

Possibly a Plus Ultra III

The Plus Ultra series may get a third building, according to the initiator Kadans Science Partner in a promotional video about the multi-occupant hub Plus Ultra II. The video was distributed as an alternative to the official opening of the building, which did not go ahead at the end of last year because of Covid. WUR Facilities & Services director Peter Booman confirms the plans for a third building. 'Space has been left for it on the corner of the plot. At present, we are investigating the options offered by the zoning plan. Discussions have been started with the municipality.' Plus Ultra I was completed in 2016, and Plus Ultra II at the end of 2020. The buildings mainly house start-ups and established businesses with a link to the food and biobased industries. FKK

Quote

'If each life is of equal worth, then the fact that some people have already had a lot of that life and others have only had a little is also relevant.'

Marcel Verweij, WUR professor of Philosophy, last week in the Radio 1 programme *Stax&Toine* about the government's plan for legislation banning selection based on age for access to intensive care.

Agroforestry in the polder

At the start of January, WUR planted 1500 trees in Lelystad on 15 hectares of arable land in the first large-scale Dutch facility for agroforestry research. The Field Crops business unit will be combining the cultivation of arable and horticultural crops with rows of trees.

'There are now six long rows of trees with variations in the distance between them,' says research leader Maureen Schoutsen. 'We want to measure the effect of the rows of trees on the microclimate, for example the wind speed – trees break the wind – but also the temperature and soil moisture content. Our hypothesis is that such hedge banks improve growing conditions and therefore yields, but only from a certain distance from the row of trees; plots close to the trees may actually have lower yields. The overall effect should be positive, though.' The experiment should also show how far apart the rows of trees need to be for the optimum effect.

Hazel trees

The researchers are using a cropping plan that includes potatoes, winter wheat, carrots, cabbage and spinach in rotation. Fast-growing trees – elms and poplars – were planted in January and hazel trees will follow at the end of the year. 'The fast-growing trees should

shield the hazels from the wind as they don't like the wind. In eight years' time, we'll take out the fast-growing trees.' During the experiment, the Field Crops unit will investigate whether the tree rows impede down the spread of disease. The researchers will also be assessing the soil fertility, biodiversity, CO₂ uptake in the soil and any income benefits to the arable farmers from the hazelnuts. 'You have less area for your

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crops with the hedgerow trees but the remaining land may be more productive,' explains Schoutsen.

The agroforestry project is part of the Agroecology and Technology Test Location, which was set up two years ago. The research facility is funded by WUR and the four-year research programme gets funding from the Agrifood Top Sector. Schoutsen hopes for long-term funding. 'It will take 15 to 20 years before we have a mature agroforestry system.' AS



Researchers plant trees in Lelystad for the agroforestry project. Photo Oene de Hoop