

Foreword by WIAS Science Director

Welcome the 26th WIAS annual conference!

The theme of this year is therefore aptly chosen: "Resilience". Nobody could have predicted that the world as we know it can be so disrupted by a single virus. Covid-19 has been the ultimate test for us as a species, to show our own "resilience", and it has clearly pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of our society. But Resilience is more than that. It is the ability of an ecosystem, an agricultural system, a species or even an organ inside a species, to cope with perturbations and still remain in equilibrium, performing as needed. And we, humans, are putting these systems increasingly to test, as we continue to disrupt the climate, reduce natural biodiversity, introduce new diseases and demand more of our animals by trying to make them more efficient: "Something's gotta give"

WIAS research is at the forefront of research on the role of animals in society, as exemplified by our mission: *'To improve our understanding of animals and their various roles for mankind through fundamental and strategic research and training of early-stage researchers (PhD and postdoc).'*

Within our domain, research on resilience, and on how to make animals, animal production systems and ecosystems more resilient, is a major research theme and I am happy to see so many excellent contributions in the program. This year's conference is spread out over two days, using MS Teams, to give ample opportunity to exchange, discuss and reflect. We have invited 2 exciting speakers who will give their view on Resilience and 32 oral presentations that show what we are working on today.

All in all an exciting program covering the full breath of our research! I wish to thank the organisers for their hard work in bringing together such an interesting program and I wish you all a pleasant and fruitful WIAS science day.

To stay with the theme of this conference: **"Be resilient!"**

WIAS Scientific Director

Hans Komen