

# WHAT SHOULD WUR DO ABOUT THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

Although we are not all going on hunger strike or blocking roundabouts, climate change is a big concern for most Wageningers, and many have an uneasy feeling that WUR should be doing more. But what?

text Milou van der Horst, Nicole van 't Woud Hofland, Coretta Jongeling illustration Henk van Ruitenbeek

## Bob Mulder



**Associate professor of Strategic Communication**

'WUR is first and foremost a knowledge institution, so clear and transparent communication about our climate knowledge should come first.

**The problem is that the climate debate is polarized, with those for and against accusing each other of lies and manipulating the public.** So for WUR to be able to communicate honestly and openly, it is essential for it to develop a central vision and a communication strategy around the climate issue, clarifying WUR's position and the terms we use. Take "climate crisis" for a start. Activists use this word to emphasize the urgency of the problem and the need to take action now, but the term also leads to accusations of hysteria and sowing fear. A shared vision would also support individual climate scientists in their communication. They sometimes get attacked verbally or even threatened by climate change deniers. Understandably, that makes some scientists hesitate to speak out.'

## Karolina Wachala



**Second-year BSc student of Animal Sciences**

**'I notice that we focus a lot on productivity: how can we earn more money or produce more food?'** We learn that ecological problems come about during the production of food and feed, but we don't learn how we can address them. I think it would be good to learn more about that as part of our studies, and

to include this aspect in every course. I also think WUR could participate more actively in awareness-raising campaigns on climate change. WUR could organize things like a climate awareness day, outdoor activities or poster campaigns.'

## Annemieke Sweere



**Front-office worker in the WUR library**

'I think WUR should play a leading role in the public debate on climate. But a more active role, by proclaiming a climate emergency for instance, probably won't contribute very much to a solution, as the term emergency is no more than a political symbol. **Besides taking the lead in debates, we at WUR should also seek solutions close to home.** Wageningen may have been declared the world's most sustainable university, but there is room for improvement. The temperature in the Forum could be a few degrees lower, and the use of plastic on the campus could be reduced a lot. I would like to see no more plastic cups coming out of the coffee machines, and everyone bringing their own mugs.'

## Lex van het Hof



**Fourth-year BSc student of Forest and Nature Management**

'WUR is one of the greenest universities in the Netherlands and I think that comes with a responsibility to work to combat climate change through research, policy and influ-

encing. I would like to see the government making more policy decisions based on the research that is done here. **As far as I'm concerned, WUR's political influence could be bigger, so that more decisions are taken on the basis of independent science.** I'm sure Wageningen does have some influence, but it is not transparent about it. So doubts remain about how it uses its influence and whether it does so for the benefit of the climate. Here we are all convinced that the climate must be improved, but of course there are a lot more people living in the Netherlands.'

## Marlies van den Nieuwenhof



### Student doing Minor in Animal Sciences

'WUR has done quite a lot of research on climate change, I think, but it's good to know what you can actually do about it yourself. And not just for WUR people but for everyone – both in the Netherlands and in the rest of the world. **I think WUR could spread that kind of awareness through students, because they are young and can communicate practical solutions to friends and the next generation.** I also think WUR itself could do more in practical terms. By serving less meat in the canteens, for example – at the moment only one day a week is meat-free – and by stimulating staff and students to use public transport more by working towards better connections between Ede-Wageningen station and the campus. Because I've heard that a lot of students who live elsewhere come to campus by car because the public transport connections are so terrible.'

## Matthijs Dekker



### Associate professor of Food Quality and Design

'WUR does a lot of research on climate and climate-smart solutions. As a university, we should do more with that knowledge. **I think WUR has a public duty to issue warnings about the climate.** Not just as a political statement, but on the basis of solid research. As well as that, we should of course set a good example. The university could do better in that regard. I see very few solar panels on the campus, for instance.'

## Maarten Voors



### Researcher in the Development Economics chair group

'We could quite easily be more sustainable on one point, and that is travelling to conferences. Sometimes you have to go somewhere at short notice, but **if there is no great**



**hurry, you can often go by train instead of by plane.** I am already trying to do that myself. My personal limit is 12 hours travelling time. If it takes longer than that, I do fly. It would help a lot if WUR stimulated this; now it's just up to the researcher. We could make it a policy to travel relatively short distances by train. That could be an inspiring example for other universities and research institutes too.'

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