

WUR from within: straight, sharp, transparent

No 01

Resource

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in Kabul continue?

Nitrogen study
raises questions

Fast transition from
cut-price chicken

Students get
vaccinated

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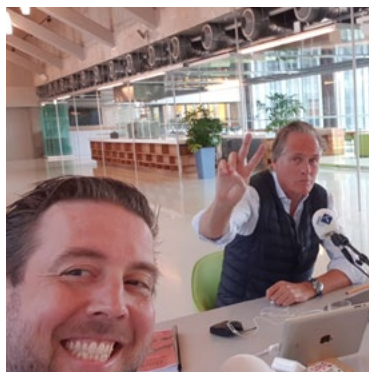
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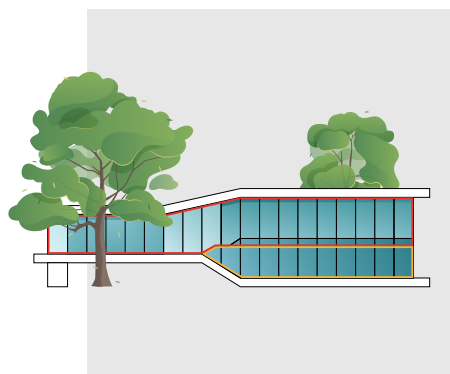
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FOREWORD

Dreams and dilemmas

Let's start with the dreams. Dreams that came true. Three WUR students got medals at the Olympic Games. We spoke to two of them and asked them what the Games were like for them and what their university plans are now (p. 22). In fact, that last question applies to every WUR student or teacher. Because they too are out of the starting blocks now the academic year has started with restrictions relaxed. The campus has finally come back to life! (See photo on opposite page.)

Staff can also look forward to a return to normal, at least to some extent. Unless there's a new Covid wave, we can work on campus more often in a few weeks' time. But that raises a dilemma, because the number of workstations is the same but the workforce has grown. The Executive Board tells *Resource* they don't want to lay down rules on hybrid working (partly from home, partly at the office); the teams should do that themselves. But have they managed this? How far have they got? *Resource* did the rounds and asked about initial experiences (p. 12). And that's what we will continue to do this year, as ever, with our journalistic reports on science, education and the organization. Please let us know if you have ideas on what we should investigate or write about: you can send an email to resource@wur.nl.

Willem Andree

editor-in-chief





Outline of polysaccharide part 1:

To provide you with a first view on the structural properties and variability of polysaccharides and how these variations affect functional properties

• Functionality and properties of polysaccharides (introduction)

• How to analyse polysaccharides (reader)

• Properties of selected polysaccharides
pectin/alginate/carrageenan/galactomannans/
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THEY'RE BACK

Here they were again, as if they had never left. The chock-full bike racks, the students hanging around the entrance to the Forum, the crowded Bornsesteeg. The academic year has yet to start officially but many students had their first classes last Monday. Another 'first' is that Aurora is now in use. The first students were being welcomed in the new education building even as construction work continued. Aurora = dawn. A new start in every sense. RK

Photo Guy Ackermans

Compulsory face masks and other Covid measures

Eighteen months after the start of the pandemic, campus education is the norm again. Albeit in a modified form and subject to conditions, such as max 75 students per classroom and compulsory face masks. An overview of the key measures.

A maximum applies of **75 students per classroom**. Those students don't have to keep 1.5 metres distance. Social distancing no longer applies in other teaching areas such as labs either.

Students and staff must wear a **face mask** when walking around campus buildings. They can take the face mask off in the classroom or when at their desk, unless the teacher asks them to keep masks on.

The online teaching guarantee no longer applies. So teachers do **not have to offer an online alternative** to students who get Covid or are in quarantine. If students end up with a delay in their studies as a result, they can apply for financial support (FOS). An online alternative *is* required for exams. Students who can't come to campus for a long period because of Covid (or worries about Covid) can contact the student counsellor (student.dean@wur.nl).

Students and staff are asked to do **two self-tests every week**, even if they are fully vaccinated. In the event of a positive test within three days of a campus activity, students have to inform their subject coordinator. Students sharing a house with someone with Covid must not come to campus. Self-isolating at home is not compulsory.

Canteens are open for take-away meals.

The eating areas are divided into sections with room for 75 students. There is less room to sit so staff are asked to eat outside or at their desks for the time being so that students who live a long way from campus can make use of the scarce seating.

Some 94 per cent of students will be vaccinated by mid-September. Staff and students who are not yet vaccinated can get **vaccinated without an appointment** on 8 and 9 September with the Janssen vaccine. LZ

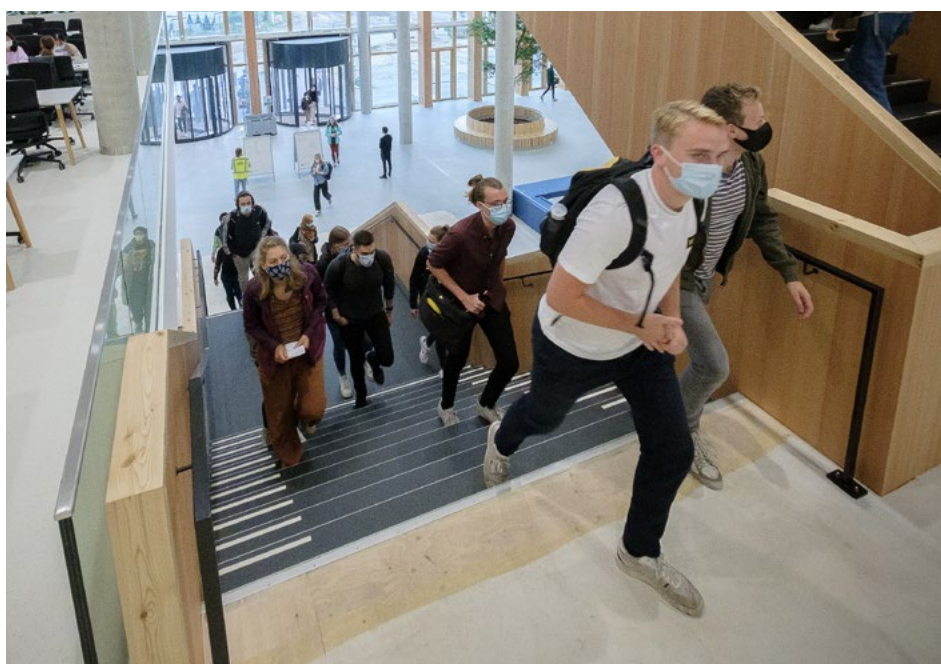


Photo Guy Ackermans

Nearly 95 per cent of WUR students vaccinated

94.3 per cent of WUR students are or will soon be fully vaccinated. A total of 87.6 per cent of current students are already fully vaccinated.

Around 7 per cent of students are in the vaccination process and a further 3.6 are considering vaccination. Just 2.1 per cent do not intend getting vaccinated. These results come from a survey among all Wageningen University students covering currently enrolled students and new first-years. 5941 students (39.3 per cent of the student population) took part in

the survey and gave permission for their information to be shared.

More, sooner, faster

This means the vaccination rate among Wageningen students is much higher than the national vaccination rate in the 18-25 age group. Nationally, just 52 per cent of this group was fully vaccinated as at 19 August, according to the public health authority RIVM's figures for that date. More students get vaccinated, and they do so sooner and faster than others in their age group.

Nutrition and Health programme director Rolf Martejijn analysed the results of the survey. 'The data show us that new non-EU students had a way to go as at 19 August. Around 80 students have been informed of the options for vaccination in the Netherlands.' Data from the Municipal Health Service show that some of these students have since been to the jab buses where you don't need an appointment. 'That means they will now be in the "in vaccination process" category,' says Martejijn. LZ

Our man in Kabul

Hans van Otterloo spent 10 years as head of the (WUR-supported) teacher training college in agricultural education in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. He is now in the Netherlands but wants to return. Once it's safe.

In the past couple of weeks since the Taliban captured Kabul, Van Otterloo, from Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, has been in constant contact with the 80 employees of the National Agriculture Education College (NAEC) to check whether they felt safe in Kabul. Most staff wanted to leave. He also discussed the situation with the Dutch embassy, who decided which employees would be on the evacuation list. So far three (former) Afghan directors and four female teachers have been evacuated and have arrived in the Netherlands. NAEC provides a two-year teacher training course for 200 students who go on to teach agriculture in Afghan schools. The centre plans to start a four-year Bachelor-level training programme for 300 students in the coming academic year.

Women

Van Otterloo has high hopes that this will go ahead. 'As far as I know, the Taliban has no problems with

the programme. We also develop curricula for agricultural education and we already worked with districts controlled by the Taliban. They think agricultural education is fine. What is less certain is whether they will allow education for women. At this point it looks like the Taliban will allow female education as long as girls are taught

'My guardian angel worked overtime'

by women. You can say that's a bad thing but Afghanistan is not a modern society.' Van Otterloo has not in fact been to Kabul for 18 months because of the pandemic. Before then, he spent years commuting regularly between Afghanistan and Dubai as the security situation deteriorated. 'I was there for 10 years but the situation got worse and worse. My guardian angel worked overtime.' He wants to return to Kabul once conditions improve. 'Mainly to hand things over properly to my Afghan colleagues. The college was set up to be run by Afghans with technical support from the Netherlands.' AS

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Fruit market in Kabul city centre. Photo Shutterstock/ Somphop Krittayaworagul

5

According to the Shanghai ranking, Wageningen is the best agricultural university for the fifth year in a row. But the Chinese universities are hard on its heels: Chinese investments in agricultural sciences are bearing fruit. After Wageningen (302 points) come the China Agricultural University (292 points), Nanjing Agricultural University (288) and Northwest A&F University (286). These three all scored a lot more points than last year. As

Shortage of rooms for first-years

Half the Dutch first-years still don't have a room, suggests a survey by *Resource* among 211 first-years during the introduction days. That is a lot more than a year ago, when many students carried on living at home because of Covid and the fact that classes were online. Idealis director Bart van As confirms the run on rooms. 'The first-years who stayed at home last year are looking for rooms now, and the normal demand from the current first-years comes on top of that.' He assumes that everyone will have found a room by 1 May.



Lots of cigarette ends on campus

Despite the ban on smoking, there are still thousands of cigarette ends to be found on campus, as WUR's Green Impact team headed by Marjolijn Dannenburg discovered in a study. For 20 days in May, they spent two hours a day picking up cigarette butts on campus. The result: 8591 butts. They published the data in the report *The Butt in the Drain*. Hotspots include the Bornsesteeg near Unifarm, the car park behind Zodiac and Campus Plaza. According to Dannenburg, the cigarette ends don't break down properly and they release harmful substances. She wants WUR to start a campaign to raise awareness of the environmental impact. Dannenburg has a simple solution for smokers: a special 'pocket', a little bag made of fire-resistant plastic you can put your cigarette end in. Available from her for 55 cents. RK

Bringing course to life

In the second-year course *Irrigation and Water Management*, students learn how to calculate how much water a crop needs and the optimum method and frequency for irrigation. Teacher Chris Seijger thought the course material needed livening up so he came up with the Tamacroppi challenge. Each student takes home one plant (onion, wheat, maize or soybean) and tries to keep it alive for as long as possible. The plants were handed out to students on campus last Monday. The name of the challenge refers to Tamagotchi, a small egg-shaped digital device containing a virtual pet that you had to look after. This was a craze in the 1990s. 'If the students take a plant home with them and look after it, hopefully that will help them better understand the complex concepts in this module,' says Seijger. Unifarm, the university's experimental crop farm, grew the crops in the greenhouses on campus. LZ



Photo Luuk Zegers

Less collaboration from home

Working from home makes it harder to collaborate with colleagues, according to WUR's latest biennial Employee Monitor.

As a working environment, home is no worse than the office except when it comes to collaborating. Working from home is not good for collaboration, as the report score of 3.3 shows.

But in general employees are very satisfied with their job at WUR. They gave scores of over 7 for nearly all topics (enthusiasm, engagement, satisfaction, atmosphere etc.), which is slightly up on two years ago. Taken as a whole, staff are satisfied (7.5) and proud of WUR (7.7), and they give their colleagues an 8.4. The research firm Effectory says these positive scores are exceptional. Many other organizations have not been able to

get such good results during the pandemic. WUR employees feel well informed about WUR's Covid policy and measures

WUR staff give their colleagues an 8.4

(7.5) and think they are being enabled to do their job effectively (7.0).

Work pressure

But there are some problems. Work pressure is as high as ever, with 44 per cent of staff saying the workload is high or even far too much. Many employees say

they are often too tired after work to do anything else. It seems little has changed since the previous monitor two years ago. That was also the conclusion of the ministry of Social Affairs Inspectorate in a recently published report.

The Inspectorate says the action plans to reduce work pressure focus too much on the individual and fail to tackle the underlying causes of the high workload. RK



WUR nitrogen study raises questions

MPs want to know why the ministry of Agriculture does not see any implications from a WUR study of critical nitrogen values.

That is the essence of a series of parliamentary questions put by Laura Bromet and Joris Thijssen (of the left-wing GroenLinks and PvdA parties respectively), prompted by an article in *Resource*. That article (on 14 June) was about a study looking at a new method to determine nature's response to nitrogen emissions.

In the study, lead researcher Wieger Wamelink and his team showed that the new method gave a reliable association between nitrogen deposition and the nature quality for 37 of the 61 habitats they examined. In 26 of those 37 habitats, nature was harmed

and biodiversity declined before the current critical threshold value was reached. However, that solid conclusion based on

The solid conclusion is missing from the report summary

the study, which Wamelink confirms in the *Resource* article, is missing in the report summary. Wamelink says that after some discussion, 'a summary was chosen that a broad readership will understand'. The results are still to be found elsewhere in the report.

No implications

The report was sent to the Lower House of Parliament in June. Agriculture minister Carola Schouten told parliament she does not yet envisage any implications from the report. She believes the results are insufficiently 'plausible' for too many habitat types. The MPs who submitted the parliamentary questions have their doubts about this. Bromet and Thijssen say the solid conclusion in the report 'probably has far-reaching implications' for the nitrogen emission targets, which may need to be even more rigorous. The MPs are still waiting for an answer to their questions. RK

Click chemistry makes fusilli-shaped polymer

A new method that WUR helped develop produces polymers shaped like fusilli pasta quickly and efficiently.

The method in question is an example of what is termed 'click chemistry'.

That is chemistry where the individual components click together like Lego bricks, explains professor of Organic Chemistry Han Zuilhof. In this case to form a polymer (for example plastics), a long chain of identical molecules, arranged like beads on a string.

'The polymer acts like a platform that you can click all kinds of things onto'

The basis of the chain is the small molecule SOF₄, a compound in which one atom of sulphur is doubly bonded to one atom of oxygen (S=O) and singly to four fluorine atoms (S-F). In the monomer, the beads in the chain, two of those S-F groups function as a kind of hook, explains Zuilhof. 'One of those hooks is used to attach the individual monomers to one another. The other hook is then available to click onto other molecules.'

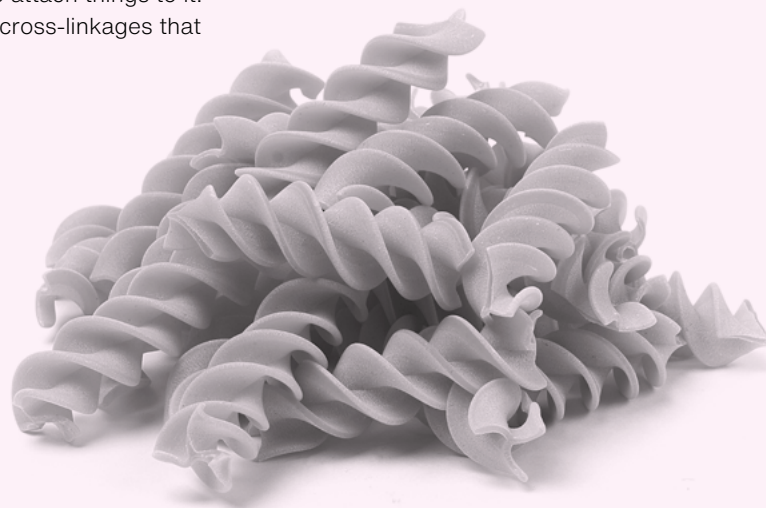
That sequence is essential. Zuilhof: 'The hooks react one after the other. The polymer chain is created first and only then can we attach things to it. That avoids any cross-linkages that

would cause a mess.' That sequence makes the method an interesting option for practical applications. 'The polymer acts like a platform that you can then click all kinds of things onto very efficiently,' says Zuilhof.

Pretty

At the nano scale, the polymer molecules look like fusilli pasta. Put more scientifically, they are helical. That structure was determined by Zuilhof's WUR colleague Sidharam Pujari. It is not yet clear whether the fusilli shape has benefits, says Zuilhof. 'What you can say is that it's pretty, but at present it's just a feature.'

Zuilhof explains that the new technique lets scientists 'make new materials rapidly and in a controlled way under mild reaction conditions.' Zuilhof's group is also doing this but he doesn't want to say more at this point. 'It took nearly two years before the publication was accepted, and we've made advances in the meantime.' RK





A Little Wiser

Is it OK to re-heat spinach?

It always used to be said that you mustn't re-heat spinach. But why not, actually? And is it true?

According to associate professor of Dietary Assessment Jeanne de Vries, this idea dates back to the time when not every household had a fridge. 'Spinach and other leafy vegetables contain nitrates, which are not bad for you as such,' she says. 'In fact, research has shown that nitrogen oxide, which is formed from nitrate, can lower your blood pressure, so it is good for your cardiovascular health.' But under certain conditions and at particular temperatures, bacteria convert nitrates into nitrite, which can then be converted into carcinogenic nitrosamines in the body. De Vries: 'That conversion of nitrate into nitrite only happens at high temperatures. The time it takes to cook or heat up spinach is short and doesn't give bacteria time to convert nitrate. So as long as you keep leftover spinach in the fridge in the interim, there's no problem.'

'Nitrate can also be converted into nitrite in your body. But the amount of nitrate we ingest through our food is very small.' It can cause problems for babies, however. Too much nitrite can cause Blue Baby Syndrome: nitrite binds to red blood cells in the bloodstream, preventing the cells from transporting oxygen. This process is less easily reversible in babies than in adults. Blue Baby Syndrome is usually caused by polluted drinking water and

occurs mostly in developing countries, where people in rural areas get their drinking water from wells.'

As with any substance, the toxicity of nitrite depends on how much you ingest. De Vries: 'With the amounts of leafy vegetables we eat, you don't generally consume too much nitrate. What is more, vegetables also contain antioxidants, and those prevent the conversion of nitrate. Also, our drinking water is purified and there are legal limits to the amount of nitrate that is permitted. Nitrites are actually added to processed meats to improve their shelf life and colour, and there are norms for that as well. Unlike vegetables, though, meat does not contain any antioxidants, which is why the Netherlands Nutrition Centre advises against frequent consumption of processed meats, due to their association with stomach and bowel cancers.'

Conclusion: It's no problem to re-heat spinach leftovers as long as you store them in the fridge. TL

'Vegetables contain antioxidants, which prevent the conversion of nitrate'

Jeanne de Vries,
associate professor of
Dietary Assessment

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

Illustration Marly Hendricks





Fewer animal experiments

The number of animal tests at WUR fell by a fifth last year, according to the annual report *Animal Experiments 2020*. This figure is somewhat misleading as 2019 saw a huge jump of nearly 40 per cent after years with a downward trend. In the longer term, animal testing numbers at WUR fluctuate at around 55,000.

Nearly three quarters of all animal experiments at WUR involve fish, mainly in the fish monitoring by Wageningen Research. WUR has a statutory task to monitor fish stocks in the North Sea. Since 2015, the fish that are caught have been counted as test animals. Fish also head the university's list: over half the 8108 animal tests involved fish. They were followed by chickens, pigs and cows.

A new name on the list is the golden hamster, which Wageningen Research used to test its Covid vaccines. RK




Photo Albert Sikkema

Pensioners build greenhouse for Nepal

Gerard Bot and Martien Beek, both 76 years old, have built a bamboo greenhouse on the Wageningen campus. The former WUR employees (Bot, a retired professor of Applied Physics, is an expert on greenhouse climate; Beek is an expert in plant breeding and crop protection) want to develop a greenhouse suitable for Nepal. The prototype cannot be built in Nepal due to the Covid crisis, so Wageningen it is. The greenhouse is made of bamboo and has been adapted to the climate in Nepal.

Many market gardeners in Nepal currently use plastic greenhouses from India, but these get too hot. The bamboo greenhouse has better ventilation. The two retirees are using bamboo because it is the cheapest building material in Nepal. They have been getting support from WUR's Greenhouse Horticulture group, the Technical University of Eindhoven, Unifarm and other companies. AS

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Computer spots wildlife

Counting wildlife on aerial photos leads to population estimates that are too low. The computer can do it better than the human eye.

This is the gist of the study with which ecologist Jasper Eikelboom got his PhD. He taught a computer to detect elephants, giraffes and zebras in aerial photos of African savannas.

Nature managers have been using aerial photos to estimate wildlife populations for 50 years. But the precision of this method leaves much to be desired. Estimates assume an underestimation of the real number of animals of up to 80 per cent. Eikelboom taught the computer program

RetinatNet to recognize wildlife in photos. His teaching materials were hundreds of aerial photos taken in two game parks in Kenya. The idea was: the more pictures the better. Eikelboom: 'There is a great deal of variety in what the program has to learn to recognize. How the light falls, for instance, the background, the angle at which the photo is taken, and so on.'

Exam photo

The algorithm learned fast. On 'exam photos', the program ended up seeing more than 90 per cent of the elephants, giraffes and zebras spotted by humans. So humans see more. But the computer also spotted animals the human eye missed. Altogether,

The computer spots up to 95 per cent of the animals in the photos

Eikelboom thinks the computer spots up to 95 per cent of the animals in the photo.

The computer works fast (one or two seconds per photo), is indefatigable, and can count the game on an area up to 10 times bigger than humans can map at the same cost, thinks Eikelboom. Altogether, that produces a much more precise estimate of the total number of animals present in an area. RK

Quinoa varieties respond to salt in different ways

Researchers from the Laboratory for Plant Breeding studied the growth and development of two quinoa varieties that were given water with increasing salt levels.

One of the quinoa varieties, Pasto, developed a preservation strategy, limiting its water uptake and therefore its growth. By contrast, the other variety, selRiobamba, developed a greedy strategy of growing as fast as possible in spite of the salt stress. The result is important for plant breeders wanting to develop new salt-tolerant crops, reports first author Viviana Jaramillo Roman in *Frontiers in Plant Sciences*.

Salinization of farmland is a growing problem around the world. Seed producers want new varieties that grow well in saline soils, but salt tolerance is a highly complex trait that involves multiple genes, which this research has identified. The research was done at the Netherlands Plant Eco-phenotyping Centre (NPEC) at WUR, where researchers precisely measure the effects of stress factors such as saltwater on the development of plants. The researchers measure, for example, the transpiration of the plants every three minutes for 11 weeks. AS



Photo shutterstock

Insect larvae make good fodder

The black soldier fly can replace soymeal as a source of protein in the diet of pigs.

A multidisciplinary research team from WUR and Leiden University studied two groups of eight pigs. One group was fed a conventional diet of soymeal as the protein source; the other group was given a diet of black soldier fly larvae. These insects were produced by Protix, a major Dutch producer of insect larvae for animal feed. The larvae can be grown on waste and residual products from the food industry, which makes them a sustainable alternative to soya.

The larvae are also a sustainable alternative to soya

The researchers fed the two groups of pigs, then measured their blood values and the bacterial composition in their intestines. The pigs that were fed the insect larvae had more bacteria in their intestines of the genus *Bifidobacterium*, which has been shown to have positive health effects in humans and animals. The researchers also have indications that the insect feed contains microbiota that suppress pathogenic bacteria. This suggests that insect feed is actually healthier than soya.

Permission

The researchers used a FeedOmics approach, explains lead researcher Soumia Kar of Wageningen Livestock Research. That meant they determined the impact of the diet in both the intestines and the blood to give a very detailed picture of the effect of the feed. They published the results in *Nature Scientific Reports*.

The study is very timely: the European Commission has recently given permission for protein from insects to be included in animal feed. Kar expects that to give the production of insects for animal feed a boost. AS

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Ban on cut-price chicken can speed up transition

Supermarkets will no longer sell fast-grown cut-price chicken from 2023. Consumers will pay more for chicken and there will be fewer broiler birds in the Netherlands, expects WUR poultry expert Peter van Horne.


From 2023, Dutch consumers will only be able to buy chicken with the Better Life label in supermarkets. Van Horne investigated the costs, revenue and income of poultry farmers who keep fast-growing chickens for cut-price meat and farmers with slower-growing broiler chickens. He concludes that incomes were about the same for all poultry farmers in 2017. The farmers producing meat for the Chicken of Tomorrow and Better Life (one-star) labels in supermar-

ket had higher costs but that was fully compensated by the higher prices they got from the abattoirs. Costs are 20 per cent higher for the Chicken of Tomorrow label and 44 per cent higher for the Better Life label compared with the old-style cut-price chicken. That is mainly due to fewer birds per square metre of barn space, higher feed costs per kilo of meat and a covered chicken run for the Better Life label.

animal welfare label conditions in 2023. 'That would be a very rapid transition to more animal-friendly meat.'

The end of the fast-grown cut-price chicken will also mean

consumers have to pay more for their chicken meat: cut-price chicken costs six euros per kilo, the Chicken of Tomorrow eight euros per kilo and the Better Life chicken about 12 euros per kilo. AS

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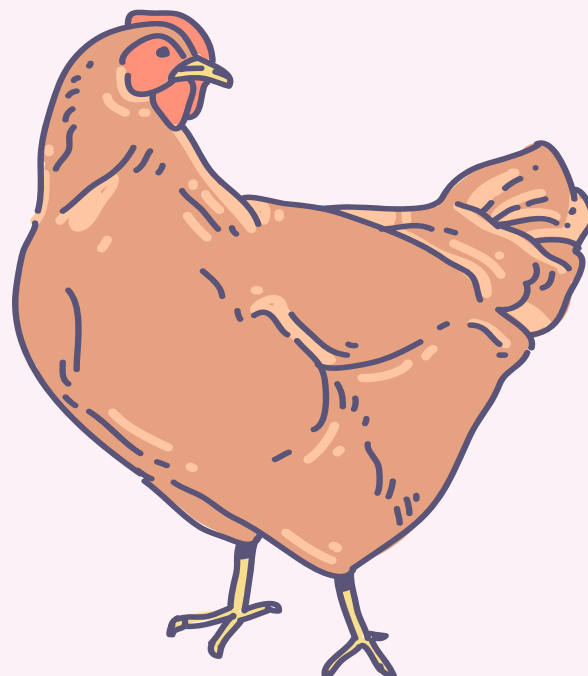
'Abattoirs should persuade farmers that they can earn a good income with Better Life chickens'

kets had higher costs but that was fully compensated by the higher prices they got from the abattoirs. Costs are 20 per cent higher for the Chicken of Tomorrow label and 44 per cent

Good income

Van Horne thinks nearly all poultry farmers who currently produce meat for the less strict Chicken of Tomorrow label will start producing Better Life chicken from 2023. He also expects the cut-price chicken farmers currently producing for the export market to switch to the Better Life label. 'These poultry farmers have had a bad year due to the pandemic and a fall in the export market. The abattoirs should try and persuade these farmers that they can earn a good income with Better Life chickens.'

Van Horne expects 45 to 50 per cent of Dutch broiler chickens to be farmed under



Prize for fire expert Stoof

Cathelijne Stoof, who does research on wildfires, was awarded a prize by the International Association of Wildland Fire for her work as a 'promising young scientist'. Stoof was presented with the prize, a glass flame, during a global online conference. She has made a name for herself with the broad scope of her research and her interdisciplinary approach. Stoof is making an impact internationally, for example with the PyroLife project, in which 15 PhD students from all over Europe are being trained as experts in fire

research. 'We aim to increase our understanding of how wildfires start and can become so extreme, and how we can design the landscape and prepare the population so that we can anticipate such situations.' Wildfires are coming in for more attention in the education programme too. In January Stoof will launch a new Master's course in Pyrogeography. 'In this course we shall study the biophysical and social aspects of fires. We'll go to the Peel nature reserve, for instance, where a big fire broke out last year.' AK

Home or office?

FIGURING OUT HYBRID WORKING

Provided Covid keeps at bay, we can get back to the campus in a couple of weeks. But while staff numbers have increased, the number of workstations on campus has not. Staff members will have to figure out together how they go about the new hybrid working week and how they will use the scarce office space. A tour of the science groups.

Text Roelof Kleis and Albert Sikkema • Illustration Alfred Heikamp

After a year and a half of online classes, campus life has started up again for students. As for staff, the way things look at the moment, they can return to campus on Monday 20 September. They will be met by a shortage of space. Staff numbers at WUR have gone up a lot during the Covid period. To accommodate this and further future growth, additional office space is needed between now and 2026. The Executive Board wants to deal with the space shortage both by saving space and by building.

Working at home and sharing workstations are therefore essential elements of the new Strategic Accommodation Plan 2021-2026. This plan still has to be approved by the WUR Council, though. Thanks to Covid, we've gained plenty of experience of working at home. Now, with the concept of hybrid working –

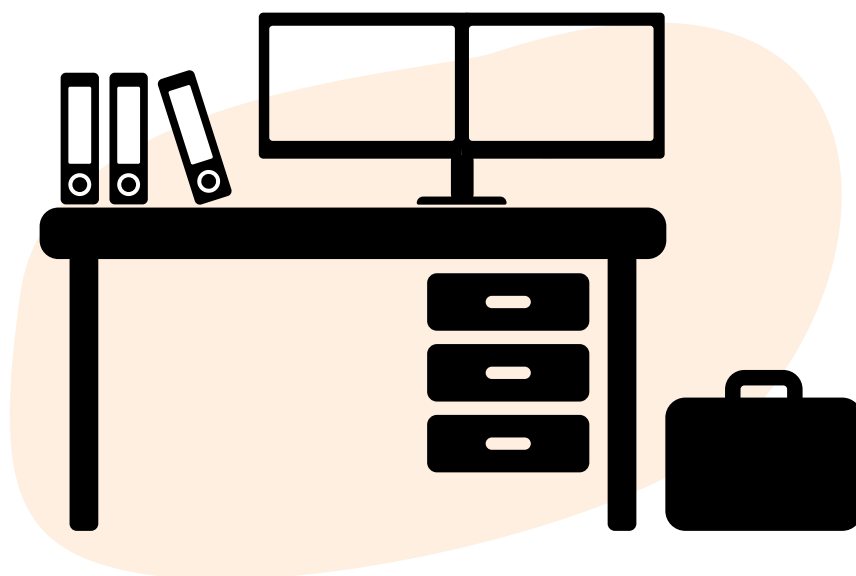
partly at home, partly in the office – an entirely new experiment lies ahead.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES GROUP

'No longer on autopilot'

'It will be an adventure,' says Ellen van Hattem of the Expedition Housing working group. 'We must see how we

can set up hybrid working with solutions for the short term.' The working group is developing a new housing plan to address both the transition to hybrid working and the growth of the Environmental Sciences Group (ESG). That growth is considerable: some chair groups have expanded by 30 per cent in the past couple of years. An important piece of input for the plan is the survey that the Works Council conducted just before the summer break. The responses



PLANT SCIENCES GROUP

'A lot of people don't like open plan offices'

The chair groups in the Plant Sciences Group don't have an accommodation plan yet. Three 'pilot groups' have started working on a plan: WUR directors and admin staff, Agrosystem Sciences, and the Genetics, Bio-informatics and Biosystems chair group. These plans are still at the exploratory stage. The pilot groups are being supported by WorkWire, an external consultancy. The process kicked off with a survey before the summer break, and the next stage is workshops. Around the building, opinion is

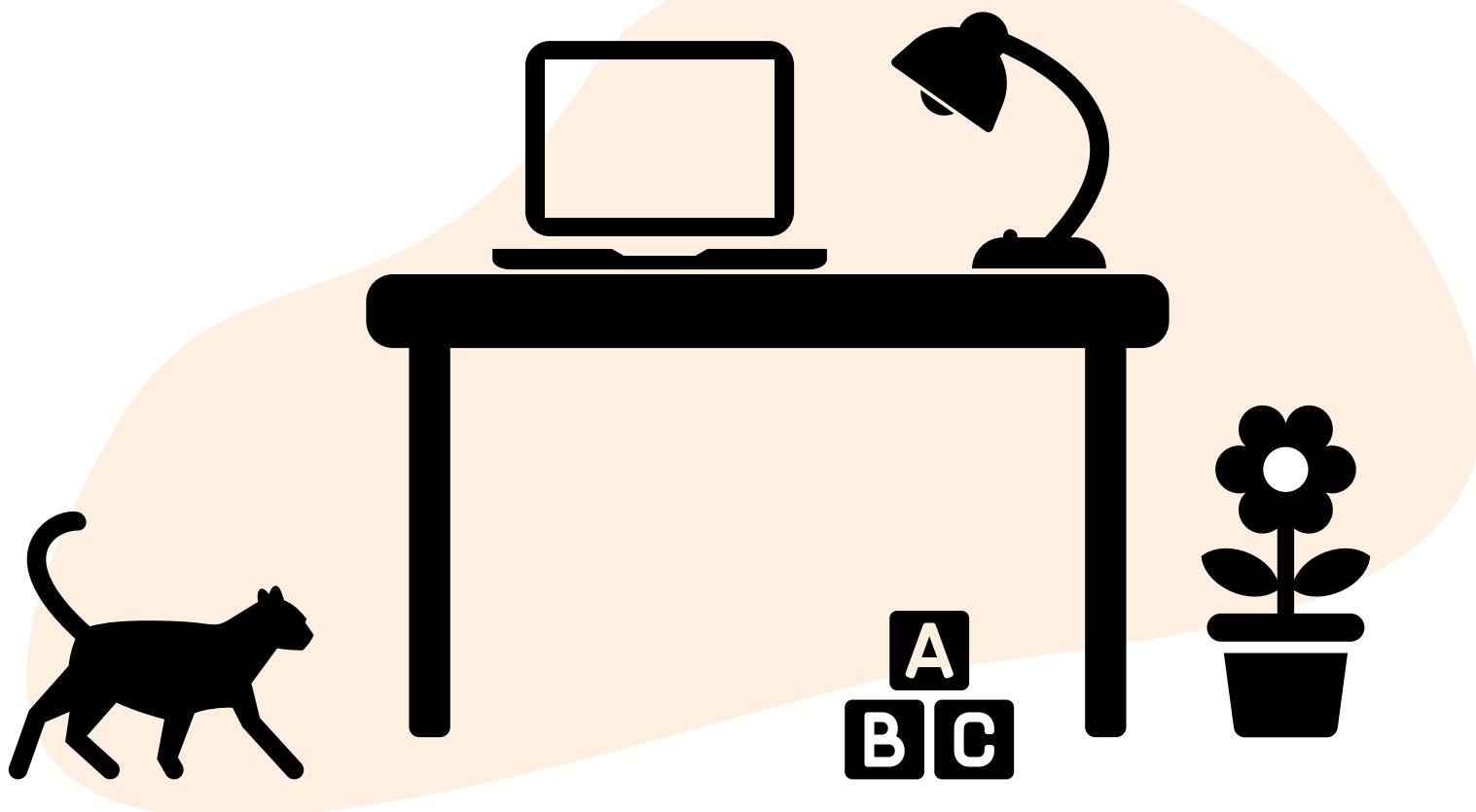
show that working at home is popular: more than half the ESG staff say they can work from home very well. But if they work in the office they would rather not work at a hot desk. The working group has also gathered information about where the bottlenecks lie by interviewing team leaders and chair holders. All this should lead to a proposal this year, and the changes should be implemented by the middle of next year. 'But don't expect a complete makeover of the building,' she says. 'The transition to hybrid working is a process. Some of the staff want to work at home. There will be no more just getting into the car to go to the office on autopilot. People will think about what they want to do that day, who they want to meet, and whether they need to go to campus to do so. It's going to be interesting to see how we go about it together, and how we organize it.'

divided on sharing desks, says Hein Stallinga of the Works Council. 'Researchers mainly do concentrated work. Many of them don't think that goes well with the open-plan office in which you have to find a new desk every day.'

SOCIAL SCIENCES GROUP

'Half want to work at home two to three days a week'

'I don't think everyone is going to come back to the campus,' says operations director Lisa van Bemmelen. 'It will be a tight squeeze in some places. Wageningen Economic Research and the Leeuwenborch, in particular, have expanded a lot.' A survey by the Works Council confirms Van Bemmelen's hunch: a clear majority of the employees want to work at home part of the time. In fact,



half want to do so for two to three days a week, says spokesperson Emil Georgiev. People say they find working at home less stressful. Georgiev: 'There's an explanation for that. Working at home makes it easier to combine professional and domestic work. People work more efficiently at home, you don't get the stress of commuting and people take less time off.' Together with a working group called Hybrid Working at SSG, Van Bommel is drawing up a list of the wishes and needs of the various departments in relation to hybrid working. 'Adjustments will be needed here and there. In The Hague and in Atlas people are already working flexibly, without desks of their own. But the Leeuwenborch is still a traditional building. You need adjustable desks, for instance, so they can be shared. Some departments actually want fewer workstations and more spaces for meetings. You don't need major renovations to achieve that. From the responses we've had so far, no big problems arise. The main thing is to make clear arrangements among yourselves. Hybrid working is new for a lot of people. It will really be a case of learning from experience.'

AGROTECHNOLOGY & FOOD SCIENCES GROUP

'Not keen to give up their own desks'

There is an acute shortage of space at the Agrotechnology & Food Sciences Group (AFSG), and it can't be solved with flexible or hybrid working. So a new building is to go up behind Axis on what is now a carpark at the Bornsesteeg. Part of that building is for groups from AFSG. The need for office and lab space has now

been documented. 'In parallel with that, we're thinking about how we are going to introduce flexible and hybrid working,' says Ellard Hooiveld of the AFSG Works Council. 'A lot of staff would quite like to work at home part of the time, we learned from a survey we did last year. But hot-desking is a different story: 90 per cent were against that. A more recent poll by management pointed in the same direction. People are positive about working at home, but negative about giving up their own desks.' Two working groups (for lab and office space) are going to work on how to introduce the flexible working week, says Hooiveld. 'That should give us a kind of toolbox from which chair groups and business units can take what they need and can use. But when it comes to hybrid working, nothing has been done yet.'

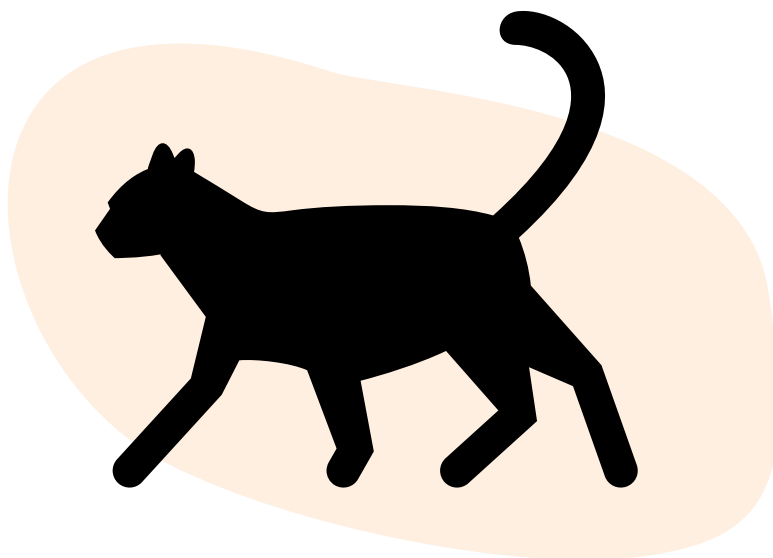
ANIMAL SCIENCES GROUP

'A lot of location-based work'

The chair groups in the Animal Sciences Group (ASG) are in relatively cramped

accommodation in Zodiac. During the Covid period, a lot of new staff joined the various chair groups and Livestock Research. When the staff come back to campus, a lot of groups will have a serious problem. The question is, in fact: how can all the groups cut their use of space by 15 per cent to cope with the growth? Discussions were held on this before the summer break, says Leon de Jonge, chair of ASG's Works Council. Several difficulties came to light. 'Some people can't work well at home because of their home situations. For other people, like lab staff, who do a lot of location-based work, working at home is not an option. Thirdly, a lot of staff are attached to their own desks and don't want to give them up.'

The next number of Resource will include an in-depth article about the Aquaculture and Fisheries chair group, which has found a solution to the space problem: one combined fixed workplace.



Debunking

Last Saturday I was in a deserted University of Amsterdam building for a broadcast of *Dr Kelder and Co* on Radio 1. There's always something spooky about an empty education building, so as I listened to my steps echoing down the corridor, I was particularly excited to hear that we can soon teach in-person again.

I'd been invited on the programme because they wanted to hear a bit about the combination of artificial intelligence and nutrition. In the course of the preparations, it became clear that the editors were particularly interested in learning more about nutritional hypes, so the item got increasingly focussed on hypes, and in particular the – never proven (!) – relation between gluten and brain diseases. One of the most interesting questions during the interview was 'why we in Wageningen always react so strongly to these kinds of hypes'. Apart from the amusing irony that I was invited on the programme to react to a food hype, only to be asked why we always react to them, this is an insoluble problem for me. Science is, with a few exceptions, a complex and cumulative process that doesn't lead up to a media moment with a lot of fanfare. Hypes, by contrast, whether food-related or not, often claim massive



Guido Camps

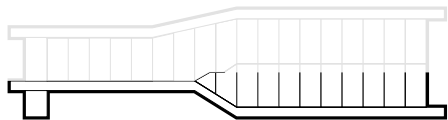
worldview or paradigm shifts ('bread/milk/starch always seemed such a harmless food, but it's the main reason you are tired/ weak/ unwell!') A hype has a short, appealing one-liner and is easy to explain. Debunking it, on the other hand,

'In the course of the preparations, it became clear that the editors were particularly interested in nutritional hypes'

takes effort, a sound knowledge base, and an understanding of relative risks. No wonder the media and the public are crazy about hypes. They are

the tasty little snack to science's square meal of whole grains and vegetables. Enough to make you despair, isn't it? Well, that's the attitude I sometimes see among my colleagues. But my reaction is different: hypes – including hypes that are plain wrong – call for endless explanation from scientists, and they generate public interest in science. Occasionally, they even lead to a re-examination of our own assumptions. Long live hypes! And long live the debunking of hypes!

Guido Camps (37) is a vet and a postdoc at the Human Nutrition department. He enjoys baking, beekeeping and unusual animals.



GROUND FLOOR →

① Breakout rooms

On the ground floor there will be seven breakout rooms in which a maximum of 30 people can meet. Three of these can be merged to create a room for 90 people. During conferences these rooms can be used in combination with the other rooms for training courses and workshops, or for livestreaming conferences and meetings elsewhere.

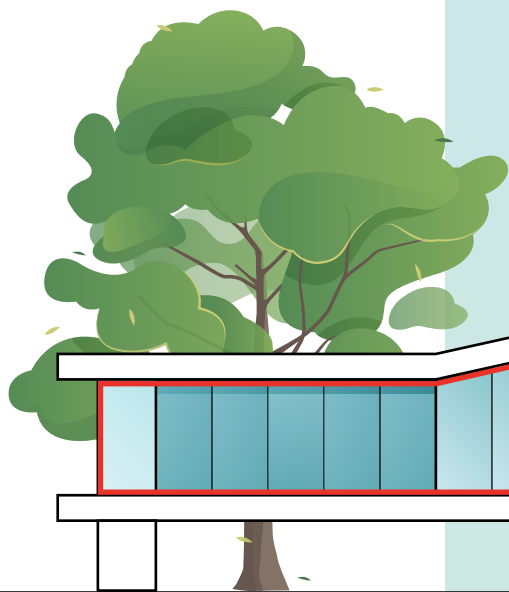
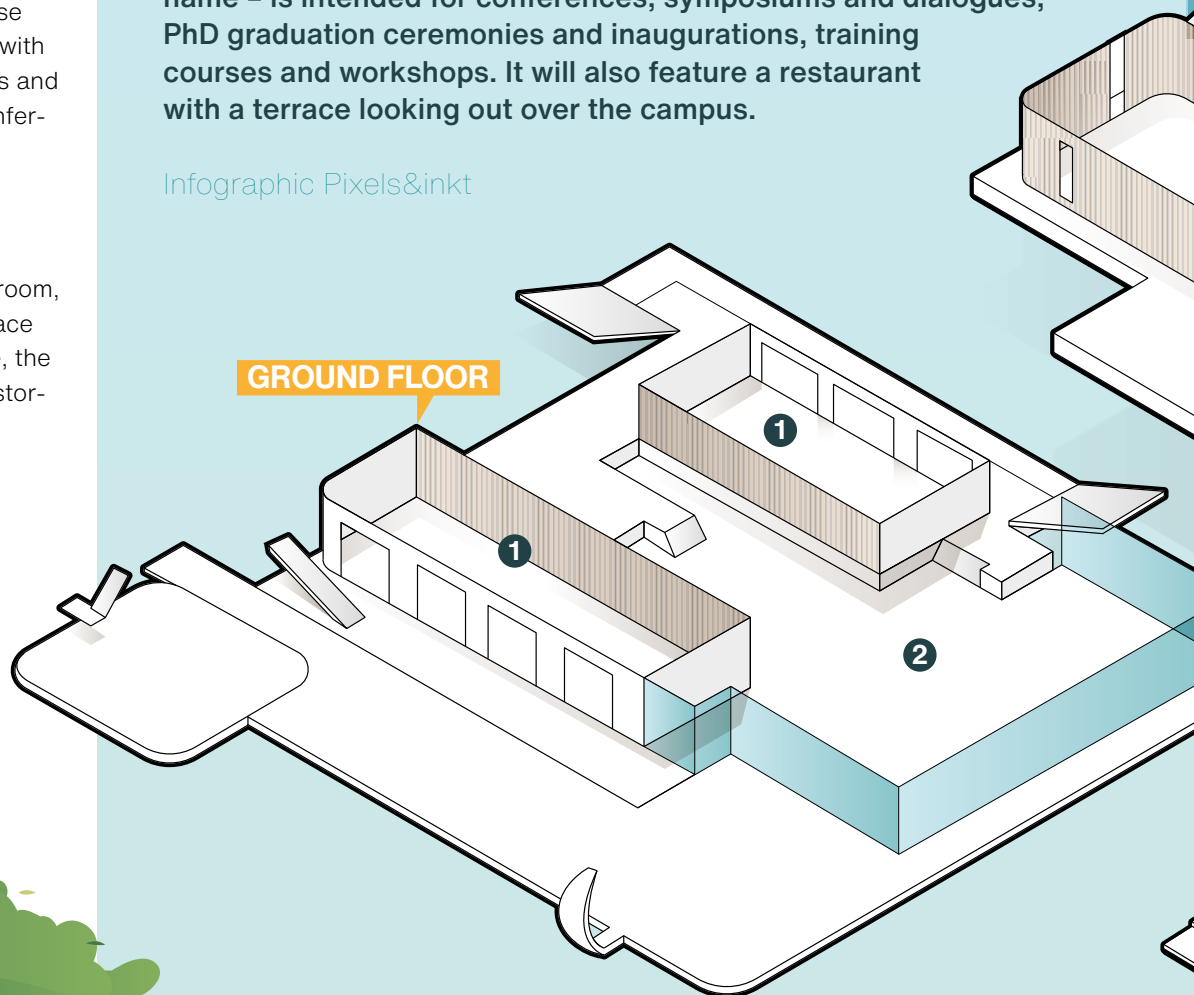
② Facilitation space

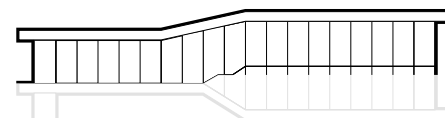
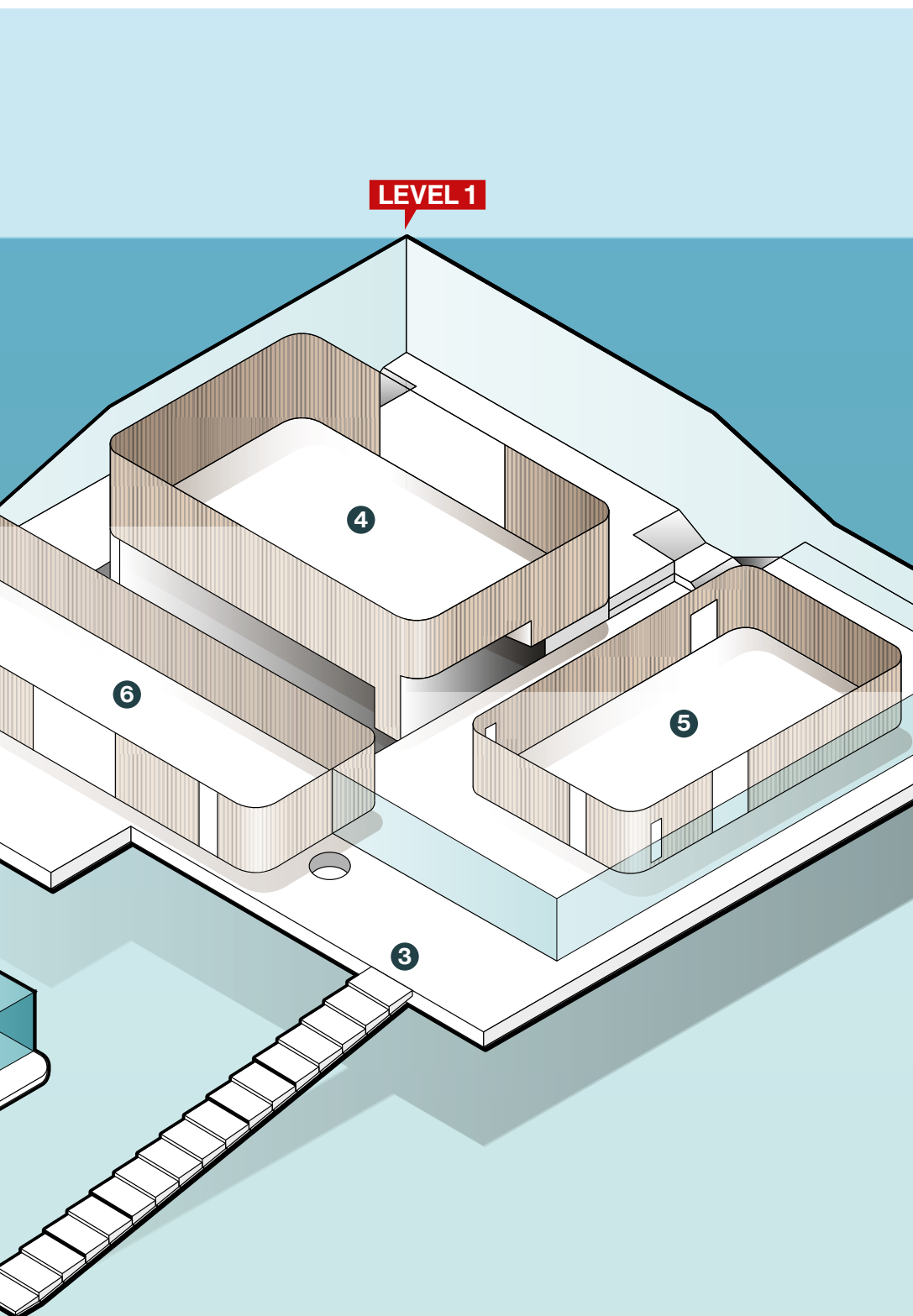
The facility areas are found on the ground floor. There is a ventilation room, for example, a furniture store, a space where PhD candidates can prepare, the academic gown store, and bicycle storage space.

WELCOME TO THE DIALOGUE CENTRE

The Dialogue Centre on campus is due to open in May 2022. Construction is in full swing. The building – still to get its official name – is intended for conferences, symposiums and dialogues, PhD graduation ceremonies and inaugurations, training courses and workshops. It will also feature a restaurant with a terrace looking out over the campus.

Infographic Pixels&inkt





← LEVEL 1

③ Foyer

The foyer is the reception area during conferences. This is where you'll find the desk where you collect your badge and information. It will be an open, well-lit space with glass outer walls, symbolizing connection with the outside world.

④ The main auditorium

The main auditorium with 272 seats is for conferences and symposiums, the opening of the academic year, inaugurations, and Founders Day and graduation ceremonies. Capacity can be increased using online links with the other rooms. Thanks to the U-shaped seating arrangement, participants can see each other.

⑤ Thesis defence auditorium

The thesis defence auditorium has a stage with two tables, the traditional setup for PhD ceremonies and 108 seats for the audience. This room will be used on three to four days a week for PhD ceremonies, and it can be rented for small symposiums or – in combination with larger auditoriums – big conferences. The auditorium has its own foyer for drinks afterwards. The walls are hung with portraits of Wageningen rectors.

⑥ Faculty Club

The Faculty Club has a restaurant and a reception area for guests. The restaurant seats 62 and will provide food to *Bib Gourmand* standard. This is the Michelin label for 'exceptional value for money'. WUR is currently recruiting a caterer. Adjoining the Faculty Club is the Dialogue Centre's terrace, which looks out over the campus.

More info

The Dialogue Centre is available to both internal and external users. More information: chris.vankreij@wur.nl; 0317-483820. Impulse will continue to provide a podium for small-scale events such as lunchtime concerts and lectures. More information: nicolien.pieterse@wur.nl 0317-484479

OYSTERS IN THE WAVE POOL

Wageningen and Delft researchers are studying how oysters react to currents in a mini-North Sea. *Resource* spent a day with them.



Text Tessa Louwerens

At the entrance to what looks like a vast factory floor, researchers Oscar Bos, a marine ecologist at Wageningen Marine Research, Tim Raaijmakers, an offshore engineering researcher at Deltares, and I put on our safety shoes. We are at Deltares research institute in Delft, where the two researchers are studying the behaviour of oysters in an enormous wave pool with sand on the floor and a stone 'dyke' around the sides. Machinery buzzes and pumps away in the hall, and we have to talk loudly to be heard above the din. 'Here we have scale models of various waterworks,' Raaijmakers explains proudly as we walk over to the Atlantic Basin, an enormous pool of 650 square metres, where the researchers have simulated a mini-North Sea.

In my wading suit I follow Bos and Raaijmakers up some rickety steps into the 'sea'. The water is shallow, and the large suit seems a bit over the top. But then both researchers kneel down in the water and start placing the brightly coloured oysters in neat rows on the sandy floor. They are clearly enjoying themselves. 'We do most of our work at the computer,' says Raaijmakers, 'so a day like this is a nice change.' A bit later, the three of us are back at the railing of the pool when the alarm goes off: machines start up and before long, the first waves ripple through the water. I must admit, I had expected something

a bit more sensational. But instead of a choppy sea, there are gentle waves such as you might see in a sheltered bay. 'We simulate the current you would find in the deepest water in the North Sea,' says Raaijmakers. The researchers want to find out how the oysters react to the current they experience in their natural environment.

Restoring oyster banks

This knowledge should help with the restoration of the flat oyster banks (for *Ostrea edulis*) in the North Sea. The restoration is needed because oyster banks – just like tropical coral reefs – are an important link in the ecosystem. 'They filter the water and provide a resting place for fish such as plaice and cod,' says Bos. 'In turn those fish attract sharks, rays, porpoises and seals.' Soft corals grow on the shellfish banks, where fish can spawn and birds feed on shrimps and little fish that live around oyster banks. Another function of the oyster banks is to form natural breakwaters that protect the coast. A century and a half ago, one third of the bed of the Dutch North Sea was covered in flat-oyster banks, says Bos.

'WITH THIS MODEL WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO FORECAST MUCH MORE PRECISELY WHERE OYSTERS WILL END UP'



Oscar Bos (left), a marine ecologist at Wageningen Marine Research, and Tim Raaijmakers, an offshore engineering researcher at Deltares, place oysters in a test pool to see how waves affect the oysters' location. Photo Tessa Louwerens

‘Through a combination of overfishing, diseases, pollution and cold winters, the flat oyster has now almost entirely disappeared from the North Sea.’ And they don’t come back easily: once there are not many oysters, the chances of successful breeding are small, if only because their sex life is complicated (see inset).

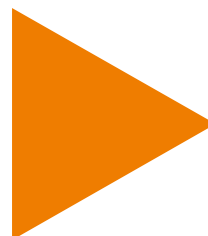
The researchers are working with the shellfish industry within the ECO-Friend project to introduce oysters at offshore wind farms in the North Sea. ‘Offshore wind farms are a suitable location for releasing oysters, partly because those locations are not accessible for bottom-trawling fishing boats.’ Pilot studies are already up and running, including at

the Borkumse Stenen, north of Schiermonnikoog island, and the Gemini Wind Farm, north of Groningen.

Washed away

One of the problems faced by the researchers in the field is that it can be impossible to find oysters again after releasing them, so you cannot monitor how they fare. To get a better understanding of what goes on underwater, the researchers are simulating what happens to the oysters on a small scale in the Delft pool. This is what brought Bos and Raaijmakers together. ‘It’s a nice combination of technical and ecological knowledge,’ explains Bos. ‘One of the first things Tim asked me was: what

is the size and density of the oysters? That’s not the sort of thing I think about as a biologist.’ Raaijmakers is pleased with the collaboration too. ‘We are interested in nature-inclusive engineering and how that works best. For example, we make scale models of the base of a wind turbine and the seabed protection around it, and then we can see which type of substrate can best be added to it so the oyster larvae can attach





Resource editor Tessa Louwerens steps into the test pool to follow the research from close quarters. Photo Oscar Bos



The researchers use colours to indicate the size and shell density of the oyster. The stripe shows whether an oyster is lying on its flat or its rounded side. Photo Oscar Bos

themselves to it. Biological knowledge is indispensable for that.'

The nice thing about the test pool is that the researchers can simulate difference conditions to see what effect they have. They sort the oysters by size and shell density. They also add weight to the oysters by filling the shell with little metal balls. Red shells are the lightest, green ones are medium-weight, and the blue ones are the real heavyweights. A stripe is added to the flat side of the shell, to which the oysters owe their name, so the researchers can see whether the oyster is lying on its flat or its rounded side. If oysters land on their rounded side, they are less streamlined so the current can carry them off more easily.

The surface of the water in the pool is smooth again now, peace has returned and it's time to see what the 'damage' is. Cameras, both underwater and above water, record the situation precisely. Raaijmakers: 'With this model we hope to be able to forecast much more precisely where oysters will end up, depending on things like the weather

conditions when they are released or in the days between their release and the monitoring.'

Fall test

Besides the current, another factor is the height at which the oysters are dropped into the water. At sea, this is done with a kind of crate controlled remotely. So the researchers have created a fall test next to the wave pool. This is basically a large vertical tube of water with which they can establish for every shape and weight of oyster how fast it reaches the bottom of the tube. Some oysters sink like stones, while other float down more like leaves falling off a tree. 'You can imagine that oysters that take longer to fall will drift further with the current before reaching the seabed,' says Raaijmakers. 'We don't want them all landing in a heap, says Bos, 'but if they land too far apart, it makes it harder to monitor them, and they won't be able to breed easily either.'

The researchers expect their first results in a few weeks. ■

MALE AND FEMALE

The reproduction of the flat oyster is a bit complicated. Oysters start out in life as male. After eight to 10 months in seawater of at least 12 degrees they reach sexual maturity. After three to four years, at water temperatures that gradually go up to 15-16 degrees, they change sex. After that they can switch between sexes. In the mating season (July and August), the males release sperm into the water. The females 'breathe in' this sperm through their shell cavity and fertilize their eggs with them. One or two weeks later, they blow the larvae out of their shell. For the first few weeks the larvae swim in the top layer of water and then they sink to the bottom. The baby oyster then needs to find a hard, calcareous surface to attach itself to, and spend the rest of its life there. Only a small percentage of the larvae succeed in this, and the rest die. Flat oysters are fit for consumption after five or six years, but they can live for 20 years and grow to 15 centimetres.



UNIQUE houses

There are student houses and there are weird and wonderful student houses. Our new feature 'UNIQUE houses' is about the latter.

Wessel: 'There was a castle just down the road once. Our house is so crooked because it was built on the old castle moat, which caused it to subside. It was built in 1902 and it became a student house in 1975. You can feel that it's crooked when you walk around the house. It's really weird to start with, but you get used to it. Upstairs there's a room in which you can't put an office chair on wheels because it would just roll to the lower side of the house. It can be quite handy if you've drunk a bit too much because it compensates...' **Anouk:** 'But we wouldn't know anything about that, haha. Nothing is level here. We had a glazier and an odd-job man here not long ago. They were so amazed: everything had to be custom-made. It's nice living here and

we sometimes call ourselves "the little family". A bit cutesy, perhaps, but we do a lot of stuff together. The agreement is that we only cook one meal a day and you join in if you can.' **Joost:** 'The history of this building will never get lost: everything in our house has a story and we pass it on orally to the new residents. For example, there are hundreds of photos of blonde children on the wall in the hall. Hung there once by a resident whose girlfriend worked as a photographer at Ouwehands Zoo. She went abroad for six months and she put these photos up to scare off any potential one-night stands. That turns out not to work very well, haha. Also, one of the photos is upside down and two of them are identical. Anyone who doesn't live here who can find all three gets a bottle of Beerenburg – our house tipples. WA

House :
The Crooked House

Residents :
Anouk Verstappen (22, Master's in Nutrition and Health), Wessel van der Meer (21, Soil, Water, Atmosphere), Joost van der Lee (20, Biology), Thomas Kloezeleman (21, Master's in Management, Economics and Consumer Studies) and Yvonne Lemlijn (22, Nutrition and Health). The Crooked House is for SSR-W students. You don't apply for it: you live here by invitation

Unique because :
the house is wonky

If you too want your UNIQUE house in *Resource*, send an email to resource@wur.nl



From the top down: Wessel, Anouk and Joost. Photo Guy Ackermans

Three WUR students win Olympic medals in Tokyo

'I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES'

It's every top sportsperson's dream to win a medal at the Olympic Games. For athletes Emma Oosterwegel and Femke Bol and hockey player Frédérique Matla – all WUR students – that dream came true.



Text Luuk Zegers

Hockey player Frédérique Matla (24) plays for Den Bosch Hockey Club and the Dutch women's team, is one of six nominees for the international Women's Hockey Player of the Year prize and... is studying Health and Society at Wageningen. At the Olympic Games, Matla and her teammates became the champions in a glorious fashion, winning all eight matches.

Matla looks back on the Olympic gold medal from a beach in Greece. 'This has been a dream of mine since I was a child. I joined the Dutch team after the previous Games in Rio, so I've been able to work towards this for five years. It's the peak of my career so far. We had to wait for it because of Covid-19, but perhaps that just makes it even more special.'

Bubble

'We all formed a bubble and stuck together from then on. I just loved being on the pitch with the team. I hope one day I can experience a normal Olympic Games as well.' Matla may be one of the best hockey players in the world, but she still sees her sport as a hobby. 'You can earn big money in football, but that's not the case with hockey. So it is not that I won't need to work again after my sporting career. My parents encouraged me to go to university. I chose Wageningen and moved there straightaway. In the first year I passed all my courses, but after that I joined the national team and my stud-

ies slowed down a bit. After one year in Wageningen I moved to Den Bosch, where I now live near the hockey club.'

Matla wants to start on her Bachelor's thesis in September. 'That will take me a year. After that I want to do a Master's but I don't know where and when yet. I'll see about that when I've got more headspace, after my Bachelor's.'

Hurdles and heptathlon

WUR students won medals for athletics too. Femke Bol (21, BSc student of Communication and Life Sciences) won a bronze medal in the 400 metres hurdles (with a European record). And she and her teammates came sixth in the 4x400 metre relay, setting a new Dutch record. Her fellow athlete Emma Oosterwegel (23, BSc student of Soil, Water, Atmosphere) surprised everybody including herself by winning a bronze medal in the heptathlon, an athletics event with seven components divided over two days.

'I got off to a good start on the first day of the event,' says Oosterwegel. 'I set a new personal record in the 100 metre hurdles, I equalled my personal record in the high jump, the shot put didn't go so well but in the 200 metres I won my series with a personal record.' At the end of the first day, Oosterwegel was 11th in the rank-



Emma Oosterwegel. Photo EPA / Christian Bruna

‘THIS HAS BEEN A
DREAM OF MINE SINCE
CHILDHOOD’

‘STANDING ON THE
PODIUM TOGETHER WAS
VERY SPECIAL’

ing. ‘On day two I often go up a few places. I didn’t sleep well at all that night. Maybe I felt subconsciously that something great could happen.’

Together on the podium

So Oosterwegel started out tired on day two. ‘Luckily, I was able to flick a switch as soon as the first event started, and I could concentrate well. I achieved my second-best distance in the long jump, bringing me to eighth place. In the javelin I broke yet another personal record: 54.60 metres, putting me in fourth place in

the ranking, just behind an American athlete and fifty points behind a Belgian one. Just one thing counted then: to run very fast in the 800 metres. On the one hand, it was nerve-racking, but on the other hand, you realize: wow, I’m in the running for a medal.’

After a strong 800 metres, Oosterwegel had a total of 6590 points, a clear personal record that won her a bronze medal. ‘I couldn’t believe my eyes when I saw on the scoreboard that I had come third. How could this be happening? And Anouk Vetter, who I train with, came second. Standing on the podium together was very special.’

Elite sport and university

Online classes during the coronavirus pandemic made it a lot easier for Oosterwegel to combine elite sport with studying. ‘Because I could take courses from a distance and could watch lectures later, it was all a lot easier. That has had a positive effect on my university results. Online education is no longer guaranteed now, but I only have to do one more course and a thesis, so that will be alright.’

Oosterwegel wants to do a Master’s after her Bachelor’s. ‘I don’t know which one yet. Maybe I’ll take a year off first, which could be nice in terms of athletics. And I’m hoping to be fully fit at the Olympic Games again in three years, although that’s a long way off now. For now I’m going to focus on the European Championships and the World Championships next year.’ ■

The strength of small student societies

A tight network

You name it, Wageningen has a club for it. After the introduction days (AID), everyone has heard of the main student societies with their clubhouses, year groups and publicity teams. But what is it like to belong to a small student society? What brings these people together, what do they do, and who organizes it?

Text Coretta Jongeling • Photo Guy Ackermans

Lodi van Herwijnen (Ichthus, 60 members), Eva Everloo (Vegan Student Association, 50 members), Anne Swinkels (Yggdrasilstam, 31 members) and Rick Baats (Brabant Student Guild, 37 members) are all members of a 'mini' society. To introduce them briefly: Ichthus is a Christian society, which is not linked to one specific denomination. The 'Ichthians' get together every week in Ons Huis community centre and run events including the annual Saint Pancake's day, when they

make hundreds of pancakes. The Vegan Student Association (VSA) is all about – no surprises here – the vegan diet and all that it entails, such as ethical, environmental and health aspects. They often get together at ThuisWageningen or meet out of doors. The Yggdrasilstam is a scout pack, which shares a clubhouse in the woods with the Wageningen scouts. The Brabant Student Guild (BSG) is primarily (but not exclusively) for students from Brabant province, spends a weekend a year in a Brabant village, and came into

existence, rumour has it, after a row about whether Bavaria counts as a drinkable beer.

So what convinced the students to join these clubs? Van Herwijnen: 'Ichthus members share the same worldview so you understand each other better. At the same time, the membership is very diverse and that appealed to me.' Baats was initially attracted to BSG out

'You can invite the whole society to your home'



Small societies at the AID intro market. Photo Guy Ackermans

of amusement. 'When you first arrive in Wageningen you hear loads of crazy stories about the big societies. I saw the funny side of joining such a tiny little club.'

Small but diverse

You might assume that the student scout pack mainly exists for students who were scouts as kids, but that is not the case, says Swinkels. 'We have members who've been scouts since they were four, but we also have people who've never tied a knot or pitched a tent in their lives. That makes for some nice interaction, and we also have activities like cocktail parties or laser gaming. It's not all cooking over a campfire.'

Activities are diverse in the other societies too. Needless to say, the Vegan club often eat together, but they also host lectures, workshops and drinks parties, says Everloo. And in Ichthus, the Praise & Prayer evenings are popular, but they run sporting activities and games evenings too.

More say

Precisely because the society is so small, everyone can have a lot of say in what happens on club nights. Swinkels: 'We really do decide for ourselves what the programme is going to look like. With us, you have far more say in things than in a big society.' Van Herwijnen, from

Ichthus: 'Because we are so small, there's a serious chance that you will do a year on the board at some point. Then you can really influence policy and the direction the club goes in. And you can invite the whole society to your house.' Other advantages are mentioned too: there are few obligations, you know everyone, the ties are closer. Everloo: 'You always see the same people at activities, and you pick up the conversation where you left off last time. You really make lasting friendships.' Swinkels agrees: 'It feels like an extended friendship group. But it is big enough to choose who you hang out with; you are not saddled with each other.' The only disadvantage? Baats: 'It can be difficult to find people who want to be on the board. It is a lot of work, and we don't have a big pool of people to choose from.'

Charm

So a few more members might not be a bad idea. What if 300 people signed up after this AID? Would that be cause for celebration? 'Well, a slight expansion would be fine. About 90 members would be terrific, but we don't really want more than that,' says Van Herwijnen of Ichthus. The scout pack doesn't need to get any bigger either, says Swinkels. 'The strength of the society is the tight network. If we expand, it will turn into a

Yggdrasilstam

Members: 31 Since: 1983
Student scouts
yggdrasilstam.nl

Ichthus

Members: 60 Since: 1971
Christian student society
ichthuswageningen.nl

Brabant Student Guild of Our Lady (BSG)

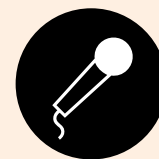
Members: 37 Since: 1926
Mainly Brabant students, but 'we are fairly flexible about that.'
hetbsg.nl

Vegan Student Association (VSA)

Members: 50 Since: 2019
Everything to do with the vegan diet, but non-vegans are welcome too.
facebook.com/vsawageningen/

different kind of society. And organizing things would get a lot harder too. Now we can easily cook for 25 people, but once you get towards 40, you need more professional equipment.' Baats: 'We wouldn't have a clue what to do with all those members. Being so small is precisely the charm of it.' ■





'I chose Wageningen to help make the world a better place'

Wageningen University focusses on climate change, biodiversity, nutrition, health, and other global issues. Is that why most students opt for Wageningen, because they want to help make the world a better place? Or doesn't that come into it? *Resource* asked first-years at the AID.

By Willem Andrée, Luuk Zegers and Aarzo Kohra



Kamiel (19)

BSc student of Forest and Nature Conservation

'There were three reasons for me to choose Wageningen. Firstly, it's the only place where I can do this degree. I looked up all the comparable degrees and this was the one for me. Secondly, I wanted to get out of Amsterdam, where I come from. I wanted to go somewhere green, peaceful and without many tourists. Lastly, I've been interested in nature all my life, counting birds in the polder or taking long walks in the woods, and I create gardens as a job on the side. And I really wanted to study something I enjoy, where my heart lies. I'm not the kind who chooses their degree because it guarantees a job, or anything like that. We'll see about that when the time comes. First I want to enjoy completing my degree.'



Kaya (18)

BSc student of Molecular Life Sciences

'I have felt a connection with the world around me since I was very young. There is so much suffering and misery, and I worry about that. I was a member of the WWF, for example. The way polar bears' habitat is shrinking – that pains me. Sometimes I try to shut it out, but I can't always do that. At secondary school I read about a study on adapting enzymes to make plastic break down better. That was an eye-opener, and then I knew that I would like to do that kind of research. I want to contribute to improving the environment and the state of the world.'



Bas (18)

BSc student of Soil, Water, Atmosphere

'I used to want to study medicine, but in the end I chose a more practical degree. Soil, Water, Atmosphere really appeals to me. You can go in various directions with it afterwards, but you know that what you are going to study is important. The subject is highly relevant, so you can really contribute to a better future with this degree. I picked Wageningen because nowhere else offers this degree programme.'

'I want to help improve the environment'



Floris (19)

BSc student of Molecular Life Sciences

‘To be honest, I didn’t choose this degree for a noble ethical reason. This is the subject I want to do, full stop. I did pick Wageningen University specifically. I was looking for a green, sustainable university. I looked at all the universities offering this subject and Wageningen came out top for me. Friendly, small-scale and green. And there’s another reason, actually: I’m a real technology/science student and I want interaction with all the science subjects. If you do applied physics at another university, you only get maths and physics and not chemistry and biology as well. And hopefully I can make the world a better place with my knowledge, but that is not the main reason for choosing it.’



Fredrick (31)

MSc student of Animal Sciences

‘I did a Bachelor’s degree in Animal Sciences and I decided to continue in the same field. I chose WUR as it is the best agricultural university. The good reputation of the university is my main reason. I feel that how to feed livestock is a challenging issue at this time. I am interested in developing cheaper feed-stuffs of good quality.’



Jorian (24)

MSc student of Forest and Nature Conservation

‘I lived in India for 20 years—in Bangalore to be exact—and I started my Bachelor’s there. Since childhood, I wanted to understand more about rainforests, so for my Bachelor’s thesis, I went to the rainforest in Indonesia, where I stayed for about three months. While I was there, I became interested in learning more about forest ecology. I got to know about Wageningen University when searching the web. It is supposed to be one of the best universities for ecology. So now I am here.’

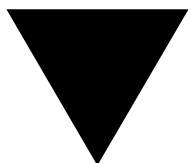


Michelle (24)

MSc student of Nutrition and Health

‘I finished my Bachelor’s in Nutrition and Diet and wanted to continue my studies in the same direction. WUR is the only university I found where you can combine Nutrition and Health with a specialization in Data Sciences. It is also a famous university, another reason to do my Master’s here. And I’ve heard there are good job opportunities after a degree here.’

‘The university’s good reputation is the main reason’



Key people: Jeroen Schipper

They are indispensable on the campus: the cleaners, caretakers, caterers, gardeners, receptionists – the list is long. *Resource* seeks out these key people. This time, meet Jeroen Schipper (40), a courier for the whole campus.

Text Milou van der Horst • Photo Guy Ackermans

‘As the only courier on the campus, I pick up the post and deliver it. I take anything that can be transported in a normal bus without ventilation, and that’s not too heavy – like letters and boxes of test tubes. My duties are the same every day: sorting post, making a round of all the university buildings at set times, seeing the same people. I don’t find that boring in itself. I got this job through the Wajong scheme which requires the university to employ people with a disability. I have ADD, which means I find it hard to con-

centrate on something unless I really like it. Since I love driving, I can keep it up very easily – I’ve been working here for six years now.

Driving the van is the best part of the day. I switch on the radio and the aircon and go for a nice relaxed drive. I like working alone. I don’t see myself as very good at socializing, but I have learned a lot. Now I actually enjoy the chats I have on my rounds. During the lockdown I really missed the friendly company in the post room. I got stressed partly because there weren’t as many colleagues around to help me. Normally, someone drives around to see how much post there is, and whether it’s too much for me to

cope with. And it was busier during the lockdown because everyone needed post delivered to their homes, and departments treated each other to boxes full of junk. It all got too much. I developed chest pains, and they didn’t go away again. Now I start work earlier so I’ve got some extra time in case something goes wrong. Like that time the wind at the Forum blew all the letters all over the campus. It’s a pity I was only diagnosed with ADD when I was 24. Otherwise, I might have been able to go to university with special guidance. Then I might have been able to become an astronomer or an astronaut, like I wanted to when I was a kid. But you’ve got to make the best of it. And that’s what I do.’

**‘Driving the van
is the best part of
the day’**





Campus ♦ residents

Project 0

Lonne van Doorne, an MSc student of Environmental Sciences, is working on a project at Enactus, the student organization for entrepreneurship. Together with three other students, she founded a startup that's all about fashion, zero waste and circularity. 'We started with nothing, so Project 0 (zero) seemed a good name.'

'We want to connect designers with fashion-conscious young people. We provide the textiles, which are mostly textile remnants and pre-loved materials. Our co-creators will make tailor-made and customized clothes for you out of that. And that is how we facilitate the circular use of materials.'

So far, Project 0 has organized several workshops in which designers and dressmakers are invited to make original clothes out of old ones. The leftover textiles are used in pillows, bedspreads and the like. 'We developed a community of 15 to 20 co-creators. When the Covid restrictions are lifted, we want to start

'We want to connect fashion designers with fashion-conscious young people'

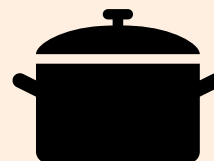
workshops in city centres, so that people can see what our co-creators can make.' Project 0 targets the trendy market, envisioning custo-

mers in the 15-30 age group. 'We want to develop our business online as well, but first people have to get to know us.'

Project 0 does not sell clothes but facilitates the matching of supply with demand. 'We will ask for a percentage of each transaction,' says Van Doorne, who can be found in PlusUltra II. As

There are about 100 companies on campus. We introduce them to you in *Resource*. This time: Project 0 in Plus Ultra II.

All the flavours of the world can be found in the WUR community. Master's student of Food Technology Katerina Zara (25) takes us to Greece with her recipe for *gemista*.



Flavours of WUR

Gemista orfana

'Gemista are usually eaten during summer in Greece since the vegetables used for this particular dish are ripe in the summer. It is a light meal, eaten either hot or cold. Legend has it that gemista are tastier if eaten the next day. Fun fact: gemista without minced meat are called "orfana", which means orphans.'

- 1 Cut the tops off the tomatoes and keep them to use as lids. Spoon out the flesh into a bowl.
- 2 Do the same with the peppers, removing the seeds.
- 3 Sauté the onion in olive oil.
- 4 Add finely chopped courgette, aubergine and carrots and cook for a few minutes until they start to soften.
- 5 Add the rice and sauté for 3-4 minutes.
- 6 Add the tomato flesh and seasoning.
- 7 Pour in 250ml water and simmer for 5 minutes.
- 8 Finish by adding the chopped herbs.
- 9 Fill the tomatoes and peppers with the stuffing, $\frac{3}{4}$ full.
- 10 Cover with the lids and transfer them to a baking dish, half-filled with water.
- 11 Sprinkle olive oil over the vegetables.
- 12 Cover with aluminium foil and bake at 180°C for 1 hour.
- 13 Remove the foil and bake for another 15 minutes until most of the liquid has evaporated.

Ingredients (2 servings) :

- 2 tomatoes, ripe and firm
- 2 bell peppers
- 1 courgette
- 1 aubergine
- 2 carrots
- 1 onion
- 200g Greek Carolina rice
- Sprigs of parsley, mint and dill
- olive oil
- salt and pepper



Katerina Zara
Food Technology Master's student from Greece

Which dish reminds you of home? Share it with *Resource* so we can all enjoy it too! resource@wur.nl

Little Leaps of Faith

I'm sitting on a colourful plastic chair in a repurposed sports hall. Legs crossed, my eyes are drawn time and again to the large screens presenting slide after slide of healthy lifestyle advice with pandemic themed gifs. 'You can take off the face mask now', a girl in a blue hi-vis jacket tells me almost imperatively. I feel a bit like Pavlov's dog forced to enjoy positive reinforcement, although most likely, she was just scared that I might faint.

The withdrawing of the needle had felt like I was being flossed in between my cells. She presses some cotton wool against the site of the injection of the pride of Leiden University. 'Now you can take a seat over there and wait 10 to 15 minutes', my charming injector said as she pressed the emblematic plaster to my left shoulder; for many, the pride of selfless heroism and potential holiday freedom, for others the mark of shame and blind servitude. 'Do I have to?', I asked. She looked me in the eye and said with an authoritative smile: 'It is strongly advised, if you leave, that will be at your own risk.'

So there I sit, trying to feel some relaxation settle in my body, which, legend has it, may be so sudden that it knocks one out cold. But

I feel nothing of this relaxation. I just look around at my fellow pandemic victims and observe a little voice in my head parroting the conspiracy theories I have read over the last months with a mixture of amusement and sympathy. Part of me wants to walk back over to the lady, who is now probably vaccinating her next semi-coerced victim, and ask her to take the vaccine out again. I wonder how she would respond, and I guess she would smile and call somebody else to deal with this hysterical nutcase.

I didn't want the vaccine, I don't agree with many of the ways in which our politicians have dealt

'Part of me wants to walk back over to the lady and ask her to take the vaccine out again. I wonder how she would respond'

with the crisis. But in the end, I figured I don't agree with most things. I don't actually expect the vaccine to have side effects any more dire than plastic packaging. I didn't want the mRNA ones, I know they theoretically cannot possibly affect your DNA, but I figured I trust my gut feeling, if only for the illusion of choice.



Luuk Slegers

Luuk Slegers is a former Master's student of International Development who wrote many blogs for Resource. This is his last blog after his recent graduation.

'You look so zen,' the girl in blue has walked over, probably trying to figure out why she is being paid so much for this job. I smile at her. 'What makes you say that?' She shrugs. 'You're not even on your phone.' Ah yes, I think, one of our many other pandemics. I just smile, and look at the clock. God knows what time I sat down, so I just get up and walk past the empty chairs occupied by the occasional screen-lit face.

'You can take off the face mask', I hear a man bark at a disoriented student as I walk into the daylight.

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IN MEMORIAM

JACQUES VERVOORT

Very sadly, Professor J.J.M. (Jacques) Vervoort passed away unexpectedly on Monday 19 July 2021 at the age of 66. Jacques studied Molecular Sciences and obtained a PhD in 1985 under the supervision of Prof. Franz Müller at the Laboratory of Biochemistry. He then continued to work at Biochemistry, where he became associate professor in 1998. He supervised many PhD students and became a professor at the University of Johannesburg (South Africa). He was also the co-founder of the start-up Biquays.

Jacques career was marked by his love of analytical biochemical techniques. Jacques understood like no other the importance of bringing molecular processes to light, and he used

advanced spectroscopic and spectrometric approaches to do so in numerous collaborations. Not just a passionate scientist, Jacques was also one of the driving forces, and founders of the Bioinformation Technology curriculum. He excelled at stimulating students to strive for the best.

We will greatly miss Jacques' passionate and active personality, his drive to contribute to science and all our casual conversations with him. Our thoughts are with Ivonne Rietjens and her family.

On behalf of the Laboratory of Biochemistry, Dolf Weijers

Colophon

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'In September I'm starting as a student in Wageningen. I'm getting information from all sides about student societies and study associations, and it all sounds very nice, but I'm not sure whether it's a good idea to join one. I am eager to get to know people, but I also want to have enough time for my studies. Who has tips for me?'

Jelmer (18), first-year,
Nutrition and Health



Useful skill

'I would recommend joining a student society or association. It helps you to meet new, amazing people and do fun - and some silly - activities that will make your student life more rewarding and unforgettable. Balancing study and leisure is trickier when you are a member, but you will need to manage a work-life balance for the rest of your life as well. So learning how to prioritize early on is very useful. Besides, your fellow members are students too. They understand you skipping events to study.'

Jonas Fuchs, MSc student of Aquaculture and Marine Resource Management

If in doubt, wait

'I would advise you to join a study association, if only for the discount on books and the degree-related excursions. It will also be a way to meet your fellow students. It takes up as much time as you want to spend on it. Student societies are a bit more time-consuming, especially in the first year. That's not a problem as long as you pick a society you really feel at home in. If in doubt, you can always join later.'

Robin Tas - alumnus and online editor at Corporate Communications & Marketing

Distraction

'Studying at WUR is hard work, I will not deny that. You need to invest time to pass your exams. However, you are expected to spend about eight hours per day on your studies. The remaining hours, as well as weekends, are free time. My advice is to take your mind off your studies at those times by joining student, study and sports associations. I joined three of them myself, which works well for me.'

Marta Battistel, MSc student of Biology

Fun

'I would definitely advise you to join a club of some sort. They come in all shapes and sizes: you are sure to find one that suits you. Some clubs organize an activity once a month, others weekly or almost daily. Explore the clubs that match one of your hobbies or sports. I am actively involved in a sports club myself, and that means I have some fun to look forward to every week.'

Jelte Zeekaf, MSc student of Biology

Find a click

'Take a good look around at the various societies. You might meet people that you click with. My experience is that belonging to a student society enriches your university days but that it still leaves you enough time to study. You will also get to know people within the society who are doing the same degree as you. And that's useful, because they can give you tips and advice on your programme.'

Bas Volkert, BSc student of Business and Consumer Sciences

NEXT WURRY

'I'm a first-year who wants to live in Wageningen. I've been to a few viewing evenings at student houses to get a room, but in vain so far. How should I tackle this 'hospiteren' business? What are the dos and don'ts?'

J., BSc student of Biology
(name known to the editors)

*Do you have any suggestions for this Wurrier? Or could you use some good advice yourself? **Email your tips or question (100 words max) to resource@wur.nl, subject noWURries, by 10 September.***