

Louise Fresco: 'More scope for serendipity'

'We in Wageningen do a lot of research in support of policymaking, and that is relevant to society. But we must make sure that fundamental research holds its own as well,' said Executive Board chair Louise Fresco at the opening of the academic year on Monday 6 September. Because groundbreaking discoveries certainly don't always come out of clear-cut research plans. For this reason, Fresco says we need to create more scope for serendipity – chance discoveries – and also for failures. 'We don't have an expression like "magnificent failures" for nothing. I see a future in which we bring together groups of scientists without an immediate research assignment. And why not get an art historian to help figure out how to combat a zoonosis, or a philosopher to ponder food security? That is the cross-fertilization I've been arguing in favour of for years.'

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