

Heads together on sustain

Wageningen ran its first Business Day this year and wants it to become an annual event, giving interested businesses an impression of the most innovative research now in progress. 'I had wanted to get in touch with scientists from WUR for some time.'

TEXT KENNETH VAN ZIJL PHOTOGRAPHY JONNE SEUDEL

Through the Business Day we aim not only to inspire people, but also to encourage them to engage in dialogue,' says Ruud Duijghuisen, business development manager at Wageningen Livestock Research. 'We hope that people who are interested, including our partners, would like to help think through the challenges facing us now, such as climate change and population growth. We don't have all the answers to the challenges of the future up our sleeves.'

The Business Day was organized by the Value Creation department along the lines of a successful open day for companies in 2018 on the occasion of Wageningen University's centenary. This year, businesspeople, developers and policymakers were introduced to new technologies and their possible applications and impact through lectures, brainstorming sessions, workshops and presentations at venues across Wageningen Campus.

NEW PROTEINS

One of the visitors was Serpil Tascioglu, Research & Development director at Unilever. She wanted to get up to speed on the latest developments in the field of nutrition and technology, she says. She was especially

interested in the theme of 'new proteins': the search for sustainable new sources of protein as substitutes for meat and dairy. 'You see more and more people buying plant-based products. I came to the Business Day to find out how Unilever can help with that. Ultimately, we want to have more sustainable plant-based products on the shelves.'

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT

The big surprise of the day for Tascioglu was that you meet people you don't come across in your day-to-day work. 'Very inspiring to experience that there is a great big world outside Unilever.' She was struck by the innovative spirit and drive with which young researchers do pioneering work in startups in the field of food technology. 'I get a lot of energy from that.'

'I have had many interesting conversations with mostly new contacts,' says Marc Arts, founder and director of Greenfoods50, a campus-based company that develops food ingredients. 'My main reason for coming to the Business Day was to exchange ideas with other people about how to make food systems more sustainable. And of course I wanted to show how our innovative quinoa ingredients, based on quinoa seeds



In September, interested visitors could find out about new technologies at lectures, brainstorming sessions, workshops and presentations dotted around Wageningen Campus.

nable food production



‘We aim to inspire people and encourage dialogue’

SET THE BAR HIGH

Alumnus Onno van de Stolpe was the keynote speaker at the Wageningen Business Day. Van de Stolpe (Plant Pathology, 1986), founder and CEO of biotechnology company Galapagos, talked about how his company has grown in 16 years from a small startup in Leiden with an idea for an anti-inflammatory treatment for rheumatoid arthritis into one of the biggest biotech companies in Europe. Van de Stolpe: ‘Value creation requires stamina. By making a deal with a pharma company, we have ensured that we can’t be taken over for the next 10 years. That enables us to work on developing our original ideas.’ His lessons: ‘Stick to your plan; always think about the financing; be agile and think big. I said from early on, much to other people’s amazement, that we would become leading in biotech in Europe. Set the bar high and keep your ultimate goal in mind.’

bred in Wageningen and grown in the Netherlands (without pesticides) can contribute to this.’

AUDIO-RECORDING ANALYSES

Dirk Nordwig drove all the way from southern Germany especially for the Business Day. Nordwig is a senior consultant with a small software company, Dawin. ‘We support scientists in the field with software with which they can audio-record results and analyses using a headset. The data is stored and categorized on a computer, while the researcher can just carry on working.’

Dawin works mainly with scientists in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. ‘Of course I’ve heard of Wageningen University & Research, but I’ve never been here before. I’ve wanted to get in contact with the scientists from WUR for some time, because I had already understood that the procedures regarding collaboration between private parties and the university are excellent here. I wanted to talk to those Wageningen guys, so when I heard about the Business Day, that was a perfect opportunity.’

Dawin offers its software free to research institutes. A win-win situation, according to Nordwig. The comments, questions and experiences of their researchers help Dawin to further develop and optimize its software.

PHENOTYPING

Nordwig wanted to talk to as many people as possible and collect business cards. ‘I have talked to a lot of very interesting people, including Rick van de Zedde from the Plant Sciences Group.’ Van de Zedde spoke about the up-and-coming phenotyping technology with which the growth and health of plants can be screened automatically.

Nordwig hopes shortly to run a workshop for Van de Zedde’s group on how Dawin’s software can contribute to phenotyping. He has now established the contacts he would need, at least. ‘Workshop or no workshop, I got what I came for 100 per cent.’ Nordwig is familiar with the concept of a business day from universities in Germany and Austria, but he experienced a fundamental difference. ‘I am impressed by how accessible everything is at this event. There are so many places and options for getting into conversation with each other that the match-making feels very natural.’ ■

www.wur.eu/businessday