

Meat-light visions

In a week in which Agriculture minister Henk Staghouwer announced an investigation into a possible meat tax, WUR co-organized a debate on ‘The Future of Meat’.

Eating meat is actually a weird idea, argued ‘ecomodernist’ Hidde Boersma. He shared a thought experiment with the audience in which he presented a meatless society as the norm. ‘In such a vegan society, would anyone think it a good idea for humans to shut billions of animals in barns, snip or saw off body parts, clear a quarter of the Earth’s surface to grow food for them — and then kill them in order to eat them?’ he wondered out loud. Boersma advocated a completely meatless future in which precision fermentation is used to feed the world with non-animal protein sources: cultured meat and dairy products

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that can be produced compactly and have the perfect taste and texture thanks to fermentation bacteria optimized with CRISPR-Cas.

WUR agricultural economist Petra Berkhout saw it as a ‘nice alternative that is efficient and effective’, adding: ‘To be honest, as a person I would have to get used to the idea. But as an economist, I say go for it.’

Half

Professor of Livestock & Sustainable Food Systems Imke de Boer said that meat would not have to disappear from the menu if the Dutch food system only produced what the planet can sustain. ‘If we only feed animals with waste streams and grass, which is indigestible for humans, we would need to cut our meat consumption by about half. And that is in line with what the Nutrition Centre recommends,’ she said. The video recording of the evening, which also included inspiring contributions by practitioners, can be viewed on the YouTube channel of debating centre De Rode Hoed. ^{ME}