

16 MILLION EUROS FOR ROBOTICS INNOVATION NETWORK

WUR has secured a major European project worth 16 million euros in the field of robotics, called agROBOfood. In that project, WUR's Agrofood Robotics team will be working with European partners to set up a knowledge and innovation network.

The EU wants to digitize the agro-food sector. Precision farming could reduce the use of fertilizer and pesticides while robots could solve the problem of labour shortages in agriculture and horticulture. The agROBOfood programme will help achieve this by linking up science institutes and innovation hubs, says project manager Janneke de Kramer. As she has found a

new job, her WUR colleague Kees Lokhorst will be taking over coordination of the European project from her this month.

De Kramer stresses that AgROBOfood is not a research project. The aim is to organize a network of sci-

'How do we make the picking robot commercially attractive?'

ence institutions and companies that will help one another speed up the application of robots in agriculture and horticulture. Take the cucumber picking robot. There is a prototype, but now the question is

which European regions will introduce this robot? How do you finance the production facility and how do you market the robot?

'We need to take things one step further to make the picking robot a commercially attractive prospect,' says Lokhorst. The same applies to milking robots and robots that take care of pot plants. The people developing robots for agriculture will learn from their colleagues who work on robots in sectors such as healthcare and infrastructure. In addition to Wageningen, Eindhoven and Delft universities are also involved in the project. **AS**

The pepper picking robot Sweeper. ►



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