UPDATE
News in brief about research and developments at Wageningen UR

SUSTAINABLE CHOICES
In spite of good intentions, the Dutch don’t tend to choose sustainable products in the supermarket. ‘You go to the supermarket to do your shopping, not to save the world. Negative logos could help.’

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN
In five years and with support from Wageningen, a college of agriculture has been established in Kabul, Afghanistan. ‘Good training has a lasting impact on agriculture.’

TAMING VIRUSES
Viruses are cunning pathogens, but virologists are now using smart tricks to make viruses do their bidding. To produce vaccines for example.

OUTSTANDING ALUMNUS AWARD
Niels Louwaars received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from University Fund Wageningen. He is a role model for professionals and researchers in the seed sector. ‘New methods are subject to close political scrutiny.’

FEATURES

LIFE AFTER WAGENINGEN
Both alumni did the Applied Communication Science Master’s, still new back in 2004. Now Mirjam Wagteweld manages the communication for a major nature project at WNF. Kirsten van Gorkum helps gas and electricity network operator Enexis formulate strategies for the future.

ALUMNI
News for alumni of Wageningen University

PERSONALIA
Information about the lives and fortunes of alumni of Wageningen University.

KLV
Announcements from the KLV Wageningen Alumni Network

Holistic food policy
‘To be properly prepared for the many challenges ahead related to sustainable food, the Netherlands needs to make a transition from agricultural policy to food policy. That requires a systems approach with attention to the entire value chain from production to the consumer, as well as to biodiversity, climate, animal welfare, food safety, health, poverty, trade, identity and participation. This holistic approach sounds appealing but it still has to be translated into a new form of governance. At the moment policy is dispersed over several different ministries. And an integral food policy is impossible without regional government bodies, civil society organizations, ordinary citizens and companies. A lot of thought is being given to innovative ways of developing food policy, both within and outside the EU. Several Dutch political parties argue for a ministry of Food. Personally, however, I don’t think a new ministry is the best approach to arriving at an integral food policy. Departmental reorganization always leads to political wrangling or a preoccupation with internal ‘nonsense’ in the civil service. Each reorganization cuts through existing linkages again. And there is a risk that in a large new ministry sustainability issues will get snowed under because of a lack of checks and balances. So it would be sensible to explore other options too. Such as appointing a programme minister for food, without a ministry. Such a minister would approach negotiations in Brussels differently to a minister who is primarily defending the interests of the agriculture sector. Experience suggests, however, that in government circles in the Hague such ministers don’t achieve much. So I think it’s an illusion to think you can design a simple governance model for holistic food policy. I would prefer to see a network organization – a kind of governance bypass that works around the ministries – such as the one set up to run the Delta programme. That kind of network organization has to bring together the ambitions and visions of various stakeholders working on food, make discussion of conflicts about values possible, stimulate innovative collaboration and develop long-term strategies. To do that it needs a firm political, legal and financial institutional base. Otherwise it will be all words and no action.’

Katrien Termeer, professor of Public Administration and Policy