

Resource

AUGUST 2023 VOLUME 18

The journalism platform for all at Wageningen University & Research

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WU and WR closer

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with fish in particular

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'Harry Potter' gallery

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FOREWORD

Probing

Wild bees don't enjoy much legal protection — why is that? The FOS support scheme for Wageningen students who get behind due to personal circumstances or spend a year on a committee should definitely be kept. How can students stay motivated and concentrated? These are just three of the topics first-year students wrote down and posted in our 'mailbox' at our stall during the AID information market in answer to the question 'What should *Resource* write about?'

We also constantly ask staff we bump into this question. And topics are proposed spontaneously in emails or on our website. Why do WU and WR still have different collective labour agreements? You guys should look into the resistance to hot desking, or probe into WUR's collaboration with the fossil industry. But we also get tips about interesting research, inclusiveness initiatives, new courses or flora and fauna on campus. This year too, we will be publishing our articles on science, education, student life and the organization. So please let us know if you have nice ideas on what we should write about or issues you are critical of that you think we should be investigating. You can send an email to resource@wur.nl.

Willem Andréé
Editor-in-chief





ON YOUR BIKE!

Last Monday, the Bongerd sports centre organized a lesson on cycling in the Netherlands for about 80 international students. They learned how to mend a flat tyre and went on a hunt through Wageningen. Aashini Sheth (27), an Urban Environmental Management student from India, was one of the participants. 'It's really important for us to learn the traffic rules because a lot of us come from countries without a cycling tradition. We don't have cycle paths in India. Some students are worried about cycling here as we've heard about international students on bikes having accidents. We were also amazed you don't have to wear a helmet. We just learned how to fix a puncture, so I can do that now. That could even save me money!' ^{WA}

Photo Resource

Animal testing, mainly of fish, increased in 2022

In 2022, WUR carried out over 104,000 tests on animals, 29 per cent more than in 2021. Most of these tests (80 per cent) were on fish. These figures are from the *Animal Testing Annual Report*, which was published at the start of August.

When numbers of animal tests and lab animals are recorded (different things because one animal can be used for multiple tests), a distinction is made between Wageningen University (WU) and Wageningen Research (WR). At WU, the number of lab animals fell last year to 10,693, a drop of 17 per cent. But at WR the number increased to 94,198, over 27 per cent more than in 2021. As in previous years, most of the animals used across WUR in experiments (80 per cent)

were fish, which must be included by law in the animal testing counts as of 2015. The annual report cites the example of glass eels, which are given minuscule markers in their thousands to track their spread. The remaining categories in the animal testing top five of 2022 are chickens (13 per cent), mice (3 per cent), pigs (1.2 per cent) and cows (0.6 per cent).

Most of the animal tests at WR (83 per cent) were aimed at the protection of animal species. At WU, tests were generally for applied research (62 per cent), and mainly to do with animal welfare.

Alternatives

WUR does a lot of tests on animals for the purpose of animal protection and health. According to Animal Sciences Group (ASG) director



Cows make up less than one per cent of all lab animals; fish are by far the biggest category • Photo Resource

Ernst van den Ende, these ‘target animal tests’ as they are termed could to some extent be replaced by other approaches, such as organoids or artificial intelligence. In the four-year programme Next Level Animal Sciences, ASG is investing a lot of effort and money (12 million euros) in the development

of technological innovations that could serve as an alternative to animal testing. ‘But technology will never be able to replace all animal tests,’ he stresses. ‘New vaccines or livestock rations, for example, will still eventually have to be tested on an animal.’ ME

Student pact: wrong message?

Last week, a national set of guidelines and tips entitled *Student Pact on inappropriate sexual behaviour and sexual violence* was presented. The pact is aimed at making student life safer and was compiled by the government commissioner Mariëtte Hamer, a number of student organizations and societies and Amnesty International. The slogan Hamer used to summarize the pact – ‘*Geen vent zonder consent*’ (No guy without consent) – wasn’t to everyone’s taste. One critic is assistant professor of Biology Anneke Valk. ‘It rhymes nicely in Dutch but it makes no sense. No guy without consent? If it’s without consent, it’s a crime! The moment you humiliate, abuse or rape someone you’re in the wrong – that goes for women too. I’m worried about the message this sends to students.’ For more on the pact, see resource-online.nl. ME

Who will replace Mol?

WUR is looking for a new rector magnificus. Arthur Mol, who has held this position since 2015, will be retiring in March 2024. The selection procedure for his replacement started this week. Unlike for other vacancies, candidates can be nominated for the position of rector. Students and staff can propose someone, giving their reasons. The selection committee then asks that person whether they are interested in the job. Nominees do have to be (or have recently been) a WUR professor. People can also apply of their own accord. The selection committee will submit at least two candidates to the Supervisory Board, which will interview them and make the final choice. If you want to nominate someone, you will have to be quick as the period for submissions ends in a week’s time. The inauguration of the new rector will be during the *Dies Natalis* next March. RK

6,655

In the first half of 2023, Dutch municipal health services (GGDs) recorded 6,655 gonorrhoea infections, almost as many as in all of 2021 (7,964). The sexually transmitted disease was seen 10,600 times in 2022. The biggest jump is among 18 to 25 year olds. The National Institute for Public Health calls the spread of gonorrhoea worrying. The local GGD says students can come along for a free test. ^{LZ}

Omnia to get Harry Potter style gallery

The portrait gallery in Omnia currently consists of paintings of former rectors and professors, all of them male. They will be replaced by picture frames showcasing regularly changing videos that give a better impression of the diversity of the WUR workforce. The idea comes from creative thinker and student film director Giacomo Sardoini. His concept was chosen as the winning submission by the Portrait Gallery working group. The working group was set up after increasing criticism of the gallery's lack of diversity. 'I can't resolve that issue, but I can show how diverse the campus community is now,' says Sardoini.

'My idea was inspired by the moving portraits in the Harry Potter books. There will be picture frames within which a series of short videos will be projected. The films will be edited to look like moving paintings.' ^{DV}

WU has most women doing science degrees

At Wageningen University, 58 per cent of the new students doing science degrees are female. Maastricht and Utrecht also have more women than men starting science degrees, at 56 and 54 per cent respectively. Men are still very much in the majority in the intake at Eindhoven, Twente and Delft, with women accounting for 28, 28 and 31 per cent respectively.



First-years during AID • Photo Guy Ackermans

Nationally, men make up 57 per cent of the intake and women 43 per cent, according to the Techniekpact monitor for 2023 (intake numbers for September 2022). The online version of this article (resource-online.nl) includes a list of which Wageningen degree programmes count as science degrees for the monitor. Rector Arthur Mol is pleased more and more women are opting for science degrees. He has no worries about the intake of male students. 'If the ratio got really extreme, we could start thinking about how to encourage more men to choose a science degree, but I don't see any need for that at the moment.'

Female bastion?

Other Wageningen degrees too show a difference in preferences between men and women. For example, last September 116 women started the Food Technology Master's compared with 58 men; that means two out of every three students are female. The difference is even

bigger in the Animal Sciences Bachelor's, with 108 women versus 35 men. Another degree with a big difference is Nutrition & Health, with 101 women and 27 men. But more men than women

Women make up 58 per cent of intake in science degrees

started Bachelor's degrees in Forest & Nature Conservation (59 versus 39) and Agrotechnology (25 versus 7).

All these figures are for last academic year. It's difficult to say anything much yet about this year's intake. A slight increase overall was expected based on preliminary registrations, but the AID registrations suggest stable numbers or even a slight fall is more likely. The definitive intake numbers will be available in October. ^{LZ}

Double Bachelor for Forest & Nature Conservation

Wageningen University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) will be offering a Bachelor double degree, made up of Wageningen's Forest & Nature Conservation programme and the Swedish Forest & Landscape programme.

This means in practice that WU Forest & Nature Conservation students can spend their third year in Sweden while SLU students spend their third year in Wageningen, explains programme director Gijs Elkhuisen. 'If the exchange students pass all their courses, they will get a degree for both programmes. We are aiming for bal-

anced numbers of exchange students and we are starting small.'

Elkhuisen thinks the double degree could be interesting for forestry students, for instance. 'In addition to the state-of-the-art knowledge SLU has in

'If the exchange students pass their courses, they will get a degree for both programmes'

this area, the exchange also opens up opportunities for a career in Sweden's forestry industry.' On the other hand, Wageningen's multi-functional forestry could be interesting for the SLU students, says Elkhuisen. 'In particu-

lar the societal aspects of forest and nature conservation.'

WU has been collaborating closely with SLU for some time, says Elkhuisen. 'This double degree extends our partnership further.' The agreement on the double degree was signed in Omnia on Tuesday 29 August. The first exchanges are due to start in September 2024. LZ

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Diet tailored to personal metabolism reduces risk of cardiovascular diseases

You can reduce the risk of diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases if you adopt a diet that fits your personal metabolism. Anouk Gijbels studied the effects of this 'precision nutrition' on the health of the metabolism, heart and blood vessels.

'We know different people respond differently to a particular diet but we don't know exactly why. One of the theories is based on biology. We wanted to investigate whether you do indeed become healthier if you eat food that fits your personal metabolic profile or glucose metabolism.'

Working with researchers at Maastricht University, Gijbels studied 242 participants. 'They were all overweight or obese, aged between 40 and 75, and included both men and women. None of them had been diagnosed as diabetic but they all had an abnormal glucose metabolism.'

All the participants had some form of insulin resistance, whereby the body does not respond so well to the hormone insulin, which stabilizes blood sugar levels after a meal. In half the participants, resistance was due to abnormal mechanisms in the muscles, while in the other half the problem was in the liver. Each group was divided into two: one half had to eat a diet rich in monounsaturated fatty acids, with olive oil and nuts for instance, while the other half had to eat a low-fat diet with lots of fibre and protein. So there were four sub-groups.

Healthier

All participants were monitored for 12 weeks. The aim was not to lose weight. Gijbels: 'After the 12 weeks, all participants were healthier in terms of the cardiometabolic risk factors (the health of the metabolism, heart and blood vessels, ed.):' The health benefits were greatest for participants



Photo Shutterstock

who were in one of the two sub-groups with the 'right' combination of insulin resistance and diet: the high-fat diet for people with liver-related insulin resistance, and the diet rich in proteins and fibres for people with muscle-related insulin resistance. 'Insulin sensitivity increased in these people and we saw fewer fats of the wrong kind or inflammatory markers in the blood. They didn't suddenly become just as insulin sensitive as a healthy, slim, young person, but it was a big improvement.'

Commercial

We are still a long way off a practical application of diets tailored to your personal metabolism, nice though that would be. 'We now know this concept works, but we still don't know how. What is more, this is the first study to show this. The study needs to be repeated to confirm the results.' Another problem is the lack of a simple test to determine your metabolic profile. 'The type of test we used to determine the profile can currently only

be performed in a lab.'

Even so, commercial companies are very interested in precision nutrition. 'They already use simple markers and measuring instruments, such as the continuous glucose monitor used by some diabetic people. The health benefits of precision nutrition are very promising but it is still in its infancy in scientific terms.' Gijbels got her PhD in June. DV

'We now know this concept works, but we still don't know how'

[Live&Learn]

A botched experiment, a rejected paper: such things are soon labelled as failures in academia. As for talking about them – not the done thing! But that is just what WUR scientists do in this column. Because failure has its uses. This time, we hear from **Vincent Blok, personal professor of Philosophy.**

Text & Illustration Stijn Schreven

‘Two years ago, I applied for a full professorship, the last step on tenure track. I had created a portfolio and written a paper setting out my vision, and my professor had submitted a letter of recommendation. The assessment was good – that’s a matter of measurable achievements. Then came the interview with a committee. Contrary to all expectations, their recommendation was negative. Initially, I was furious. What were they doing to me now? I met all the criteria – except a course on PhD supervision, but I could catch up on that easily. But their feedback wasn’t about the formal criteria: I wasn’t a ‘figurehead’ for the university yet, and I wasn’t prominent enough internally. I wasn’t aware of those requirements. Tenure track already felt as if I’d had to jump through 100 hoops, and now they were adding a few more hoops. Forget it, I thought at first – I’m done with this farce. But at some point, understanding got the upper hand, and I saw the upside of their feedback. It’s reasonable to expect a professor to contribute to the institution,

and not just promote themselves as an individual on the market. So I embarked on a coaching programme. The experience of working on myself was more important than the ideas in question. Tenure track focuses

‘Forget it, I thought at first – I’m done with this farce’

on the person, and that is quite lonely. If you fail, it’s on you, even if people offer help. In a coaching process like that, you approach the setback constructively: okay, so I’ve got to work on myself, and someone’s going to help me do that. Thanks to the rejection, I became aware of my learning points, and I started actively looking for ways to work on OneWUR. We got a big Research Council project for collaboration between social and technical departments at WUR. But don’t overestimate the role of planning in that. The success of those plans is partly a matter of luck.’



Mathematicians simulate evolution of species

Wageningen scientists have used a mathematical approach to simulate the evolution in numbers of species. This shows that diversity in species makes ecosystems more robust. In future, the simulation model may be able to predict changes in ecosystems.

Species come and go constantly in nature. With the help of her supervisors, Master’s student Elena Bellavere developed a mathematical model to simulate such evolution. If the simulation starts with a single species, all kinds of new species soon appear. That shows what biologists have long suspected: ecosystems benefit from having a variety of species. ‘If a single species continues to dominate, it exhausts its natural resources,’ explains Joshua Dijkman, associate professor of Physical Chemistry & Soft Matter. The model looks at the amount of food, light, oxygen, CO₂ and space in a habitat and calculates which species will survive and which will become extinct. The simulation also constantly adds new species. This is what happens in nature too: species migrate from elsewhere or evolve due to random changes in the DNA.

Rules of evolution

By programming laws and calculating the consequences, a new layer of evolution rules is created automatically. They seem to be in line with actual trends in evolution.

But the simulation is not entirely accurate. ‘Species don’t eat one another in our model,’ explains Christian Hamster, a mathematician in Biometris, WUR’s applied mathematics department. It is a simplified version of the real world that can be used to simulate simple ecosystems. An example is our gut flora, a closed environment with only micro-organisms. Dijkman expects that in future, the model will be able to do things like show how antibiotics affect the composition of the micro-organisms in our intestines. NVHWH



Detail from the cover illustration for Davy Meijer's PhD thesis *The effects of far-red light on plant-arthropod interactions and the implications for greenhouse tomato cultivation* • Illustration Roos van Dooremal

More red not a bad thing

Plants grow better when more far-red is added to the light. But in principle, the additional growth is at the expense of the energy available for defending the plant against pests. Is that harmful? Not in combination with biological pest control, shows research on tomatoes by PhD candidate Davy Meijer.

Plants respond to the shadow of neighbouring plants by growing faster and making more flowers. This adaptation gives the plant an advantage in the competition for the available sunlight. Plants 'sense' shadow with a special photoreceptor that measures the

'The number of pests increases, but so does the predatory insect population'

ratio of red to far-red light. Neighbouring plants reflect far-red, which sets off the shadow avoidance process.

More and more growers are exploiting this characteristic by giving plants in greenhouses additional far-red light from LED lamps. Not that you can see that with the naked eye. At 730–800 nanometres, far-red light is outside the visible spectrum, explains PhD candidate Meijer. He investigated what the extra light does to the interaction between insects and tomatoes. Pests such as the spider mite, greenhouse whitefly and green peach aphid

do indeed get a boost when more far-red light is used. Meijer: 'The number of pests increases due to the decline in the defence system. But that increase their food supply in turn sparks growth in the population of predatory insects. They become so numerous they are able to effectively suppress the pests. So biological pest control works well in combination with far-red light.'

Bumblebees

There is no adverse effect either on pollination by bumblebees. On the contrary, show experiments by Meijer. When given a choice, bees prefer to fly to tomatoes growing with extra far-red light. He also discovered why bees do that. The flowers of far-red tomatoes emit a much stronger chemical signal to attract the bees.

'The mix of volatile organic compounds doesn't change, but the total amount produced does,' explains Meijer. 'The stronger signal acts as a kind of neon advert telling the bees this is the place to be.' It's not false advertising either.

'The plant isn't tricking the bees. More far-red light means more flowers, so it's easier to find food.'

Trial setup

The use of far-red light looks like a win-win situation for all parties. The plant grows faster and produces more tomatoes. And those effects are not at the expense of biological pest control or pollination performance. 'Based on my results, I would say: use far-red light. But as a scientist I need to be cautious,' says Meijer. 'These are greenhouse experiments where the bumblebees had a choice,' he says to explain his caution. 'That is not the case in a commercial setting. If you want to demonstrate the overall effect on yields, you'd need a different setup: one greenhouse with far-red light and one without, then compare the yields. But a PhD is only four years.' RK

PhD theses **in a nutshell**

Stable mayonnaise

Like all foodstuffs, emulsions such as mayonnaise eventually deteriorate. One reason for this is oxidation of the fats in the emulsion. PhD candidate Suyeon Yang investigated various microscopic techniques for analysing the oxidation of fat droplets in water (essentially an emulsion) in detail. Yang's work shows the proteins that are added to the emulsion as stabilizers play a key role. The stabilizers can both speed up and slow down the oxidation. According to Yang, oxidation depends in part on the size of the fat droplets and how the proteins that are added accumulate on the surface.

Spatiotemporal mapping of lipid and protein oxidation in food emulsions.

Suyeon Yang ◀ Supervisors: John van Duynhoven, Johannes Hohlbein

Better farms

The average Dutch dairy farm could halve its nitrogen emissions and still increase profits by a third. That is one of the conclusions from research by Melina Lamkowsky. All that is needed is to manage the farm better. She based her conclusion on a comparison between average farms and the 'best in class'. Lamkowsky also looked at whether farmers can get loans from banks for investments in reducing nitrogen emissions. A third of farmers can't borrow more than 50,000 euros. Only 40 per cent of farmers are eligible for the more expensive investments. She says that means help in the form of grants is essential, as is offering a future for Dutch dairy farming.

Is lack of finance a barrier for the sustainability of Dutch dairy farms? Melina Lamkowsky ◀

Supervisor: Miranda Meuwissen

Swimming in medicines

Antidepressants and antibiotics are getting into the environment via treated sewage. But it is difficult to determine how much damage they cause to aquatic life. Effective standardized tests are lacking. Lara Schuijt developed a test based on the swimming behaviour of the river shrimp *Gammarus pulex*. Does that behaviour change when fluoxetine (an antidepressant) is added to the water? Not noticeably, it turns out. But effects can be seen in a model ecosystem. Not on the *Gammarus pulex* population, but on other organisms and the performance of the ecosystem as a whole. That means the swimming test is not sufficient to determine the effects of medicines on aquatic life.

Aquatic life on drugs. Lara Schuijt ◀ Supervisor: Paul van den Brink

THE PROPOSITION

PhD candidates explain the most thought-provoking proposition in their thesis. This time it's **Martina Lazzarin**, who received her PhD on 2 June. She investigated the role of far-red light in plant photosynthesis and photoprotection.



'AI will increasingly impact our lives, but whether it will lead to an improved quality of life is uncertain'

'ChatGPT greatly helped me with the programming aspect of my PhD research. It could easily provide me with solutions to programming problems that had eluded me for hours, or identify errors that I couldn't spot on my own.

I believe that AI tools like ChatGPT have huge potential and are genuinely useful, but I doubt whether they can truly improve our quality of life. Yes, AI tools can help us work more efficiently, but we often fail to consider the consequences of such improvements. Work is always present. Once you've

completed a task quickly, it's very likely that your manager will give you more tasks. That's why I don't think AI will lead to a better work-life balance in the long run. Nevertheless, I cannot deny the immense satisfaction I got from ChatGPT. When I had to travel to Italy for my thesis, I discovered that the program was banned there. Seeking a solution, I turned to ChatGPT — it ingeniously provided me with a workaround on how to make itself usable in a country where it is banned.' NF

Barbenheimer

Were we going to do *Barbenheimer*, my student sons asked earlier this summer. I'm never very well up on social media hypes, so I had to ask around. I could see why they would suggest a film about Oppenheimer: he was a fascinating scientist of huge historical significance. But Barbie? Did my sons even know what a Barbie doll was? I did once give them

'It seemed too good to be true that my boys wanted to go to a Barbie film with me'

sons wanted to go to a Barbie film with me. So we went to see both *Oppenheimer* and *Barbie*. Oppenheimer was indeed tremendous. Barbie was completely different to what I expected. A really good night out – not just for me, but also for my four guys.

A lot has been written about it. Perfect Barbie lives in her perfect Barbieland with a load of other girls, all called Barbie. And then there are Kens, but they're not so important. (I didn't even have a Ken

a baby doll, but they mainly liked throwing it, and they never graduated to a Barbie. I myself was a Barbie girl. It seemed too good to be true that my



Sjoukje Osinga

as a kid, because what use would he be?) Ultimately, the film has a feminist message, but mainly it's a lot of fun. Right from 1959, Barbies had careers – from stewardess to astronaut, before there even were female astronauts – and nowadays there's a Barbie for every profession you can think of. For a long time, her advanced freedom to choose a career went with just as much pressure to perform. She always looks perfect and her outfits and accessories are immaculate to the last detail. Now there are many inclusive variants of Barbie, but even 'Curvy Barbie' still looks perfect. The lecture rooms will soon be full of first-year students. They are all beautiful. Young people, fizzing with expectation. I can't remember all their names yet – I get them mixed up. But that will change. They'll find out what they're good at, what they like doing – and importantly, what they don't like. My wish for them is that they develop their own style and preferences, without perfectionism or peer pressure. Who know, there might be an Oppenheimer among them.

Sjoukje Osinga (55) is an assistant professor of Information Technology. She sings alto in the Wageningen chamber choir Musica Vocale, has three sons who are students and enjoys birdwatching with her husband in the Binnenveldse Hooilanden

Ignas Heitkönig: from improving the world to saving the world

‘We seem to have lost our connection with nature’

Ignas Heitkönig was pronounced Teacher of the Year last June. Here, the assistant professor of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation talks about the importance of outdoor classes, taking cake to demonstrators blocking the A12, and a tramline to Ede.

You’ve just been through a difficult period in your work?

‘During the pandemic I was asked if I would like to teach the Animal Ecology course. One of the learning goals on this course is to carry out animal experiments to test ecological processes. That is usually done with cows and sheep in the meadows, but that wasn’t possible at that time, so we decided to get the students working on snails. We had the snails delivered and handed them out on campus. In the snail arena, students conducted experiments looking at the snails’ eating habits, predator avoidance behaviour, and various other things. It all went well but it was massively time-consuming. Supervising students online, doing everything on Teams, improvising all the time – it sapped energy. By the time we’d finished that course, I was exhausted. I wasn’t even happy that it had all gone well, I was just relieved. I went off on holiday exhausted, and I came back exhausted. It took me an awful lot of energy to get back to work. I think I was on the brink of a burnout. Thanks to coaching from the occupational social work department, I made a pretty good recovery,



Text Luuk Zegers

but I am still having difficulty concentrating.’

‘Incidentally, I couldn’t have taught the course at all without my colleague Janneke Troost: she organized the switch to online lectures quickly and amazingly well. That just goes to show that teaching is teamwork.’

You enjoy teaching outdoors

‘We are all part of nature, but we seem to have forgotten that connection, including the connection with the food we eat. We have created a system in which the distance between us and food production is so vast that we can no longer see the whole picture. A very nice component of Reineke van Tol’s Wild Perspectives course is that we go for a long walk out in the countryside with someone who knows a lot about plants. He plays awareness-raising and networking games with the students, as well as telling them things like: you can eat the leaves of this plant like lettuce, or the roots of that plant look like carrots. Then the students harvest those plants. That makes you realize that food comes from nature, and how rich nature really is. To me, courses in which you spend time out in nature with the students are crucial.’

‘We are a great university in that area, by the way. Take

‘Even a course like statistics benefits from going out of doors’

the BioBlitz, for example – an initiative launched two years ago by Liesje Mommer and Mieke de Wit. During the BioBlitz, everyone is invited to come to campus and see what plant and animal species can be found here. This year, over 1380 species were found - crazy! And now the BioBlitz has grown into a Europe-wide competition that a lot of universities and institutes take part in. It's great fun to do, you learn a lot from it and you go home feeling happy. It brings you closer to nature. Such brilliant initiatives are what Wageningen excels at. In that respect, I am proud to work for a university like this one.'

So should we all be getting outdoors more? 'I think that a little time out of doors could enrich every course. Just the change of scenery – so getting away from the laptop or out of the classroom, and standing in a field or at the edge of a pond – can provide

'I have a great admiration for the activists'

inspiration or help make the material sink in properly. It adds something educationally as well as helping us to reconnect with nature. The other day, a teacher emailed me to say he did the statistics mock exam and course review outside on campus. His students were enthusiastic about it. That shows that even a course like statistics benefits from a bit of time out of doors. How easy and nice would it be to use TimeEdit to book an outdoor classroom for a workshop or a meeting?' 'The campus itself could be a lot more natural too, incidentally. Make it a connecting zone between the Veluwe and the Utrechtse Heuvelrug. Don't be afraid to think big. It would mean a different mobility plan with far fewer cars. The province wants to boost mobility by widening the Mansholtlaan. But why don't we



'To me, courses in which you spend time out in nature with the students are crucial.' ♦ Photo Guy Ackermans

'If we go on the way we are now, we will wipe out humanity'

collectively opt for – am I allowed a crazy suggestion? – a tramline? That idea was suggested by Like Fokkens at Scientists4Future. Lay two tracks, sow grass between them, surround them with trees and that's it. The trams could come and go at regular intervals from morn till night. There'd be less exhaust fumes and you could narrow the Mansholtlaan, because you'd have made an easy, sustainable connection to Ede-Wageningen station. Encourage the mobility of the future, not that of the past.'

The student jury lauded you for your authentic teaching, your love of nature and your activism. But do science and activism belong together, actually?

'I can't see why they would clash. In fact, I don't understand how on earth a scientist can remain silent – having critically read the scientific literature, knowing what is going on and how inadequately we are acting on it. When it's so urgent. Recently there was a week with seven consecutive days of the highest global temperatures in the last 100,000 years. Meanwhile, I hear that the demand for meat just goes on rising, while in other places there is hunger caused by

drought and climate change. These problems are all interlinked. When I was a student, I wanted to go to developing countries to help make the world a better place. Nowadays, my aim is to try to save the world. The urgency has changed and is even increasing.' 'Fortunately, I am not the only one who sees this: members of Scientists4Future now include over 170 Wageningen researchers, staff, PhD students and students from various walks of life. More people sign up every week. That tells you something. There is a feeling that we might be able to achieve things together under this umbrella that we can't manage alone. That's what my activism is: bringing people together and keeping issues on the table.'

So you're not blocking any motorways yet?

'Not myself, but I did go to the A12 to cheer on the motorway demonstrators and hand out cake. I didn't stay very long as I haven't had any activism training yet. I have a great admiration for the activists and I can see myself doing it in future, once I have had the training. Not to be cool, but because things are going terribly wrong with the world. That is why I feel so strongly that WUR must sever its links with the fossil industry. Just before the summer break, the board decided to appoint a committee that will critically examine the university's collaborations. That makes me despair. They explain the decision by saying that maintaining dialogue with all parties is fundamental to science. But that's just not true: science is fundamentally about understanding the processes taking place in nature and society. Nowhere does it say that you have to collaborate with destructive parties. We need to focus far more on the limits of what our planet can handle: we've all got to operate within those limits. If we go on the way we are now, we will wipe out humanity. WUR's motto is *Improving the quality of life: we need to add within planetary boundaries*'. ■



Ignas Heitkönig reads from the IPCC report (May 2023) in Atlas to call for attention to 'the most important report in decades' • Photo Susanne van Donk

Curious to know how Ignas Heitkönig ended up an assistant professor at Wageningen? In the AID issue, he talks about his childhood in Sittard, researching the horse antelope in Mali and teaching in South Africa. Scan the QR code.



UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH CAOS GET MORE ALIGNED

The collective labour agreements (CAOs) for WUR employees were renewed this summer. According to the Works Council, the CAOs for Wageningen University and Wageningen Research employees have been brought more in line with one another. There has been criticism of the differences between the two CAOs for a while.

Text Marieke Rotman

WUR has two collective labour agreements: the one for Wageningen University (the CAO for all Dutch universities) and the one for Wageningen Research (WR CAO). There are differences between the two CAOs: WU employees have Good Friday and 5 May off and work 38 hours in full-time employment, while WR employees have a full-time working week of 36 hours. The salary scales of the two CAOs are also different. This can lead to strange situations on the work floor: in some departments, some employees are covered by one CAO while others are covered by the other CAO.

An agreement on the new universities CAO was reached on 28 June. On 26 July, a new WR CAO was agreed with the trade unions FNV, CNV and CMHF. The Universities CAO includes a 9 per cent salary increase from 1 August and a one-off payment of 800 to 1200 euros,

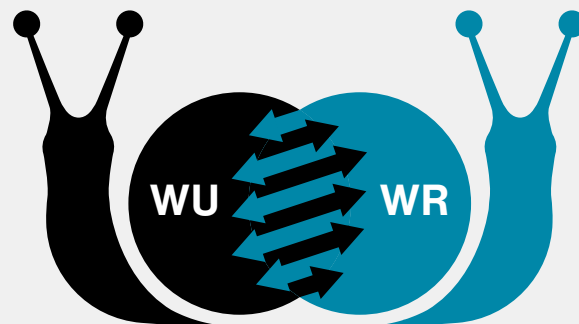
depending on the salary scale. The new WR CAO increases salaries by 4.7 per cent and the year-end bonus by 4.3 per cent (to 8.3 per cent in total). There will also be a one-off payment on top of that for lower incomes.

Ill will

According to Michel Riksen of the Works Council, the unions and WR have been reasonably successful in aligning the collective labour agreements. 'Among support staff in particular, it can create ill will when two people who do the same work are paid different salaries because one has a contract with WU and the other with WR.' The Works Council sees the

secondary employment conditions as particularly important because it's the Council's job to keep an eye on them, for example the development opportunities for staff.

'WU and WR are two different employers with very different employment conditions; it's like comparing apples with oranges,' says Tanja Schrijver, who was at the negotiating table on behalf of FNV. 'The trade unions offered WR the choice of joining the Universities CAO with the option of making additional agreements for Research. But they preferred to keep their own CAO.' According to WUR spokesperson Edwin van Laar, it was impossible for Wageningen Research to join the Universities CAO. 'They are simply two different entities. But there is a desire to work together more. That's why at the end of this year we will explore with the unions how things can be done differently so staff feel it's a logical and acceptable situation.' ■



'THEY ARE SIMPLY TWO DIFFERENT ENTITIES'





WHO WEARS THE TROUSERS?

The quiet summer on campus ended with a bang when AID kicked off. About 2200 new students arrived in Wageningen on 18 August to spend the next five days getting to know the university, campus and town. The introduction days started with the Campus Games, a playful way to introduce the newcomers to various Wageningen clubs and societies. In the photo: four AID participants in four-person trousers try to outrun their opponents. LZ

Photo María Joaquina Acosta

Plastic cord helps control destructive weevil



The apple blossom weevil is wreaking havoc in Dutch orchards, leading to serious harvest losses. A simple piece of plastic could help, discovered researchers in Randwijk. Text Roelof Kleis • Photo Guy Ackermans and Shutterstock

The harvest is poor in many Dutch apple orchards this year. The cause is a tiny proboscis weevil of barely six millimetres in length, which goes by the name of *Anthonomus pomorum*. The apple trees at Proeftuin Randwijk, the heart of Dutch fruit research, are no exception and are yielding a lot less fruit this year thanks to the apple blossom weevil. WUR researcher Herman Helsen estimates that there are less than half the usual number of apples on some plots.

The culprit is no newcomer to apple orchards. 'Growers have been battling this weevil for as long as there have been apples,' Helsen says. The apple blossom weevil strikes in spring. 'For most of the year the weevil is inactive,' Helsen explains. 'Then it hides, under

the bark of a tree for example. The weevil becomes active in the spring and lays its eggs in the flower bud. The flower then fails to open, and forms a capsule or casing around the larva. A new generation of weevils emerges in May, and the following year they start looking for flower buds.'

Catching by hand

Before the development of chemical pesticides, one way of catching the weevils was manually. According to Helsen, schoolchildren were often used for this. 'In old French dictionaries you come across the word *anthonomage*, which means catching these *Anthonomus* weevils. The insects would be shaken out of the trees and caught on a mat, where schoolchildren collected them.' The discovery of the insecticide DDT just after the war was a breakthrough in pest control - with serious negative consequences for the rest of nature. Nowadays, chemical pesticides are only

authorized occasionally.

In efforts to find natural remedies, a lot of research has been done into the use of ichneumon wasps, which lay their eggs in the weevil's abdomen or in the casings around them. Helsen: 'But you can't get enough ichneumon wasps into an orchard to control the weevil adequately. The conditions that suit these parasitic wasps are actually ideal for the apple blossom weevil too. Parasitic wasps can play a role in controlling it, but you won't solve the problem with them.'

Breakthrough

But there has now been some success in the fight against the weevil. Helsen goes so far as to call it a breakthrough. 'A breakthrough in the sense that it enables us to get rid of more than half the weevils with non-chemical substances.' The finding dates back to a more or less accidental discovery 15 years ago. Helsen and a colleague of his at the time wondered where apple blossom weevils overwinter. 'Normally, weevils often hide in tree bark. But in an orchard, the apple trees don't get old enough to develop rough bark. Their trunks are smooth, so the weevil looks

'Parasitic wasps can play a role in control, but you won't solve the problem with them'

‘Growers have been battling this weevil for as long as there have been apples’

for a different hiding place. When my colleague was pruning, he happened to cut through a plastic strap used to attach fruit trees to posts. And we saw a weevil inside the hollow plastic cord.’ That observation gave Helsen the idea of hanging bundles of the ties in the trees to lure the weevils away. ‘We started testing various other materials as well,’ he says. ‘But these ties turned out to work best. You hang up bunches of ties in the summer and in the winter, you take them inside and put them in a plastic bag or in the cold store until the weevils are dead. In the spring, you can use those bunches again.’ In large-scale field

trials at organic growers, there were big catches. ‘At one grower’s farm, there were 90 per cent fewer weevils in the treated fields than in the control ones.’

Cool spring

But the battle is not won yet, partly because some of the weevils overwinter outside the orchard. Overall, the apple blossom weevil population is still growing, and this has been a problematic boom year. Helsen thinks the cool spring could account for the spike. ‘The cool weather slowed down the development of the apples. That gave the weevils longer to lay eggs. Another factor is that this year, unlike previous years, the government did not grant an exemption for growers to use Raptol, an insecticide based on pyrethrum from chrysanthemums.’

Meanwhile, Helsen is busy with preparations for applying the new method. ‘This is a prototype, but there is still plenty to work on. For example, which properties of the material are important? Is it the diameter or the colour? What effect does transparency have? How high up the tree should you hang the bundles?’ A handful of organic growers are already applying the prototype on their farms to reduce the weevil population pressure. But Helsen still foresees obstacles ahead. Although the solution is low-tech in itself — so low-tech, in fact, that it cannot be patented — it still costs money. Helsen: ‘It is labour-intensive to make and hang up those bundles. One on each tree, three thousand trees per hectare — just do the maths. Even if you pay the minimum wage, you can easily spend a few thousand euros per hectare. We are therefore also exploring the potential for mechanized production of the bundles and faster ways of hanging them up.’ ■



Herman Helsen: ‘It turns out the apple blossom weevil likes to hide in the material we use to tie apple trees to posts.’



'I chose WUR because I want to make the world a better place'

From climate change to nutrition and from biodiversity to health, WUR focuses on the big global issues. Is that also why students choose Wageningen? To make the world a better place? Or is it because the degree courses are pretty cool and Wageningen is nice and small? *Resource* asked some first-years at the AID market.

Text Luuk Zegers, Dominique Vrouwenvelder, Maurice Schoo and Felix Landsman • Illustration Shutterstock



Nikshep Trinetra Bangalore Suresh

MSc student Environmental Sciences from India

'I believe that the true cost of everything we buy, sell and use is not represented in the prices we pay. With ecosystem services, you can estimate the real price of things by looking at the value added by nature. You essentially calculate what the natural environment has given us, and then present it in a monetary form that people can understand. That's why I want to study ecosystem services here. So yes, in an indirect way I think I came to Wageningen to change to world. Because when people pay the true price for things, they are helping to protect the environment, even if that's not their goal.'



Jennifer de Jong

BSc student Food Safety from the Netherlands

'My degree is all about people's health, which I think is important. Nowadays a lot of people are sick because they eat the wrong things and don't pay attention to what they eat at all. This costs the government money and it's bad for the people themselves too, while it can easily be prevented. If I can do my bit to improve food safety and help other people, I can also help make the world a bit better. I chose WUR because it's the only university that offers this degree.'



Vilem Cech,

BSc student Environmental Sciences from Czech Republic

'Yes and no. I'm here to do a degree in a subject I'm interested in and good at, but also to make the world a better place — you could call it a nice side effect. Later I would like to do something to make a meaningful contribution, like sustainable raw material management, or technology that helps the environment.'



Khaimile Chekwe,

BSc student Environmental Sciences from South Africa

'Absolutely. I've come here to study to make the world a better place and I think I can learn how to do this in Wageningen. WUR is definitely strong in all the environmental sciences, and that's important to me as well. I want to study something I enjoy and can do well, but which also helps create a better world, because that's what motivates me.'



Femke Frieswijk,

BSc student Landscape Architecture & Planning from the Netherlands

'Not really. I came to Wageningen because I'm from a small village in Friesland and I feel at home here. That's because, like my home in Friesland, it's not very big and is surrounded by countryside. I chose my degree because I like geography and have a broad range of interests. Landscape Architecture & Planning is a pretty broad study. I'm also creative and I'm expecting to be able to use that creativity in this degree.'



Naurah Nadzifah,

MSc student Sustainable Business & Innovation from Indonesia

'During my Bachelor's I studied agricultural business, so this degree in Wageningen fits well with that. I certainly hope to help make the world a better place. To me it's important that businesses start operating more sustainably. They shouldn't just aim for profit, but should also be sustainable for the people. That means minimizing the impact on the environment, and much more focus on the social aspects involved. A sustainable economy can eventually help make the world a better place.'



Jop van Veenendaal,

BSc student Management, Economics & Consumer Studies from the Netherlands

'That statement makes no sense to me at all. I just want to make a lot of money. I'm going to do the Management, Economics & Consumer Studies degree and I already know I'm going to choose the Management specialization, with Operations Research and Logistics. There are so many more things going on that just the environment and the world. Why Wageningen? Because I like it here. Wageningen is a great town.'



Why did you choose Wageningen?
To comment, go to the online article



Diversity coach for assessment committees

‘Awareness alone doesn’t get rid of systematic inequality’

In just under a year and a half, 30 per cent of WUR professors should be women. For a long time, the targeted increase was only happening slowly, but it’s picking up speed now. Could that be thanks to the diversity coach for appointment committees? ‘The goal is not for WUR to hire more women.’ Text Marieke Enter

The overview of full professorships that WUR publishes every six months on its website shows that the proportion of female professors is now 24.4 per cent (reference date: 1 July), compared to 21.9 per cent six months earlier — quite a jump. This hasn’t come entirely out of the blue. Earlier this year, Diversity & Inclusion programme manager Eva Siebelink (from whom Ina Lütmann will take over on 1 September) noted that for the first time in WUR’s history, more than half of all the professors appointed in 2022 are women. ‘Having an external diversity coach guide the Broad Assessment Committees is now really starting to bear fruit,’ she said in *Resource*. That’s intriguing. What does a diversity coach do, exactly? And why someone external?

Trust-based relationship

Carolín Ossenkop is the external diversity coach. She obtained her PhD from VU University Amsterdam on the subject of ethnic diversity and career development in Dutch organizations. Since then, she has worked as an independent diversity consultant for organizations including several universities and the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, and as an assistant professor at the Nijmegen School of Management. She emphasizes that this position is unrelated to her work for WUR. But it does mean she knows the academic world well, and as an insider. At WUR, she mainly assists BACs, the Broad Assessment

Committees that make recommendations on the appointment of new professors. That’s if the BACs want her to; they are not obliged to call on Ossenkop’s expertise. ‘The role I play at WUR is unique in that I’m so involved in the BACs,’ she says. ‘Other universities engage me for training but this goes much further and enables us to really build a trust-based relationship. That is very valuable, both to me personally and for the process.’

Systematic and structural

So far, Ossenkop has supported about 15 BACs across the Wageningen science groups. Precisely how many women or people with non-Western backgrounds have been appointed, she isn’t sure. ‘But that isn’t the goal as such. My work focuses on optimizing the process,’ she explains.

That may sound technocratic, but according to Ossenkop, this is all about human behaviour. ‘My goal is to ensure that the steps in the selection process leave as little room for bias as possible,’ she says by way of clarification.

Of course she helps the BAC members examine their unconscious biases, but awareness-raising is not enough: ‘In this context, the issue is inequality that is systematic and structural. So we must tackle it at the source,’ she explains. And that’s why the key word is ‘process’. In practice, that means that she and the BACs scrutinize every stage of the recruitment and selection



Scene from the film *Barbie*. Barbie visits the head office of her manufacturer Mattel and discovers to her surprise that all the directors are men. At WUR, Broad Assessment Committees can engage a diversity coach to get a better understanding of bias and preconceptions in recruitment and selection procedures. • Photo Landmark Media/Alamy Stock Photo

process, from the wording of the job description to the way they reach their decision on which candidate to nominate for appointment. The aim is for bias to be given very little chance to rear its ugly head.

Gut feeling

The examples Ossenkop gives show that bias can lurk in unexpected places. Take job interviews. If their structure, duration and context are not standardized, gut feeling can play a bigger role. 'And that's how bias can creep into the process,' explains Ossenkop. It's a question of seemingly little things like a 10-minute difference in the length of a conversation, or whether or not it is preceded by small talk. But those so-called minor details can get in the way of an objective judgement — or more accurately, the most objective judgement possible. Because, as Ossenkop explains with a smile, 'A completely bias-free assessment is almost impossible. Which is precisely why the processes need to be so well thought out.'

'A bias-free assessment is almost impossible'

Another example Ossenkop gives is the way committee members discuss their preferred candidate. 'The dynamics of that discussion are super-unconscious, and yet all sorts of factors can influence the course of the discussion,' she explains. 'A well-known example is that women get interrupted more often than men, and men are usually given more speaking time than women. Who gets to speak first or last is significant too. Even the seating matters: seat men and women alternately and the conversation goes differently than it does when men and women sit in separate clusters.'

That insight is an argument for a set interview structure and a sharp observer to ensure that the protocol is followed — a role that Ossenkop often takes on herself. 'To start with, BAC members sometimes feel a bit uneasy following a rigid framework. That is normal; I sometimes compare it to dancing. If you're good at salsa and you suddenly start taking tango lessons, it feels strange at first too. You've got to give yourself time to get the hang of it. And BAC members often tell me that they come to like the structured approach to the process. It helps them arrive at a really considered opinion'. ■

Small fish, big uncertainties

THE RIDDLE OF THE ANCHOVY

The Eastern Scheldt estuary was always teeming with them in the past. But last summer, for the fourth year in a row, there wasn't an anchovy to be seen in the traps. Researcher Joey Volwater (Wageningen Marine Research) and student Robin Stark set out to find an explanation for this.



Text Marieke Enter

In the Netherlands, anchovies (*engraulis encrasicolus*) are now only fished in one place by one family. The Van Dort family is all that's left of the once flourishing Dutch anchovy fishing industry. This was mainly located around the then Zuiderzee Bay, to which the tiny fish migrated in huge numbers in late spring to spawn. The construction of the Afsluitdijk causeway closing off the Zuiderzee about 100 years ago put paid to that, but the Eastern Scheldt remained accessible as a spawning ground. During the season, the Van Dorts caught around 8000 kilos of anchovies there every year, using the traditional method of weir fishing (see inset). That was until the summer of 2019. Since then, there have hardly been any anchovies in their traps. Looking for an explanation, the Weir Fisheries Conservation Foundation came knocking at the door of Wageningen Marine Research (WMR). There was no funding but WMR did not want to leave the anchovy riddle unsolved. 'Their question made our ecological hearts

beat faster. After all, our surveys haven't revealed a negative trend for the North Sea anchovy population. So why are they staying away from the Eastern Scheldt?' says researcher Joey Volwater. He set up a student project to at least find out whether existing survey data offer any leads for an explanation.

List of suspects

And that's how Robin Stark came on board. He's a Master's student of Marine Biology at the University of Amsterdam (Volwater's call got no response from Wageningen). Among other things, he studied catch data from weir fisheries and correlated it with annual values of salinity and temperature. He also trawled through WMR fisheries surveys for relevant figures and insights. He made analyses and models and investigated the Van Dorts' theory that Borssele offshore wind farm

is to blame for the vanished anchovies. Or to be more precise, the wind farm's power cables. It is since they went into use in 2019 that the anchovies have stayed away. But Stark and Volwater soon took the wind farm off the list of suspects. Volwater: 'Scientific research contradicts the fishing family's hunch. Quite a lot of research is being done on the impact of the electromagnetic fields of those cables at present but so far, none of the studies have found a strong negative effect — not on fish species living on or just above the seabed, nor even on species such as sharks and rays, which have special receptors for electromagnetic fields. That makes it unlikely that anchovies would stay away

Weir fishing

In this traditional fishing method, which has been declared cultural heritage in the Netherlands, fish are driven into a trap (a 'weir') when the tide is going out via a structure made of poles, making good use of the current. The method is quite sustainable, as after the target fish have been selected, bycatch can leave the trap unharmed.



Because of its considerable overbite, the anchovy is also known as 'the Freddy Mercury of the fish world'. ♦ Photo Shutterstock

THE FISH MIGHT BE MISSING THE CUE TO MIGRATE

for this reason, as they are pelagic fish living closer to the surface and have no such receptors.'

Delta Works

Volwater and Stark went down another route. Stark: 'For anchovies, 14°C is a crucial threshold temperature for spawning migration. That temperature is reached a month earlier nowadays than it was around 1980. In some fish species, it has already been established that this can disrupt migration patterns, because the fish miss their cue to migrate in the runup to the spawning season. That could be a factor here too.'

There are some other systemic shifts that could explain the anchovy's absence too. Volwater: 'The Eastern Scheldt has always been an estuary, in which the water has a particular salinity gradient, warms up fast in spring and is relatively nutrient-rich thanks to nutrient deposition from the rivers. The Delta Works have changed

that massively.' The fact that the Eastern Scheldt has hardly any freshwater influx anymore has particularly far-reaching consequences — for salinity, nutrient balance, the temperature gradient over the seasons and water turbidity, for instance. 'In fact, the Eastern Scheldt has been transformed from an estuary into a sea arm. A process like that is gradual, but there comes a moment when the tipping point is reached at which the area loses its appeal as a spawning ground. This assumption is supported by the fact that anchovies have not been found in the Eastern Scheldt since 2019, but are still abundant elsewhere in and near the North Sea.'

Scientifically, this explanation is not watertight, Volwater stresses. 'In the Netherlands, anchovy is only fished

at one location. The species has been virtually absent there for four years now, but we know nothing about anchovy stocks elsewhere around the Netherlands.' Crucial comparative material is lacking on other fronts too. 'There's more research going on in France and Spain, where anchovy fishing has a much higher economic value. But the question is whether that knowledge is valid for "our" anchovies. Because we know from our research that the North Sea population is genetically different from the one in the Bay of Biscay. So they might not have the same triggers in terms of environmental variables such as temperature or salinity.'

Symbolic

Specific research would be needed to fully unravel the anchovy mystery, says Volwater. He holds out hope that there will be funding for that. 'Our little report attracted quite a bit of media attention. Perhaps that will be decisive in nudging a government body or an NGO to release funds for it. Because it isn't just about this one species, or about the last family still fishing for it. You could see anchovies as symbolic of all the changes in the Eastern Scheldt.' ■

Nutrition science at Lowlands

WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE FRUIT OR SHOWERS?

‘Would you rather never have a shower again but retain access to fresh fruit, or never have fresh fruit again but be able to take a shower?’ WUR researcher used dilemmas to challenge festival-goers at Lowlands to think outside the box about our food system.



Text Dominique Vrouwenvelder

In the front row of the Echo — the culture and science tent at Lowlands music festival — WUR researcher Sigrid Wertheim-Heck is swinging away to the rousing music coming from the speakers.

It is Saturday, the second day of the music festival, and the tent is slowly filling up. In a few minutes, Wertheim-Heck gets to go on stage for a panel discussion about ‘the menu of tomorrow’ for the TV programme *VPRO Tegenlicht*.

‘Before we try to make our food production more sustainable, there are other questions we should think about,’ says Wertheim-Heck, consumption sociologist and associate professor of Global Sustainable Food Systems, during the panel discussion. ‘What and how will we eat in future? And do we eat to nourish

ourselves or for the sake of the activity of eating itself? What do we see as normal? Take Lowlands, for example: it started as a music festival, and slowly but surely it has turned into a massive food festival. It seems we consider that normal.’

Digital plates

Elsewhere in the Lowlands Science area, Wertheim-Heck has set up a tasting restaurant, right next to the Alpha tent, Lowlands’ main podium where the biggest names are performing all weekend. The restaurant, designed to suggest the seabed — a reference to the festival grounds on reclaimed land in the Flevo polder — has seven tables seating four people each. The tables are laid with red-and-white checked tablecloths. There are baskets of bread and tablets showing digital Dutch crockery on which dilemmas are served. In this restaurant setting, she hopes to find out how Lowlanders perceive the Dutch food system. ‘We’d like to know what they think about our society, in which we consume a lot, and about how we can make the food system healthier, fairer and more environmentally friendly,’ Wertheim-Heck explains. ‘For example,

FREE LUNCH

Sigrid Wertheim-Heck's Lowlands Science experiment FREE-LUNCH-FREE is part of the NWA project ‘Transition to a sustainable Food System’, funded by the Dutch Research Council. It was carried out in collaboration with SugarRushFilm, with animations by Kristiaan Funke.



VPRO Tegenlicht's Lowlands programme on the menu of tomorrow can be watched on
<https://www.vpro.nl/programmas/tegenlicht/lees/artikelen/2023/lowlands/het-menu-van-morgen.html>



The research participants were served dilemmas on tablets showing digital Dutch crockery. ♦ Photo Max Peters | Goldfish

how important is it to them to eat together with other people? How important do they find it that other people have enough to eat? And what if we could afford to give everyone access to healthy, sustainable food if we paid for our consultations with our GPs? We confront the participants in the experiment with tricky dilemmas, to which there isn't a single ideal answer.' The experiment has proven popular. 'Since the start of the festival, every session has sold out. Maybe that's because you can have lunch here without eating,' says Wertheim-Heck enigmatically. When the VPRO presenter gives her a quizzical look, she laughs: 'You do get food! The only question is: what do you see as food?'

Shakes or death?

Lowland-goers can take part in the experiment for the rest of Saturday and Sunday. During the panel discussion, the researcher is reluctant to give away much about the dilemmas they'll be faced with so as not to influence their thinking. But she does talk about a couple of them — and the preliminary results. Would you rather take potluck in a neighbourhood restaurant and that everyone has enough food, or eat whatever you fancy at home, while there isn't enough food for everyone? The presenter asks everyone to stand up if they would choose the first option and

'I wouldn't want to miss a single pizza'

remain seated if they would go for the second. Nearly everyone stands up. The researcher says that matches the answers of the people who took part in the experiment on Friday: about 70 per cent opted for the neighbourhood restaurant.

The next dilemma causes more of a stir, judging by the noise from the audience. 'Would you rather never eat solid food again but reach a ripe old age in good health living on meal replacement shakes, or carry on eating normally but die 20 years earlier?' Wertheim-Heck reports that according to the first results, 62 per cent of the Lowland participants would rather die younger than deny themselves solid food. One man in the front row agrees whole-heartedly: 'I wouldn't want to miss a single pizza.' His mate agrees with him: he really enjoys his food, whereas the man in the next seat would opt for healthy ageing on meal replacement shakes. 'To me, life is too good to choose to die 20 years earlier.' The woman next to him nods vigorously: 'It sounds lovely to me, living on shakes.'

Wertheim-Heck's enthusiasm prompts her to share a third dilemma with the audience. 'We ask the guests whether they would rather never have a shower but

keep access to fresh fruit, or never have access to fresh fruit but be able to take a shower. Lowlanders overwhelmingly choose fruit over showers, according to Friday's results.' The popularity of fruit among the festival-goers was also clear from the disappearance of the fruit hanging on the wall. Wertheim-Heck: 'Halfway through the day, we noticed that the banana which was hung up as art had been nicked.'

Animations

After the panel discussion, Wertheim-Heck heads back to her restaurant. 'We collaborated on this experiment with a filmmaker and an animator. We serve our guests five courses in the form of plates displaying animations about our current food system, with suggestions on how it could be different. What we're doing really is giving the participants some food for thought. In between, visitors are presented with dilemmas, which could be seen as appetizers.'

The animations are made from film clips that once

went viral, such as Marijke Helwegen's ode to the cucumber and a Rotterdam man throwing a pan of noodles out of the window. As they watch the clips, the restaurant goers are silent and all eyes are on the screen. But as soon as the dilemmas come into view, there is a buzz of conversation. People are keen to know how others voted.

Individualism

Three women in their twenties leave the restaurant afterwards. 'I found it a fascinating experiment, with videos describing very recognizable situations. That makes you think,' says one. 'Our society is strongly geared to capitalism and individualism,' adds another. 'This is reflected in the experiment, for example, in the bit about Uber Eats delivery people. There should be a bit less of that. And less consumption.' When asked if they would like to live exclusively on shakes, their answer is loud and clear: 'no.' The third woman says: 'I'm willing to change, but the alternative has to be a bit palatable!'

After Lowlands, Wertheim-Heck is enthusiastic about her experiment and the preliminary results. 'The experiment was 100 per cent fully booked from the first to the last session. We have been invited to conduct the experiment at other venues as well, and we are working on a plan for Dutch Design Week, in Eindhoven later this year.' ■

'How important is it to us for everyone to have enough to eat?'

'Do we eat to nourish ourselves or for the sake of the act of eating?'



Sigrid Wertheim-Heck (right) during the panel debate about 'the menu of tomorrow' for VPRO Tegenlicht • Photo Resource

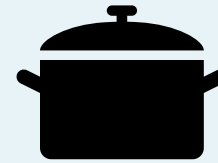


You see the most fabulous looking people and the coolest outfits around the Wageningen campus. In this feature we put someone in the spotlight every two weeks. This time, **Roald Nooijens**, a Master's student of Forest and Nature Conservation.



'I get a lot of inspiration from the fashion world. There you often see the more extreme expressions of fashion and I try to tone them down to something that looks a little more normal. I've also been in Rotterdam a lot lately, and a lot of young people there dress strikingly. And then my girlfriend is in the art world, so she inspires me too. Young people and the art world are ahead of the game; they're the fashion pioneers, I think. I take my inspiration from them and water it down to clothes you can wear every day. So: colour combinations, shapes, proportions, the role of shoes, how you can combine smart clothing in modern styles. A lot of people just go along with all the fashions. I try to stand out in contrast to what everyone is wearing. I like to look for unique, good clothes in the 'normal' second-hand shops. There are also vintage shops where every garment is interesting, but what I like is precisely to find something special in the messiness of an ordinary second-hand shop. I often buy trousers there that are much too big and I alter them. A lot of garments only look nice in combination with other clothes. The only thing I buy new is shoes.' IB

You encounter all the flavours of the world in our WUR community. **Elīza Ilze Malceniece**, an MSc student of Plant Sciences from Latvia, and **Minnie Leong**, a PhD student in the Laboratory of Plant Physiology from Hong Kong, share a recipe for Barbie soup.



Flavours of WUR

Cold soup (aukstā zupa)

'My friend Minnie asked me to make a Latvian dish for dinner. As I am not the world's greatest cook, I decided to make a cold soup that is very popular and easy to make. It's a nice dish on a sunny summer day. Actually, this soup is typical not only of Latvia but of many Eastern European countries. If you add beetroot — which you usually do — then it's pink. Because everyone's talking about the Barbie movie, we joked that it's a Barbie soup, and we decided to send it to *Resource* for the recipe column.'

Preparation (20 minutes)

- 1 Hard-boil the eggs and put them in cold water.
- 2 Peel the cucumber. Cut it into small straws or grate it.
- 3 Cut eggs, sausage and beetroots into small pieces.
- 4 Chop spring onions and dill.
- 5 Put all these ingredients into a big bowl.
- 6 Add salt and pepper.
- 7 Add kefir and mix everything.
- 8 Add mustard and horseradish, and stir again.
- 9 Add a dash of beer (optional) and stir again.
- 10 If the consistency seems too thick, add water.
- 11 Your cold soup is ready to be served chilled.

Most Latvians eat the soup with rye bread. There are many variations: you can add onions or boiled potatoes or, if you are vegetarian, make it without meat.

Ingredients (for 2 persons) :

- 3-4 eggs
- Jar of beetroot
- 1 fresh cucumber
- 3-4 tbsp finely chopped fresh dill
- 3-4 tbsp finely chopped spring onion
- 1L kefir
- 1 tsp horseradish paste
- 1 tsp mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- Sausage
- A dash of beer
(originally we use a drink called kvass that is non-alcoholic and made from barley and malt)



Elīza Ilze Malceniece, an MSc student of Plant Sciences from Latvia, and **Minnie Leong**, a PhD student in the Laboratory of Plant Physiology from Hong Kong.

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



THE SIDE JOB

It's not just students who have side gigs; WUR staff do it too. The other life of Gerrit van den Heuvel (58), who works in IT at Facilities & Services, plays out on the football pitch. He spends a few hours a week teaching prospective referees to blow the whistle right.

Text Steven Snijders

'I've been working at WUR for 32 years now, 15 of those in my current IT job at Facilities & Services. Our team makes sure there's enough storage and server capacity for things like research data and the computing power we need. Regular maintenance has to be done too. My side job is something

'You can't ignore it if someone shouts "Flatten him!"'

completely different: I train football referees and the referee assessors who monitor them.

I got the refereeing bug when I was 36. As a trainer, it's so nice to see the trainees coming out of their shells as time goes by. During difficult times, such as when my parents died, these courses helped me get through it. Every group is different. There are lots of highly motivated trainees who are keen to blow the whistle for the KNVB, and it's very nice to support them. But some trainees drop out too: sometimes a person doesn't have the right skills. Or the course is not what they expected. Being a referee is wonderful, but it has its challenging

sides too. You get called nasty names sometimes, and tensions can run high on a football pitch. Social media is a topic on the course too. And there's a module on mental resilience for those who are interested. It's crucial to stay in control on the pitch. Short lines of communication. Early anticipation. Bringing players together when necessary. You can't ignore it if someone shouts "Flatten him!" — even if it comes from the bench. And always use precise phrasing: "I saw that..." That way you stick to the facts. I'm a man of action, not words. I sometimes run into a problem and realize that I could have anticipated it. I teach my trainees that there are four phases: observation, interpretation, decision and action. In my job at WUR and in daily life, I tend to go into action a bit too quickly.'

Gerrit trains referees

Who: Gerrit van den Heuvel (58)

What: Football referee trainer for the Royal Dutch Football Association KNVB

Why? Infect others with his passion for refereeing

Hourly wage: Varies a lot, €400 gross per month on average



Gerrit van den Heuvel • Photo Steven Snijders

Do you have an unusual side job or know someone else who does? Send an email to steven.snijders@wur.nl

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IN MEMORIAM

MONIQUE VAN DE GRAAF

On Saturday, 5 August, our colleague Monique van de Graaf passed away at the age of 60 after saying goodbye to her close family and friends. We received this sad message knowing this moment would inevitably come. Monique has always been so persevering, but she unfortunately had to give up this fight.

Monique has always been more than 100 per cent committed to the Commodity Inspection Department, the Dutch Food

Safety Authority and finally Wageningen Food Safety Research. Monique was a much loved colleague with a great sense of responsibility. Despite her illness, she always succeeded in being that sociable, friendly and above all helpful colleague, with a smile until the last moment.

Monique, you are too young to go. Time will pass, but you will always remain in our thoughts. WFSR, 7 August 2023.

MARJOLEIN FLOOR

We are sad to announce that Marjolein Floor, our fourth-year International Development Studies BSc student, passed away on 17 July in a fatal fall in the Swiss mountains she loved so much. We are deeply affected by her passing. Marjolein was a creative, engaged and talented student full of dreams for the future, and due to graduate this month. After the summer, she was going to start a new degree course at the School of Arts in Utrecht. She cared a lot about injustice, inequality and migration, but in search of her place and voice in society, she kept on coming back to her creative side. This was her interest in writing, reading, theatre, film, music, philosophy and art and her secret dream of a career in the cultural or journalistic sector. She decided to apply for the Writing for Performance Bachelor's degree in Utrecht and got

admitted. What a wonderful way to further develop her passion! What an amazing step! We can hardly comprehend that these beautiful plans and such a young life have abruptly come to an end, and we are intensely saddened by this.

Dearest Marjolein, we will miss you so much. We want to extend our sincerest condolences to your loved ones. On behalf of students, teachers and the International Development Studies programme team.

The condolence book for Marjolein is in Room 1034 in Leeuwenborch (first floor, left wing). The book will be available for you to write your message until Friday 8 September. Contact person: evelien.meijs@wur.nl

Colophon

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

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'Soon they'll be turning the Sower into a woman' • Photo Resource



GUYS, GET WISE, CHOOSE WUR!

Male students are an endangered species in Wageningen. Time for action, says Animal Feed professor Jan van Dittum.

Once again, WUR tops a list. This time it's the feminization of the student population. Nowhere are there as many women relatively speaking as in Wageningen. An incredible 58 per cent of first-year students are women. Isn't that great? Not really, says Van Dittum. In his opinion, it's changing too quickly. 'At this rate, all Wageningen students will be women in 50 years' time. That surely can't be the intention?' The influx of women studying Animal Feed has changed the programme content too. Van Dittum looks back nostalgically at the time when Animal Science was exclusively about cows and pigs. Those were the days. 'Farmers' sons meeting up over a beer for some laughs.' In his opinion, the first signs of trouble were when they started to include other domestic animals. 'Horses,' he snorts. 'Not my thing at all. They don't even taste good.' Don't get him wrong. 'I've got nothing against women. Even my best friend has one. But it's getting out of balance. The Wageningen ecosystem is fast reaching a tipping point. And the thing with tipping points is there's no way back.' So Van Dittum has decided to

take action. Wageningen needs more male students. The concerned professor already has an idea of how to tackle this. 'Step one is for me to take over from Arthur Mol as rector magnificus.' He tells *Resource* the lobbying behind the scenes is already in full swing. 'Once I'm the rector, I'll get WUR to start a major

nationwide campaign.'

He already has a slogan in mind: Guys, get wise, choose WUR!

'Look,' says Van Dittum, 'That Sower statue is in

front of the main building for a reason. I'm sure a lot of thought went into that. But now they'll probably be wanting to replace him with a woman. Or even something gender neutral.' He assures us that won't happen when he's in charge. 'Of course, first I need to get the rector job.'

**'I've got nothing
against women.
Even my best
friend has one'**