



A sustainable future for an interdisciplinary journal

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A sustainable future for an interdisciplinary journal

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1. Impact in agricultural and life sciences

With its 60th anniversary in 2023 approaching, the future of the interdisciplinary journal NJAS looks promising. The founder of the journal, the Royal Netherlands Society for Agricultural Sciences (*Koninklijke Landbouwkundige Vereniging*, KLV), dissolved in 2020 after 134 years (De Groot & van Kasteren, 2020). Fortunately, Taylor & Francis recognised the value of an interdisciplinary journal in the domains of the agricultural and life sciences. With Taylor & Francis as the new owner and publishing house, we, as editors-in-chief, are confident that we will be able to sustain and expand the journal's role as platform for integrative research that addresses major agricultural and societal challenges. In this editorial, we outline our view on the journal, which is also reflected in the aims and scope of NJAS.

The importance of agricultural and life sciences is rapidly increasing as displayed in the increasing attention for e.g., global and local food production, the conservation of our natural resources and the attention to climate change. Although basic scientific research remains highly relevant, there is an increasing call to truly make the next step and show the (potential) impact of our research efforts on, for example, sustainable development goals. This requires more integrative research and additional attention in reporting the broader context of the research. This new emphasis is reflected in the new sub-title of NJAS: Impact in Agricultural and Life Sciences.

2. Type of contributions

Research and review papers: We look forward to publishing research papers that demonstrate the value of versatile research in topical domains, such as the provision of healthy food in dynamic market environments, the viability of agricultural production systems affected by risk and shocks, and natural resource management under uncertain conditions. We also invite the

submission of review papers that provide a multi-perspective view on a current issue in life sciences. We encourage authors to show the added value of taking interdisciplinary and impact-driven perspectives and display how to do collaborative research while engaging with different stakeholders addressing major agricultural and societal challenges.

Special issues as space for interdisciplinarity: In its life span of almost sixty years, the journal started as the Netherlands Journal of Agricultural Science, which still echoes in the acronym NJAS. The journal gradually adopted a more multidisciplinary focus and broadened its scope to the interdisciplinary domain of the life sciences in 2002 (Jongen, Struik, Wienk 2002; Struik & Wienk, 2009; Struik, Wienk, Gerritsma 2002). In the collaboration with our previous publishing house Elsevier (2009–2020), the interdisciplinary nature of the journal became particularly visible in a series of special issues (Vellema, Struik, Slingerland 2020). We would like to continue and stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration around special issues or article collections, and due to a generous gesture of the Society KLV, we will be able to mobilise dedicated support for realising special issues.

We welcome proposals for special issues that collect papers, which, individually or collectively, display how to do collaborative research. The journal pro-actively encourages young scholars (including PhD candidates) to propose and organise special issues and offers organisational and editorial support for realising these. Special issues offer space to collect disciplinary and/or multi-disciplinary papers, which in combination investigate and unravel a complex problem in the agricultural and life sciences in an integrative manner. The empirical, methodological, and/or conceptual contributions to interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary perspectives will be brought forward by strong editorial reviews that place the papers in a broader societal and scientific context.

Synthesis papers: Integrative research requires methodological advancement and innovative conceptualisations conducive to integrating multiple dimensions of major societal challenges. We have a special interest in reflexive and synthesising papers that examine and scrutinise the realities of jointly travelling uncharted terrains, accepting the uncertainties of working across boundaries within the natural and social sciences and between science and society, or creatively combining methods. Publishing such synthesis papers may be considered as risky or as a less obvious choice when building a scientific track record. Nevertheless, we consider such reflections to be essential for advancing integrative research. Therefore, we encourage the submissions of papers that build on a set of research papers (e.g., from a PhD thesis) where the synthesis has an added value by providing a multi-dimensional view on a complex problem in life sciences. We recognise that

such papers are of a different nature compared to normal research papers, and yet compose high-quality contributions to a journal fostering integrative research.

3. Access to science

NJAS is now a Gold Open Access journal, which is one of the consequences of the dissolution of the society and the transfer of ownership. Reading interesting and critical reflections on the implications of Gold Open Access in the field of development studies (Meagher 2021) and geography (Geoforum 2020) remains relevant for advancing the journal's editorial policy and supporting a growing international community interested in interdisciplinary research and making an impact in the agricultural and life sciences.

With Taylor & Francis, we, as editors, continue to discuss how to make the journal as accessible as possible for both readers and authors, especially those affiliated with resource-constrained knowledge institutes. Take a careful look at the website of Taylor & Francis for the specific arrangements and waiving possibilities available to ensure bringing research by scholars in emerging nations to the attention of the global academic community.¹

All papers published in NJAS since 1953 are available via the library of Wageningen University & Research (1953–2008; <https://library.wur.nl/ojs/index.php/njas/issue/archive>) and the Open Archive at Science Direct (2001–2020; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/njas-wageningen-journal-of-life-sciences>). From 2021 onwards, all papers will be open access via the website of Taylor & Francis.

We look forward to receiving manuscripts that resonate with the perspective on integrative research in agricultural and life sciences outlined in this editorial. We aim to sustain and expand the community of interdisciplinary scholars associated with NJAS. We suppose that the open invitation for special issues is an attractive offer for younger scholars looking for ways to connect to other scientists in making an impact in the agricultural and life sciences by unravelling the multi-faceted dynamics of major societal challenges in food provisioning, agricultural production and natural resource management. Or in topical domains that we have been unable to envision.

Note

- [1] <https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-open-access/oa-funding-options/https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-open-access/oa-agreements/eifl-agreement/>

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