



LEAVING WUR A BEQUEST

‘Scientific research helps the world make progress’

What motivates people to donate to WUR? ‘Wageningen sees the importance of fundamental research, which I firmly believe in myself,’ says Ton van der Heijden, who is leaving a large proportion of his estate to WUR.

TEXT TESSA LOUWERENS PHOTO HARMEN DE JONG

‘I always thought I would leave part of my estate to a cause,’ says Ton van der Heijden. ‘But then something scientific, because I feel that’s what helps the world make progress.’ He wants to leave a considerable part of his estate at least to WUR, and his sister is considering the same idea. ‘Neither of us have children, nor do we have any immediate family members still living.’ Van der Heijden studied physics for several

years, followed by a long and successful career in ICT. ‘I have always had broad interests. I live in the countryside and I’m interested in biology, ecology and sustainability. I have bookcases full of books about these subjects.’

Remarkably, Van der Heijden is not an alumnus. But he did know that Wageningen does a lot of research in the areas of his interest. ‘I had never been here before, so my sister

and I planned a holiday in Wageningen. Then, later on, we spent a day on the campus at the invitation of University Fund Wageningen.’ The Van der Heijden siblings were given a guided tour and several talks on topics of their choice. ‘I let them know in advance which topics we were interested in, such as non-toxic crop protection, biodegradable plastic and the potential for using algae

‘We spent a day on the campus’



PHOTO ERGO MEDIANPRODUCTIES

and seaweed for CO₂ sequestration, food production and the production of biofuel and sustainable building materials. In these fields, WUR is a world-class institute.’

SYNTHETIC MATERIALS

It is important to Van der Heijden that the money is used to address the longterm challenges facing the world. ‘Plastic and synthetic materials are going to be a problem for

a long time yet, and to me, our future food supply is another important issue, not least in relation to CO₂ emissions.’

Another reason WUR appeals to Van der Heijden is that it does not restrict itself to applied research. ‘WUR sees the importance of fundamental research, which is something I firmly believe in myself.’ He has therefore stipulated in his will that some of the money should be used for fundamental research.

Meanwhile, Van der Heijden tries to do his bit himself where possible. ‘I have solar panels and I had underfloor heating and a heat pump installed a few years ago. In the garden, I’m replacing paving with things like tree bark as much as possible. My sister thinks sustainability is important too. She suffers quite a lot from flight shame, in fact – which is a bit tricky given that she lives in Spain.’ ■

DONATING THROUGH YOUR WILL

University Fund Wageningen (UFW) is Wageningen University & Research’s philanthropic channel for people who want to contribute to science for a sustainable future, scholarships or the university’s heritage. The University Fund supports the development of academic talent, rewards excellent education and research and facilitates pioneering research within Wageningen University & Research.

Inherited share

Nowadays, more and more people are making wills in which they include one or more charities. One approach in the Netherlands is to designate what is known as an inherited share (this is also called a testamentary disposition). This

could mean that you name a fund as one of the beneficiaries alongside any family members, friends and other organizations, thus entitling the fund to a share of the estate.

Another option is to leave a legacy. In this case, the will states that, say, University Fund Wageningen will receive a specified amount or a percentage of the estate. A legacy can also be used to leave a beneficiary an asset such as a house, a painting or a share portfolio.

It may also stipulate that the legacy should be used for a specific purpose such as research, scholarships or preserving the university’s heritage.

For more information on leaving money to WUR in a will: www.universityfundwageningen.eu/legacy