gas and electricity, and the volumes of animal products consumed by the society. They are also able to share their successes and challenges. The aim of the competition is to encourage student societies in their efforts to become more sustainable. LZ



A LITTLE WISER

Are white eggs better for the environment?

Most Dutch people prefer brown eggs. But if you care about the environment, it seems you should go for white eggs...

'It's true that white eggs are more sustainable,' says Thea van Niekerk, a researcher at Wageningen Livestock Research. 'White hens eat less and lay more eggs per year than brown hens. So less feed and transport are required, which is better for the environment.'

So why do people prefer brown eggs? 'In the old days, eggs from battery hens were white, so that colour is still associated with them, even though we no longer have battery hens in the Netherlands,' says Van Niekerk. 'The first free-range eggs that came on the market were brown, which was a way for the producers to distinguish themselves. And people associate brown eggs with farm chickens that run around the farmyard. So it's marketing. The image is slowly changing now.'

The colour of the chicken doesn't always tell you much about the eggs, says Van Niekerk. 'For that you have to look at their earlobes. Chickens with white earlobes lay white eggs, and chickens with earlobes of other colours lay brown eggs. Most white chickens do in fact have white earlobes, but there are white chickens that lay brown eggs, and the other way round.'

So should we start buying white eggs from now on? 'It depends what is important to you as a consumer. The Better Life label focuses mainly on animal welfare, and in that respect not every white egg scores higher. But if you can choose between a white and a brown organic egg, and you want an egg that's sustainably produced as well, you'd better go for the white one.' TL

'In the old days, battery eggs were white and that colour is still associated with them'

Thea van Niekerk,
researcher at Wageningen
Livestock Research.

Every day we are bombarded with masses of sometimes contradictory information on pressing issues. In this feature, a WUR scientist gives you something to hold on to. What are the facts of the matter?

Every question makes you a little wiser. Do you dare to ask yours? Email us at redactie@resource.nl



The Dutch wasted about as much food in 2018 as in previous years

No change in food waste in 10 years

This finding comes from the Food Waste Monitor. On average, the Dutch wasted between 96 and 149 kilos of food per person in 2018. ‘Waste’ means that people did not eat the food intended for them. ‘These figures are calculated by looking at the waste in the entire supply chain, so not just consumers but also producers and supermarkets,’ explains Sanne Stroosnijder, Food Waste programme manager at Wageningen Food & Biobased Research. Consumers are still responsible for the most waste, says Stroosnijder. A quarter of the food produced for people is not consumed. ‘But we have seen consumers reduce their waste in recent years. That trend is not yet reflected in the rest

of the supply chain but it could be that it’s too early for that: more initiatives have been taken precisely since 2018 to curb wastage.’

Food waste is not only a problem in its own right, it is also bad for the climate, says Stroosnijder. ‘Take the raw materials required, the water consumption, the plastic packaging and the trucks transporting the food. Wasted food

accounts for six per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions. Cutting back on wastage is a simple way to reduce the food production footprint.’

In addition to preventing waste in the first place, it is also important to find high-grade applications for ‘unavoidable food residues’. Stroosnijder: ‘At present, about 60 per cent of food remains are incinerated, although we *are* seeing some changes. For example, the volume of food remains being turned into animal feed has increased slightly.’

Lower during lockdown

A survey among 1500 consumers carried out by Gertrude Zeinstra and colleagues at Wageningen Food & Biobased Research in partnership with the Netherlands Nutrition Centre shows that a quarter of Dutch consumers wasted less food during the Covid-19 lockdown. Zeinstra has some possible explanations (and tips for the reader). About 40 per cent of the respondents said they went grocery shopping less often during lockdown. ‘They also planned their purchases better,’ says Zeinstra. ‘Over a quarter were more likely to use a shopping list and a third said they made fewer impulse purchases. People also stocked up on less perishable products such as canned vegetables, pasta and part-baked bread.’ TL

Less waste during lockdown as people planned their shopping more

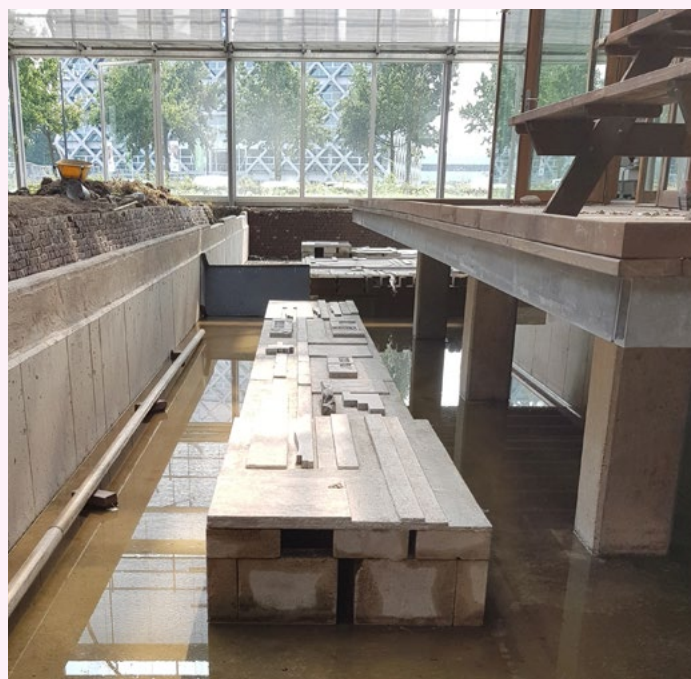


20 billion for knowledge, innovation and infrastructure

The Dutch government has reserved 20 billion euros over the next five years for boosting knowledge, innovation and infrastructure. Hoekstra and Wiebes, the ministers for Finance and Economic Affairs, announced this on Budget Day.

‘Companies, civil society and public authorities’ can submit proposals. Wiebes gave assurances that the funding would not be politicized. The government will borrow the money; this is possible because of the low (or even negative) interest on government debt. Each project must be at least 30 million euros. An independent commission will assess the costs and benefits of each proposal. The final decision will be taken by the cabinet.

The cabinet plans to start signing off proposals early next year. ‘Investments in R&D and innovation deliver most when the government, the business community and scientists work together,’ say the ministers. ^{HOP}



Lumen’s indoor gardens are going to be smartened up. This will reveal art that has long been invisible. The ponds, tiled paths and pergolas are all part of one big artwork, explains Elike Wijnheijmer (Facilities and Services). ‘The whole garden was designed in 1998 by landscape architect Hyco Verhaagen as a natural artwork, just like the Romans did with their gardens. Every tile is a work of art in itself.’ The renovation is sorely needed. Not much is still working in the way it was originally intended to. Read more about this on Resource-online Text and photo: Roelof Kleis

ERC grants for Swarts and Medema

Two Wageningen researchers are to receive 1.5 million euros in funding from the European Research Council (ERC).

Biochemist Daan Swarts has received an ERC grant to find and describe new immune systems against viruses in bacteria. Bacteria have developed different immune systems, each capable of recognizing specific virus particles. Swarts is going to look for new, hitherto unknown, systems in bacteria in order to discover new virus scanners. He also wants to see whether this will enable him to locate and repair deviations in the DNA. Swarts intends to use the Starting Grant he was awarded by the European

Research Council (ERC) to recruit three PhD students and an analyst. He may discover immune systems that can be isolated, which he can then reprogram so as to rapidly identify the target viruses. Swarts previously described an immune system that can now be used in the detection of Covid-19.

Bacteria language

Bioinformatician Marnix Medema is on the trail of the chemical language used by our microbiome, the bacteria with which we coexist. Recent research has shown that these microbial communities are supported by specialized molecules that manage the communication between bacteria and with the bacteria’s

host organism through a ‘chemical language’. Medema wants to decode this chemical language, and to find out which molecules are made by which bacteria, and how these substances contribute to the health of humans, animals and plants. Medema intends to use the new ERC grant to develop new bio-informatics software that can decode this language. He aims to identify the genes that regulate the exchange of information between the bacteria, to look for patterns in the way they are activated and deactivated, and to obtain information on the chemical structure of the molecules in question. ^{AS}

Moral debt

At the end of August, just after I completed my Master's, I saw a book in the shop called *40 stellingen over de wetenschap* ('40 propositions about academia'). It was a recently published pamphlet about Dutch universities. Having spent seven years studying at one, it now seemed appropriate I should read up about academia. So I bought the book.

The authors, professors Rens Bod, Remco Breuker and Ingrid Robeyns, are well known from the WOInActie campaign

'Students should take action en masse but they are not doing this'

group, which has been calling for a while for better funding and improved working conditions in higher education. Indeed, the pamphlet pays a lot of attention to the heavy workload for university staff. It claims that teaching is only possible because they systematically work overtime. The authors make proposals for changes and call for a public debate. A different kind of university is both necessary and possible, they say.

But that does require people to take action. That is why the final section, 'Who will do it?', is perhaps the most interesting. The

authors point to the government, university governors and silent, consenting academic staff, but also to students. Proposition 38: 'Students and lecturers need to rise up together.' Remco Breuker explained what they meant in the Dutch daily *de Volkskrant* (on 21 August). He says students don't speak up nearly enough about their lecturers' systematic overtime. They should take action en masse but they are not doing this. That is why he thinks students 'don't just have a financial debt (for their student loans) but also a moral debt to the people who make their education possible'.

Wow. I knew about the financial debt. But nobody had told me about that moral debt before now. To be honest, I do feel they have a point. The issue of lecturers' excessive workload has often been raised over the past few years while I was studying. But I can't remember us students ever talking about our role in this. This new pamphlet is a good occasion to get that discussion going. So I suggest you read that book by Bod, Breuker and Robeyns. And don't wait until you've done your Master's.



Vincent Oostvogels

Vincent Oostvogels (25) is in the first year of a PhD on biodiversity recovery in dairy farming. His dream is to be able to keep a few cows of his own one day.



Dolf Weijers and his passion for plants

'I never take success for granted'

Discover the secrets of the plant world. That was the goal for biochemist Dolf Weijers (b. 1976), chair-holding professor of Biochemistry, when he became the youngest professor in Wageningen at the age of 26. Behind the successful scientist is a modest man who never loses sight of the importance of his team. **photo Duncan de Fey**

His PhD students and postdocs say he is always ready to help them. Whether it is Monday morning or Saturday night, they never have to wait long for a response to an email or a WhatsApp message. *Resource* put him to the test and, indeed, there was an answer from Professor Weijers within two hours. An interview on Saturday morning? No problem.

In true Covid-proof style, we made a Skype appointment. 'I'm fed up with working at home now,' says Weijers from his home office. 'Not for myself, but I am noticing that it creates a barrier for the people in my group. Normally they just drop in at my office to consult me or have a little chat, and that has disappeared during the coronavirus crisis.' So now Weijers is spending time on a regular basis at the laboratory, close to the action and the plants.

Where did your dedication to plants come from?

'I'm afraid I don't have a nice story about how I walked through the fields with my grandad as a little boy and thought, "I've got to understand these plants."' My



Text Nicole van 't Wout Hofland

interest only developed during my Applied Sciences degree in Laboratory Science, when I did an internship in Wageningen in a group that was studying plants. Then I realized how little is known still about the plant world. Processes that we've known about in detail in humans and animals are still unexplored in these green beings. Because there are still so many unanswered questions in plant biology, I saw the potential for making a real difference in that discipline. In the years that followed, I came in contact with other interesting disciplines where there was still a lot to be discovered too, but I never felt the urge to switch subject areas.'

Applied Sciences? Not what you expect of a chair-holding professor.

'I wasn't really motivated at secondary school. That changed when I started my Applied Sciences degree: I was fascinated by biology and biochemistry. It woke something up in me. So much so that I thought about transferring to a more theoretical university, but I

decided to finish my Applied Sciences degree because I wanted a good experimental foundation. I could always transfer to another university after that.'

But you didn't do that. After your first degree you went straight on to doctoral research, without getting a Master's first.

'That is indeed unusual, but I thought: "What I really want to do is research. So why not give it a go?" I applied for two PhD positions, one in Wageningen and one in Leiden. Wageningen rejected me because I didn't meet the entrance requirements. Luckily I was accepted as a PhD student at the University of Leiden. That way I could skip a couple of years.'

In spite of the rejection by WUR, you came to Wageningen to lead a group. No hard feelings?

'Oh no, that sort of thing is purely a business matter. Although years later I did confront the person who made the decision with the rejection. With a grin, of course.'

What was it like to do doctoral research with less experience than your colleagues?

'I was only 20 when I started on my PhD. And yes, you do feel a bit of an underdog among other PhD students who've been studying for longer. In retrospect, this situation was good for me. I didn't take it for granted that I would complete my PhD research successfully, and I never just assumed I would be successful in the next stage of my career. At every stage I thought, "I'm going to try and do this as well as possible and then I'll see whether I manage." That attitude worked for me, and has stayed with me throughout my career: a modesty about my own capacities. So getting my PhD so young was formative for my professional personality and I see that as an advantage.'

'I wasn't really motivated at secondary school'

'Getting my PhD so young was formative'

A doctor at 26, the youngest professor at WUR, an ERC starting grant in 2011, a VICI grant in 2015, another ERC grant in 2019, Teacher of the Year in 2013, and last year membership of the European Molecular Biology Organization EMBO for ground-breaking research. What is your secret?

'If you sum it up like that, it does sound rather impressive. But at each point, it's all about a single grant or a single publication. And these things have their own momentum: if you get a nice grant at the start of your career, it looks good on your CV, which give you a better chance of a second grant. I think if you are successful once, it is easier to go on being successful.'

But you do have to do something well.

'The attitude I already mentioned played an important role, I think. Because I never just assume that an idea is right, that I can do it, or that my research will be successful, I always give it everything I've got. And secondly, I'm not driven by the motive of achieving successes myself. The university and the research we do are vehicles for educating students and junior researchers. I always bear that in mind, and that's where I get my energy from.'

What tips would you give someone who wants to follow in your footsteps?

'As a scientist, you must keep on developing and reinventing yourself and your research. Do you dare to tackle new questions and subjects, and adopt new methods from other research fields? By that I don't mean that you launch a completely new research project that is unrelated to previous topics, but an issue that takes you in a slightly different direction. That has been crucial in my career. But you do run the risk of that sort of thing being a total failure.'

Have you ever had a total failure?

'Not a total failure, no. Of course, some studies have not gone the way I hoped they would, but the trick is to round off the research properly anyway. Then the researcher who worked on the project can still take the next career step. And even if the results are not a huge breakthrough, new insights still take the discipline a step further.'

It is noticeable that you dare to tackle new topics. In recent years you have researched, hormones, embryo development, stem cells and evolution. Do you get bored easily?

'Things hold my interest for a very short time, yes. That was always the case. When I was a child it could be problematic but in the sciences I see its advantages. I am always looking for new research questions that can enable us to take the research in a new direction. I find

setting up something new more exciting than keeping it going. That goes for research, but also for activities and events. I was involved in setting up the Science Café in Wageningen. I really enjoyed doing that, but I'm not the person who then keeps it going for years or revives it.'

But you did work on the plant hormone auxin for nearly 25 years. Why is that so exceptional?

'Auxin has been an exception, it's true. The funny thing about it is that there is not much to this hormone in molecular terms: it's a simple little molecule. And

'I'm not the right person to look for applications. I'm not good at it and I'm not seriously interested in it'

yet that one simple little substance regulates nearly everything in plants, from their growth to the formation of flowers. I see it as the miracle of the plant world. I'm still fascinated by how such a simple little substance can regulate so many different processes. And even though scientists have been doing research on it for over a century, we still don't know anything like all its secrets.'

That is a fairly fundamental research question. Can we do anything useful with plant hormones too?

'A lot of technological applications we see around us now stem from knowledge gained from fundamental research. Plant breeders apply knowledge about the growth of plants in the breeding of crops. So there is sure to be a nice application for the knowledge about auxin. Only I'm not the right person to go looking for that application. That's not my strong point, and I'm not seriously interested in it. My strength lies in fundamental questions about how processes work. I leave thinking up an application to my fellow-researchers who do know about that.'

What have you got planned now?

'At the moment I'm working on cell polarity. I want to find out how a plant cell knows where it is in the plant, and how it knows which way is up, down, inside and outside. We have recently started a big project which we hope will provide an answer to these questions.' ■







IN THE WOODS

On 11 September, 80 students — mostly second-years studying Forestry & Nature Management — went on an excursion to Prattenburg Woods near Veenendaal. For the Forest Resources module, they heard from the forestry manager how you can manage woods sustainably, with timber production, biodiversity, recreation and CO₂ storage all playing a role. That is challenging when there is climate change, says the teacher Ute Sass Klaassen. 'I organize such trips so as to show students how experienced people in the field apply the knowledge.' The excursion was Covid-proof, of course, with social distancing and walkie-talkies. AS

Photo: Guy Ackermans



Covid-19 is
keeping some
students at home >

One in five first-year students are still living at home because of the coronavirus. They've stopped coming to Wageningen now classes are online. **text Roelof Kleis and Luuk Zegers photo Paul Looijestijn**

This is clear from a survey *Resource* conducted among first-year students. Of the 200 students asked, 43 per cent don't live in Wageningen (yet). Half of them are looking for accommodation but haven't found anything yet. The other half are not planning to move to Wageningen for the time being. The vast majority of those living at home mention the coronavirus as a factor. Since most classes are online, they don't see much reason to move to Wageningen. A small number don't want to move, as they prefer living with their parents. And one or two choose to live at home because it's cheaper. Idealis, the biggest student housing provider in Wageningen, hasn't noticed

this trend towards living at home at the moment, says director Bart van As. 'There are now 2500 students registered for accommodation with us. That is similar to other years. All the rooms are rented at the moment. The number of international students is roughly the same as last year, in spite of the coronavirus. And among the Dutch students there is a small rise in numbers.' But not all those who have registered are seriously looking for accommodation, says Van As. Many students register for strategic reasons, to start accruing waiting time for when they do want to move. 'I always say, the best present you can give a child for their 16th birthday is a registration with Room (an online platform for renting student rooms, ed.).

You start accruing waiting time from the day you register.' Van As understands why some students are hesitant about moving to Wageningen. 'We don't know what will happen this year either. Will students want rooms after all as the year goes on? Students often get fed up with travelling to and fro eventually. And Wageningen does make a lot of use of group work. But we don't know. With the coronavirus around, you need a crystal ball.' It is a known fact, anyway, that not all students move to the Wageningen area. More than one quarter of all WUR students do not live in or near Wageningen. This figure has hardly changed through the years, and the annual accommodation plans made by Idealis, WUR and the municipality are based on it.



'My dogs are my companions'

Ziyal van der Vossen (18), Animal Sciences

No, she won't be moving to Wageningen any time soon. Certainly not without her two dogs. And just try and find a house where you're allowed to bring your two Belgian sheepdogs. So Ziyal van der Vossen is staying at home in Boxtel for now. 'My dogs are my companions,' she explains. They are called Icheb and Imzadi, a father and daughter of eight and five years old. 'Shall I spell that?' asks Van der Vossen helpfully. The names come from the famous sci-fi saga *Star Trek*. As does Ziyal, her own first name. 'My parents really loved that series.' So it is the dogs that keep her at

home, but the coronavirus plays a role as well. Classes are mainly online. 'I went to the campus just once for a practical in Cell Biology. There will be more practicals in the coming weeks.' But for those few trips she'll go up and down by train or drive her parents' car. 'I'm allowed to borrow it.' And yes, it is difficult to get to know people in Wageningen like this. 'I know a few people from my AID group. And we have to work in groups for one course.' For now, the advantages of living in Wageningen would not make up for missing her dogs. 'But that might change, once there are more classes on campus.'



'Always someone to have lunch with'

Floor Venemans (19), Environmental Sciences

'When I decided in June to come to Wageningen, I started looking for a room straightaway. Friends told me lots of rooms were advertised on Facebook, so I started looking there. There are several Wageningen Facebook groups, but Wageningen Student Plaza has the most rooms on offer.' Venemans did not respond to posts about rooms in Ede or Bennekom. 'And not to sub-renting offers either. A

friend of mine moved four times in her first year. I didn't fancy that at all.' An interview dinner at a student flat in the Computechnion did the trick: Venemans got the room. 'It is a very friendly, close house, and the people who are at home eat together every night. And with 14 people living here, there is always someone to have lunch or coffee with.'

'Happy to have a roof over my head'

Sonia Alfieri (19, Luxembourg), Environmental Sciences

'In my last year at secondary school I didn't really know what I wanted to do. But I was really interested in environmental sciences, so I searched for universities that offered Bachelor's degrees in that field. Both Utrecht and Wageningen offer programmes, and I picked Wageningen because the city is not too big and really green. I can find my way around here.'

'It can be really difficult to find a room. I tried Housing Desk, Idealis, Kamernet and Facebook. I basically responded to every post I saw about a room. Many houses do not want international students, and a lot didn't reply to me either. In the end, I found a place with two roommates, between the city centre and the university. I am happy to have a roof over my head.'



'I'm not moving for the time being'

Mark Pasman (17), Environmental Sciences

He travels twice a week to spend a couple of hours on campus. He goes by train because he hasn't passed his driving test yet. But he will soon. Then he'll have the option of driving – at least, if his mother lets him borrow her car. The rest of the teaching is online, so he might as well continue to live in Doetinchem. 'No, I'm not moving for the time being,' says Mark Pasman. 'Of course, you realize that you don't meet as many new people,' he says.

But he's not at all deprived. 'I'm a member of ESN student society.' And he is planning to take up sport in Wageningen, but water polo, which he plays at home, will be tricky too. 'If I join the training sessions in Wageningen and then have to get back to Doetinchem, I won't get home till midnight.' But he has found a solution to that. 'I'm thinking of joining swimming practice in Wageningen and carrying on with water polo at home.'

A RESISTENT BANANA IS IN THE MAKING

After a search of many years, Wageningen phytopathologist Gert Kema has found partners willing to invest in bananas that are resistant to fungal diseases: Keygene and the Gates Foundation.

Incredible quantities of bananas are cultivated and consumed across the globe – some 40 million tonnes each year. Half of these, including almost all the bananas exported to Europe and the United States, are of the Cavendish variety. But a fungal disease, Tropical Race 4 (TR4), is quietly advancing around the world and killing Cavendish bananas on plantations. Kema, a leading expert on fungal diseases threatening banana crops, wants to breed new varieties that are resistant to TR4.

That doesn't look too difficult on paper. As early as 2012 Kema and French researchers published an article on the banana genome in the leading journal *Nature*. He discovered genes that are resistant to the fungal disease in wild banana varieties (that are inedible). He wanted to start a breeding programme to implant these genes into the Cavendish banana. The breeding programme cost millions of euros, but he expected leading global banana producers such as Chiquita and Dole to be willing to help finance the research. That didn't go to plan, however.

With the help of international financiers, Kema also launched a company in order to develop resistant banana varieties.

While he was at it, he hoped to solve another problem in the banana industry: Black Sigatoka fungal disease. All Caven-



The banana is a staple food in Africa

dish bananas are clones, meaning they are genetically identical and by definition vulnerable to diseases and pests. Kema wanted a sustainable banana sector with sufficient genetic variation in the crop, to be achieved by developing several local banana varieties.

Not a snack

And he succeeded, thanks to breeding company Keygene and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Phytopathology chair group, which Kema leads, has been collaborating with Key-

gene for several years on the genetics of the banana. Fernando Garcia-Bastidas, one of Kema's PhD students, mapped the resistance of several hundreds of banana varieties and is now employed by Keygene to work on resistant bananas.

In Africa, the banana is not just a snack, as it is in many western countries, but a staple food. Due to diseases and pests, harvests in Africa are much lower than they are under ideal circumstances. So this breeding programme for resistant bananas could make a huge difference for African farmers. AS

1000 SPECIES IN ONE YEAR

How does a nature-loving student get something positive out of the coronavirus period? Set yourself a goal – like spotting 1000 different species in your local area. Wilson Westdijk managed it in less than six months. *Resource* editor Roelof Kleis accompanied him on his mission.



Text and photo Roelof Kleis

We had agreed to meet in the Hoeksche Waard, Westdijk's home territory. To be more precise: at the Esscheplaat area on the Hollands Diep River south of the village of Strijen, which is now part of a nature reserve managed by Staatsbosbeheer, the Dutch forestry service. The Ijsvogel ferry is the only entry point into the area that is overrun by policeman's helmet (*Impatiens glandulifera*). Our meeting place was not a random choice, but more on that later.

'Oh, a kingfisher. They are brooding not far from here.' Wilson Westdijk, a second-year student of Forest and Nature Management, is at home here. In fact, all over 'the island', as the inhabitants of the Hoeksche Waard call it. He grew up in Maasdam, about seven kilometres to the north. He's a nature person, and has been since primary school, he remembers. 'And after that it got out of hand.' That is confirmed if you study Westdijk's track record on waarneming.nl, the website where the nature-watchers of the Netherlands keep score. On the average

day, Westdijk records at least 40 observations. On 9 May he really pushed the boat out, with 253 observations. Hardly a day goes by without Westdijk feeding the website. 'It's a passion, yes, you could say that. My mother calls it an obsession.'

Butterfly net

It's a nice challenge for bird-watchers: to spot as many different species as possible in one calendar year. Westdijk has done something of the sort before. 'In our group in the Hoeksche Waard, the challenge was to spot 200 species of bird. I managed that once, two years ago. The year before that I didn't quite manage it – I got stuck at 199. That was a bit hard to swallow.' At the end of last year, Westdijk decided to set the bar higher: 1000 species in 2020. This included a broader spectrum, because you won't reach those numbers with birds alone in the Netherlands. So the Wageningen student began to study insects and to take along an insect net and a magnifying glass as well as binoculars. Westdijk focuses mainly on bees and flies. He doesn't do spiders, which are not officially insects. 'I'm not

so keen on spiders,' he admits. 'I used to be scared of them even. But not of beetles. And they can be a lot bigger and they bite a lot harder too.'

It's not difficult to catch insects in this area. It is hot and humid, and it rained hard last night. Westdijk fishes one insect after the other out of his net – all creatures the average walker has never heard of. 'Look, a Palearctic hoverfly.' This is not without its dangers, mind you. 'I often get bitten or stung. Every day,' he says. 'Most bees don't get through your skin. They are too small for that.'

A flock of storks passes overhead. 'You don't see them much around here. These appeared out of the sky last night.' Westdijk puts most of the species into the system on the spot. 'Whenever possible, I try as far as possible to find out what it is in the field. The app Opsidentify is an indispensable aid for that. 'It identifies nearly everything. But it sometimes goes wrong with small insects. Sometimes you need to look at those through the binoculars to recognize their characteristics.'



Student Wilson Westdijk with one of his 1000 species. Photo: Roelof Kleis

And if he really doesn't manage it, he puts the creepy crawlies in a glass tube and takes them home. 'After having a good look I usually find out what they are. Or I ask other people.' Like that one time back in June, which is the reason we are on this spot now. It was Thursday 25 June at 14:48. While out doing field-

'I OFTEN GET BITTEN OR STUNG. EVERY DAY'

'MY MOTHER CALLS IT AN OBSESSION'

work for his degree course, Westdijk saw something fly by and batted it out of the air with his net. 'At first I thought it was an ichneumon wasp, but a good friend of mine from Wageningen said it might be a longhorn beetle.'

Longhorn beetle

A book about Dutch longhorn beetles by the former WUR entomologist Theodoor Heijerman soon provided clarity. It was the *Necydalis major*, a species of longhorn beetle that hadn't been spotted in the Netherlands for 40 years. 'And before that, not for 25 years. That earlier sighting was in Dremmelen, not far from here as the crow flies.' Someone Westdijk knows, a journalist with the local paper *Het Kompas*, wrote about the find, and the news reached Wageningen.

'Hey, a fish eagle!' His enthusiastic tone

suggests this is not a daily visitor.

'I sometimes see them at the Blauwe Kamer in Wageningen. This one is on its way somewhere. In the Biesbosch nearby, there are three mating pairs. The only ones in the Netherlands.' Nature never gets boring. There is always something new to see, says Westdijk. 'I know this area pretty well, but nature is always changing. Especially with those insects, it goes on and on. The different species' flying seasons come one after the other in quick succession.'

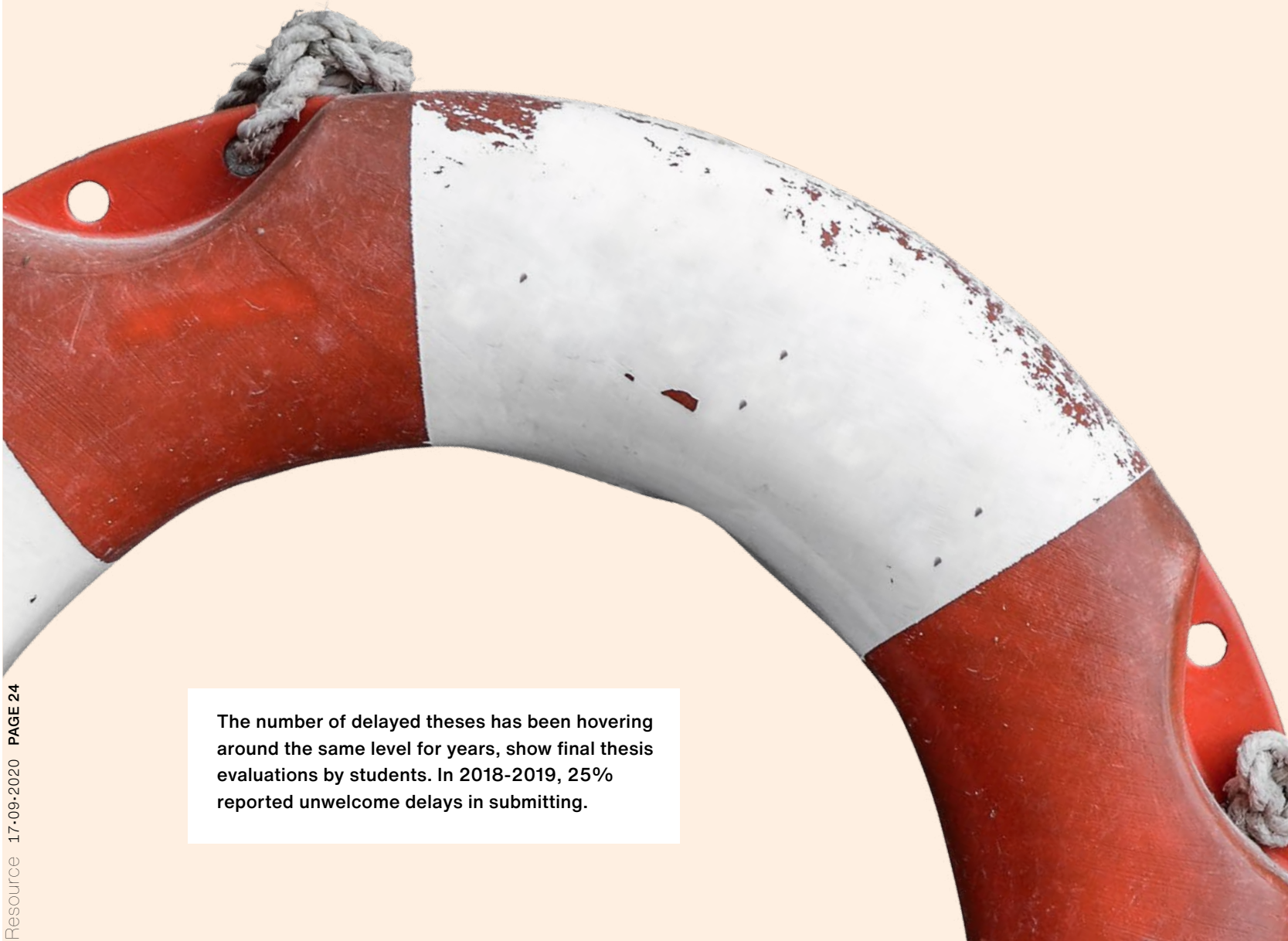
'If you don't come here for a week, the situation has changed completely,' he adds. 'But you do have to come across them, of course. Like that longhorn beetle. It has to just be flying by when you are there.' He's reached 1000 species, but the 'competition' just goes on. 'I won't reach 1500. It's going more slowly now. But 1200-1300 should be possible. There will be a few more.' ■

6 Tips

for your thesis dip

You are just not getting anywhere with your thesis. You wanted to get on with it last summer holiday, but that didn't happen. You are not alone: more than a quarter of the thesis writers get behind with their work. *Resource* collected tips for picking up steam again.

text Milou van der Horst photo Shutterstock.com



The number of delayed theses has been hovering around the same level for years, show final thesis evaluations by students. In 2018-2019, 25% reported unwelcome delays in submitting.

**IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM**

You can tackle your thesis dip more effectively if you know what's causing it. Are you getting stuck on technical points, are you suffering from a fear of failure, or does your part-time job take up too much out of you to work on your thesis energetically? Student Dean Marc Uijland: 'There are often several factors that lead to thesis problems, and they influence each other too. It's complex. Sometimes you need help to clarify what the problem is, exactly.'

**MAKE IT WORTHWHILE**

Have a good think about why you actually want to write a thesis. Student psychologist Roeland Cloin: 'Students often give externally driven motives: they want a good grade or to finish their thesis so they can graduate. But you can't motivate yourself for months with that. Look for your internal motivation: think how writing your thesis expresses your values and interests.'

**ARRANGE FOR SOME PRESSURE**

Look for someone to discuss your progress with on a regular basis. Did you meet your targets and why/ why not? Having someone you can write with can help too. 'Social connectedness is a very important factor for success. It is stimulating if you go for it together and you feel some peer pressure,' says Jet Vervoort, a study advisor in Plant Sciences who launched 'thesis rings'. These are small groups of fellow students who discuss each other's theses under the supervision of a member of staff. They have proven to shorten the time it takes to write a thesis, and to improve the quality, says education director Arnold Bregt.

**RELAX**

Don't obsess about perfecting the content of your thesis, but concentrate on the academic process instead. Jet Vervoort: 'Your thesis is not all about your data, but about your academic training.' Dean Marc Uijland agrees: 'Many students focus on the end result, but the process is more important. You don't have to be able to do it already; that's why you are still at university.'

**STRUCTURE IS SECURITY**

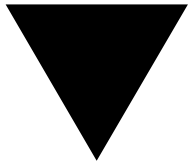
A routine you stick to like clockwork is not a bad idea. You thrive on a fixed daily schedule, and you don't waste any thinking capacity making decisions about it. Do plan time for relaxation and recharging the batteries: breaks, meeting friends, sport, and 'playing out'. Being out of doors restores your mental functions, 'down time' helps your creative progress, and exercise is the antidote to all that sitting and thinking – plus it helps get rid of thesis kilos!

**GET HELP**

See asking for help as an important life skill that is worth practising; the more you do it, and the faster you do it, the better. So cast off your thesis shame and go and see a friend, fellow student or housemate, family member, dean, advisor or student psychologist. Can't bring yourself to ask for help? Then take the first step by at least talking about your thesis dip. Whatever you do, don't go on suffering in silence. Writing a thesis is a lonely enough task as it is.

Other help to get your thesis done

- WUR student psychologists have a course on procrastination. They assess whether you qualify after an intake interview**
- The Wageningen Writing Lab offers help with the thesis-writing process**
- There are books like *Dissertations for Dummies*. If you read Dutch, there's *Grip op je scriptiedip*: a book that changes your thesis mentality in seven steps and gets you going again**



Key people: Michel Heusinkveld

They are indispensable on campus: cleaners, caretakers, caterers, gardeners, receptionists – the list is long. Resource has been seeking out these key people. This time, meet Michel Heusinkveld (47), who works in the post room in Actio. **Text Milou van der Horst Photo Guy Ackermans**

‘When I came to work in the post room 18 years ago, there was a lot more post. In those days, course manuals weighing two kilos apiece were sent around, for instance. That was hard work, but it was more fun too because there were more of us doing the job.

In the post room we deal with the outgoing post and courier dispatches from the campus, and we went on doing that during the lockdown. At first it was fairly quiet, and then it got busier and some chair groups sent their staff a present. And we put flower tokens into envelopes for about 6000 people. We also have an extra ser-

vice now, where people can email letters to us that we print and send by post. I know everything there is to know about post by now. If somebody wants to send crates of live fish, for example, I know where we can arrange special transport. Once you’ve experienced everything once, the job can get a bit predictable, but I like working independently and knowing what’s expected of me.

You are not allowed to send live animals by post, but I think people do sometimes send insects: you could hear soft crawling noises coming from inside one package. There’s been other strange post too, like the time we got several envelopes that were covered in blood. Animal scientists had asked livestock vets to send in blood samples.

As far as suspicious packages are con-

cerned, we’re in the frontline, but I’m not scared. We often recognize it before we open it, by the way it’s addressed for instance, and we have a protocol. We once received a suspicious package, incorrectly addressed and without an accompanying letter. My colleagues decided to open it anyway, because it wasn’t ticking or hissing and there was nothing sticking out of it. Inside it was a plastic bucket with holes in it, containing slugs for a practical experiment. That’s how much alarm an incorrect address can cause.

I used to take my work home quite often, but I’ve learned not to do that anymore, because it doesn’t get you anywhere. I can’t check everything and good is good enough. That way I’m more relaxed. You should go to work with a smile and come home that way too.’

‘In one package we heard soft crawling noises’



‘My own stain remover’

‘Cool, isn’t it?’ There’s a detergent on the supermarket shelves with a cleansing enzyme that I discovered. That I isolated and identified.’ Reindert Nijland is proud of this. Washing your socks with your ‘own’ sustainable detergent: now, that’s what you call Science for Impact.

Nijland discovered the cleansing enzyme 10 years ago when he worked for two years at the Dove Marine Laboratory in Newcastle, on a Marie Curie grant. His assignment was to find out how the bacterium *Bacillus licheniformis* makes biofilms dissolve.

A biofilm is a sticky layer of slime with which micro-organisms stick to a surface. They form the hardened layers on the hull of a ship, for instance. This was a golden opportunity for Nijland. Until then, molecular biology research had focused on model

Turning points: sometimes you recognize them immediately, and sometimes only in retrospect. In this series, members of the WUR community talk about a decisive moment or period in their lives that they’ll never forget. This time, Molecular Biology researcher Reindert Nijland.

bacteria such as *E.coli* and *Bacillus subtilis*. But as a keen diver, his heart really lay in marine biology. He had a wonderful time in Newcastle. ‘The lab, a Victorian marine biology building, was literally on the beach. At high tide, the water lapped against the walls. I kept my surfboard in my office.’

The research results were surprising. ‘We thought it would be a question of a small molecule that would behave like some kind of signal substance and chase away

other bacteria. But it turned out to be an enzyme (NucB), a nuclease that breaks down DNA. At that time, we had only just learned that

‘The lab was on the beach. I kept my surfboard in the office’

biofilms contain large amounts of DNA as well as proteins and sugars. The film breaks down if the DNA is broken down.’

The discovery was patented, but it didn’t lead to an application in the shipping industry. But now, 10 years later, there is an application: the giant firm Proctor & Gamble is using the enzyme as a sustainable stain remover in its detergents. Meanwhile, for Nijland, his period in Newcastle was the prelude to a career change. Even if it did take until 2017 before he took the plunge and switched to marine ecology.

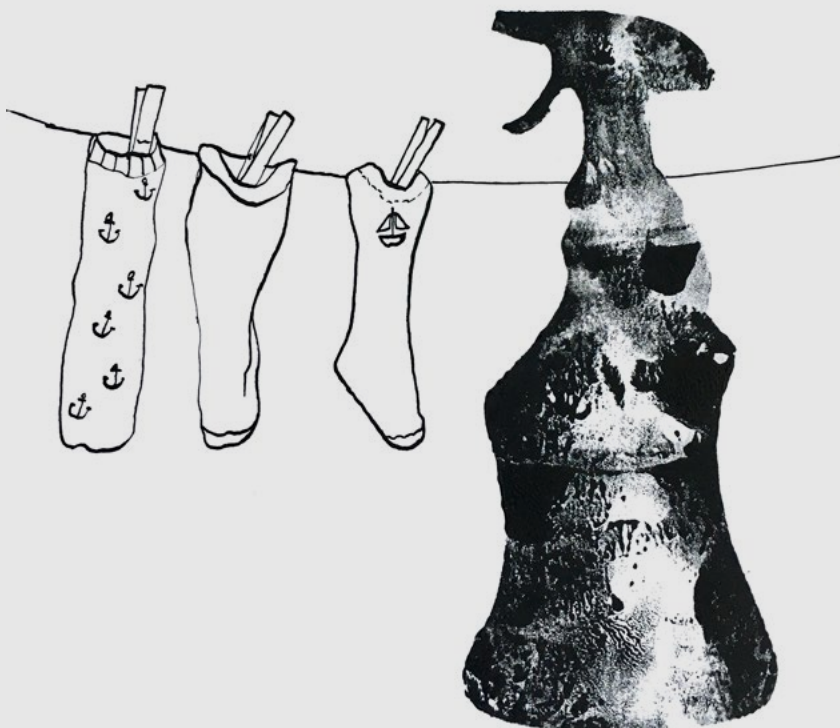


Illustration: Marly Hendricks

In other news science with a wink

◆ ILLUSION (1)

Flies see optical illusions in which spirals appear to be spinning, just as we do, researchers from Yale University have discovered. Flies have various types of neurons with which movement is registered. Switching off two of these types stops the illusion. But it gets better: switching off just one of the two causes the spinning to change direction.

◆ ILLUSION (2)

The scientists think they are now on the trail of the source of the spiral illusion. They think it comes about simply because of an imbalance between the two

kinds of neuron. Something similar could be at work in humans too. We don't have faceted eyes like insects, but we process visual stimuli similarly, say the researchers. Which leaves us wondering: are we about to shed an illusion?

◆ JERKS

Jerks don't get on any better in life than people who are pleasant and sociable, suggests a study at the University of California that followed students' careers. They found that antisocial bastards are no more successful than the rest. That's the good news. The less good news is that they don't do

any worse, either. Organizations keep on hiring jerks regardless.

◆ STOP STARING

Herring gulls don't like being watched. If you stare at them, they will fly off sooner than if you look the other way. It makes a difference of two metres. The finding comes from behavioural biologists at the University of Exeter. This is not learned behaviour, because it is observed in young gulls too. So if a gull is getting too close for comfort, give it a hard stare. RK



Campus ◆ residents

Surfix

Professor of Organic Chemistry Han Zuilhof and his PhD student Luc Scheres were involved in the tech company Surfix right from the start in 2011. Scheres still has a management role in Surfix but WUR is no longer a shareholder. The company was taken over by two other tech companies last year. Surfix, which is housed in Plus Ultra I, makes nanocoatings for use in point-of-care diagnosis, and employs a staff of 15.

Chief Commercial Officer Hans Dijk explains Surfix's sphere of activity. 'We have been taken over by Lionix International from Enschede, a company that makes photonic chips for biosensors. The chip uses light patterns to detect proteins and DNA.' The

The nanocoatings help in pinpointing the presence of pathogens

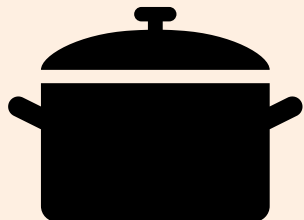
Amsterdam startup Quirin Diagnostics, Surfix's other owner, is developing a method for early detection of cancer in urine using these biochips. The test needs to be extremely sensitive because of the low concentration of cancer cells in urine.

Surfix's selective nanocoatings

make it possible for specific biomolecules to bind to the chip at the right place. This enables Surfix to pinpoint the presence of antibodies and pathogens. A fourth party came on board this year: Photon Delta from Eindhoven, which is investing heavily in the company to develop a fast test for Covid-19. Surfix is working on this together with Food and Biobased Research at WUR.

AS

There are about 100 companies located on the campus. In Resource we'll be introducing you to one of them in every issue. This time: Surfix in Plus Ultra I.



Flavours of WUR

‘This traditional Norwegian dish comes in endless varieties and with different names across Norway. This version is served in my family. The kløbb (potato dumplings) are similar to the German Knödel. The duppe is a béchamel sauce with Norwegian brown cheese in it. The brown cheese is sweet and also delicious on bread. It can be found in some Dutch cheese shops, some Jumbo supermarkets and the Norwegian Seamen’s Church in Rotterdam.’

Rinse, peel and grate the potatoes. Remove the water if there is some left in the bowl with the grated potatoes.

Bring a pan of water with the stock cubes to a simmer.

Add some of the flour (equal amounts of wheat and barley) to the grated potatoes. Mix and check that the dough isn’t too dry or too wet. Add more flour if necessary. Make a test kløbb by wetting your hand and forming a ball with some of the dough. If it is not possible to make a nice round ball, you need to add more flour.

Add salt.

When the dough is finished, you test-simmer one kløbb. If the kløbb still looks like a ball after 10-15 minutes, the dough is good to go.

Form balls of the dough and let them simmer for about 45 minutes.

Make a plain béchamel sauce with all the ingredients except the brown cheese, which you add at the very end.

Fry the bacon if you like.
Pour the duppe over the kløbb and enjoy!

What dish reminds you of home? Share it in Resource and let the whole WUR-community enjoy it! Send your recipes to resource@wur.nl.

What we eat has a big impact on our health and our environment. And all the flavours of the world can be found in our WUR community. Konrad Peckolt Fordal takes us to his homeland, Norway.

Tastes like home: Kløbb og duppe

Ingredients for approximately four portions:

Kløbb

- 10 large potatoes
- Approx. 200 ml of barley flour, coarsely ground (available at the windmill in Wageningen)
- Approx. 200 ml of wheat flour
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 2 stock cubes

Duppe

- 3 tablespoons of butter
- 4-5 tablespoons of wheat flour
- 750 ml of milk
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon of pepper
- Some slices of brown cheese
- Optional: bacon for on the side, preferably thick slices



Konrad Peckolt Fordal
Bachelor’s student doing
Environmental Sciences

On Homes

Moving furniture around is a bit of a ritual that I happen to do often since moving to Wageningen. Perhaps it's a symptom of a need for change, or about rearranging thoughts together with space, or just following practical necessities or aesthetic wishes.

A student room is much more than just four walls where you sleep and study and occasionally clean. I don't know about others, but 13 square metres are enough for me to get attached to and transform into a nest I can call home for a while.

Today, I moved my desk, intending to create a little office corner with a video-conference-friendly background. I think I succeeded. In the past three years, I moved this desk approximately five times, which is a lot considering how small this space is and that I have only two walls available for reshuffling.

I look at my room today, after a month away, with fresh eyes. I realize how really me this is, how all the small but numerous changes I made have transformed this place into one that makes *me* feel comfortable and serene. I counted the dozens of plants, said goodbye to the summer martyr of the year, transplant-

ed newly rooted cuttings and cleared dead leaves. I sat back in the armchair, staring at the window. It's a Sunday; a housemate plays mellow jazz, the breeze moves the leaves of the hanging green creatures. I'm home.

What home means has changed a lot for me in these past years. A home's not

'HOME'S
NOT
A PLACE
AT ALL'

your mother-land, a home's not where your heart is, a home's not a place at all. You are your own home. You yourself are your own homeland. This is one of the most important things I learnt when I became a foreigner, an expat, when moving to the Netherlands. And this is what I always want to keep in mind for when I move again, change space again, restart again: I bring 'home' with me wherever I am. I'll do my best to feel at home in all my new adventures. How about you?

Column



Donatella Gasparro

Donatella Gasparro, who is originally from Italy, graduated recently at WUR with a Master's in Organic Agriculture. This week she started work as a lecturer for Leiden University, at the Institute of Environmental Sciences.

This is therefore her last column for Resource. We regret losing her as a columnist as we enjoyed her writing enormously, but we wish her all the best in Leiden. Thank you, Donna, for sharing your Wageningen student life with us!

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IN MEMORIAM

HUGO BESEMER

We were very sorry to receive the sad news in July that our library colleague Hugo Besemer had passed away at the age of 67. Hugo played a key role in the library. He was ahead of the field in innovative projects, and sought collaboration with organizations such as CABI, FAO, CGIAR, and CTA. Together with the ESG, he organized an international conference for GODAN (Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition). Hugo cared deeply about FAIRdata, and he saw the

'i-score' (for interoperability) as the most important factor in the sharing of data. Hugo was no slave to conventions and was always himself. He won respect for his knowledge of his field and his great capacity for empathy. Hugo was sharp, philosophical and caring, and he had a subtle feeling for language. That is how we shall go on remembering him for many years.

*Hugo's colleagues
at the library*

Colophon

Resource is the independent medium for students and staff at Wageningen University & Research. *Resource* reports and interprets the news and gives the context. New articles are posted daily on resource-online.nl. The magazine is published every fortnight on Thursday.

Contact Questions and comments for the editors: resource@wur.nl | www.resource-online.nl

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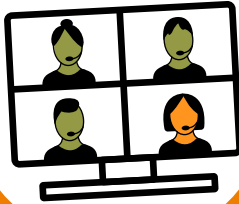
Publisher Sander Fransen, Corporate Communications & Marketing, WUR





'I am a teacher at WUR and I would like tips on how to better organize online group work. What works and what doesn't? I am also curious to hear from students!'

Jessica Duncan,
associate professor
of Rural Sociology



Camera on

'A good online environment is crucial. Teams works better than Skype or Brightspace, which often have bad connections. Also, a group of four to five students works best. Discussions are more problematic in larger groups. I find you then often get just two people doing the talking. It is also good for the teacher to join in the discussion occasionally to offer guidance. My final tip is to make it compulsory for students to turn on their webcam. The students don't always know the other people in their group, so it's nice to see their faces so you know who you're collaborating with.'

Milou Hendriks, Nutrition & Health Master's student

Join in via Teams

'There are a lot of applications that facilitate online group work. I advise teachers to use a single channel wherever possible for communication, course materials and group work. Brightspace offers integration options but they are still far from perfect. I am personally very impressed by Microsoft Teams. You can create separate channels for all your student groups. As the teacher, you can drop in on all the groups, listen to their discussions and give input. In this way, you replace groups in lecture rooms with breakout rooms.'

Ruud Wilbers, coordinator for Basics of Infectious Diseases

Keep it small

'Keep the groups small — about two to four students. It's more difficult to get to know one another online; in bigger online meetings, you can literally disappear into the background. With a small group, you can also work offline while keeping a distance of 1.5m. I would like to add that group work is even more important, perhaps indispensable, now. I personally have more difficulty with online courses without group work because then you are really on your own. First-years in particular are more likely to become socially isolated.'

Monique van Schie, Molecular Life Sciences Master's student

In-house expertise

'The Education Experience Team organizes feedback sessions that often highlight innovative methods for improving teaching at WUR. For example, if you have a tutorial in Teams, you can divide a large group into various subgroups. Its planner function can also be useful for brainstorming together or letting individual people ask questions. We are currently trying out Miro, an online whiteboard that makes it very easy to share textual and visual information. If you want more specific tips, you should definitely contact us (studentexperience@wur.nl)!'

Monica van Leeuwen, Education Experience PR team

WURRY

NEXT

'Teachers also like to drink a beer (or two) in the pub. But Wageningen is small and you soon bump into curious students. What should you do? Go to the pub in the next town along, or just take no notice?'

Mark, WUR teacher (full name known to the editor)

If you have advice or tips for this Wurrrier, send an email (max. 100 words) before 23 September to resource@wur.nl with subject 'noWURries #3'. If you need advice yourself, email your problem (max. 100 words) to resource@wur.nl with subject 'noWURries'.