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Building a strong VLAG community in times of COVID

With the number of Covid currently surpassing the values that we experienced in Spring, I sincerely hope that you are all still doing well, are healthy, and in good spirit.

There is no denying that these times are challenging, and I was happy that a number of compensation options for PhD candidates and post-docs have been put in place. It is not possible to compensate everyone, and everything, but every little bit that can be done helps. I was especially glad that now also PhD candidates without a WUR contract have an option for compensation. I will actually be part of the jury that will decide on the applications, and hope that we can help many, thus keeping the VLAG community strong.

Within VLAG we are not only trying to be instrumental to the whole VLAG community, but also try to attract talents, and do so through the VLAG graduate program, and this year also through a special round that was held together with TKI agri&food. Within both programs, we were able to give grants to talented MSc candidates who wrote their own PhD proposals. You can read more about this later in the FLASH; for now, congratulations Nicola, Marion, and Ferran! Both programs are really very close to my heart, and it is great that our MSc students are able to write innovative project proposals based on their own ideas, convince a jury, and get the opportunity to carry them out.

Another thing that I am very excited about is the VLAG open round. This time we decided to make it a special round for the newest tenure trackers, and we already have had an energizing match making event (on-line, because it was at the time that the more severe Covid rules were put in place). It was great to hear all the enthusiastic stories about all the work that is currently done within VLAG from Anouk and Vesna (from VLAG office) who were there all day. Besides that this new 'generation' of scientists operating within VLAG can now look specifically for a partner to write an exciting research proposal with, it also really helped in generating a lot of curiosity about the work done VLAG-wide. I am sure that this will be very instrumental in getting great research ideas to fruition, and the beauty of this is that this cross-pollination action is not limited to the open round!

What I also would like to share is that we have initiated a VLAG grant to further develop the four VLAG research themes and more specifically help with the preparation for and execution of the 2021 external peer review (EPR). For those of you that may not be familiar with the EPR, during this review, all research themes will receive feedback on their common vision and strategy to drive science, and how they exploit potential synergies and complementarity. Clearly, this is important for the research themes and as VLAG we want to facilitate our research themes with this. It was really nice to see that most research themes have suggested that young researchers would be put in the lead for this. I think that this is a unique option for our newest talents to get to know a whole research theme, and also build their networks based on this.

Whenever I am writing my pieces for FLASH the end of the page is in sight before I know it. So I will wrap up, and even before I have told you about my presence at the live PhD week (see also later in FLASH), and the newest addition to the VLAG team, but I will keep that for next time. You see we are busy trying to keep the VLAG community vital and hope that this also rubs off on you all individually. Never shy away from contacting us with innovative ideas to make science even more interesting. But most of all, please stay safe, and healthy!

Kind regards, also on behalf of the entire VLAG team,
Prof Karin Schroën, Scientific Director VLAG

From the VLAG Office

A big THANK YOU for all our VLAG online series lecturers!

In this lecture series VLAG scientists share(d) their research endeavours presented in such a way that the message is accessible to the broader VLAG PhD community as well as postdocs and other staff members.

After a well-received start with 8 lectures before the summer break we continued this series during the remaining months in 2020 and most likely beyond.

We could not have done this without the help and commitment of the lecturers (the 12 WUR colleagues in the picture!). We would like to thank them very much for their valuable contribution!



Three MSc students wrote their own proposal and will start as VLAG PhD

The VLAG Graduate Programme aims to stimulate talented MSc students of Wageningen University to do a PhD within one of the VLAG groups. We are happy to announce that Marion Eckl and Nicola Trevisan will join VLAG with their PhD project written in the context of the VLAG Graduate Programme. An additional position became available as Ferran Fos Codoner managed to get his

project funded via the Graduate Schools Green Top Sectors TKI call. Congratulations to all three and good luck with your research!



Nicola Trevisan

Start: 02-11-2020

'Harnessing the microalgal chloroplast for the synthesis of the monoterpene β -Pinene'

Supervisors: Dr Sarah D'Adamo, Prof. Maria Barbosa (Bioprocess Engineering), Prof. John van der Oost (Microbiology)



Marion Eckl

Start: 01-12-2020

'Meat in the back seat: a consumer-driven approach to identify healthier and more sustainable alternative protein sources'

Supervisors: Prof. Marianne Geleijnse, Prof. Pieter van 't Veer (Human Nutrition and Health)



Ferran Fos Codoner

Start: 02-02-2021

'Improvement of intestinal integrity and metabolic function by galactose: a cornerstone for whole body metabolic health'

Supervisors: Dr Evert van Schothorst, Prof. Jaap Keijer (Human and Animal Physiology)

If your talented student would like to participate in the VLAG Graduate Programme, please check the requirements and be aware that only those selected can submit a proposal. To be selected students have to send their application to anouk.geelen@wur.nl before 17 January 2021. Click [here](#) for more information on the VLAG Graduate Programme 2021.

VLAG PhD week

The 47th edition of the VLAG PhD week took place as planned from 19th through 22nd October. We are looking back with gratitude and pride. In light of stricter Covid related guidelines, it was not by any means certain. The atmosphere was heart-warming and there was plenty of opportunity to get to know each other and exchange ideas, experiences, tips...

To cite one of the participants: "...Thank you for organising the PhD week and ensuring that it could continue during these uncertain times. It was well-organised, the location was amazing and the sessions were of very high quality. However, most of all I am very happy to have met so many nice fellow PhD candidates. This has been very valuable and I think we will profit from the lessons learned throughout the rest of our PhDs..."



Plans for PhD weeks in 2021:

48th edition: 15 - 18 March 2021

49th edition: 8 - 11 November 2021

VLAG courses

12th VLAG Online Lecture

[Sign in](#) for the next Live Online lecture “Metabolic Stress and Nutrition Therapy in COVID-19 ICU patients” by [Prof. Arthur van Zanten](#), intensive care internist at Gelderse Vallei hospital and special professor in Nutrition and Metabolic stress. The lecture will take place on 10 December (11:15 - 12:45).

Philosophy and Ethics of Food Science and Technology

This series of discussion sessions will include hands-on dealings with ethical, philosophical, and societal issues surrounding science. The 16th edition of this course will take place on six Thursday afternoons in January and February 2021: 21 and 28 January, 4, 11, 18, and 25 February 2021, (14:30-17:30h). Click [here](#) for more information / registration.

Other courses open for registration:

- [Summer course Glycosciences](#) (13-17 June '21)
- [Modelling of habitual dietary intake, using SPADE](#) (11-12 October '21)

Registration for the following 2021 courses will open soon:

- Energy metabolism and body composition in nutrition and health research, [online](#) January/February
- Sensory Perception & Food Preference: into the Future! [online](#) February/March
- Safety by design, [online](#) March
- Healthy food design, April/May
- Advanced Food Analysis, (*most likely*) May
- Reaction kinetics in food science, 12-17 July
- Healthy and Sustainable diet, 5-8 July
- Big Data Analysis in the life sciences, October

Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) courses

Active Bystander intervention training (online):

This training gives you the skills to challenge unacceptable behaviours, including those which may have become normalised over time. The training is on 24 November 2020 (15:30-16:45h). Still a few seats available, registration **deadline today - 17 November**, register [here](#).

Getting on Track with your Veni application (online)

This online programme aims to provide talented postdocs and other promising researchers the skills and competences needed to develop a high quality research proposal to apply for an NWO Veni grant in 2021 that will be carried out at Wageningen University. The course starts on January 5th and runs in the period Jan-March. Deadline for registration is 15 December or as long as places are available (max. 18). Click [here](#) for details / registration.

For a complete overview of all WGS competence, skills and career development training activities, please click [here](#).

Other courses and events

BioBusiness Winter School:

Are you a PhD candidate, a postdoc or a master student and are you interested to pursue your career in a Life Sciences company? Do you want to know more about the business field and your career opportunities? Then the BioBusiness Winter School might appeal to you!

Taking place from **3-5 February 2021**, the BioBusiness Winter School consists of a 3-days **online** programme split between theoretical sessions focusing on key knowledge of main business topics such as Business Models, Partnerships, Venture Capital and Career Orientation, and interactive sessions with business leaders giving you their insights in the world of Life Sciences companies.

More information & registration: www.biobusinesssummerschool.nl/winter

Grant Application Course:

Are you a PhD student, postdoc or starting group leader and do you want to enhance your career prospects in academia? Do you wish to improve one of the most vital skills of succeeding in science? Then join the BCF Grant Application Course on 10 & 11 March 2021 to learn more on how to write a successful grant application!

During this intensive two-day online course you will be taught by seasoned scientists, grant application experts who have reviewed hundreds of grants, assessors from funding bodies and many more.

More information & registration: <http://bit.ly/registerGAC2021>

FREE BNF Virtual Event: Nutrition and COVID-1

This free virtual event will bring together eminent speakers to consider new and emerging understanding of the interactions between COVID-19 and obesity, immune function and the gut microbiome, new information on vitamin D in BAME groups, and a discussion of the strengths, limitations and future requirements of the nutrition science evidence base. There will also be a live panel discussion, where attendees will be invited to ask questions of panellists. For more information / registration click [here](#).

FREE (online) Workshop "SMART TECH for FOOD":

Taking place from 25-26 November, for all VLAG PhD candidates and WUR employees (register with your WUR e-mail address and check the box for 0,00€ during registration). Register as soon as possible! For more information click [here](#).

Wageningen Evolution & Ecology Seminar Odor-guided behavior in pollinating insects (online)

The seminar will take place on Wednesday, 25 November (16.00-17.00h) and be hosted on zoom. The seminar can be accessed via the following [link](#).

Research management online training – workshop,

This ReMaT workshop will take place on 18-19 February 2021 and is designed for early-stage researchers, particularly PhD candidates from the 2nd year onwards. ReMaT is an interactive, intensive workshop providing an introduction to research management. The modules of the workshop cover exploitation of knowledge and entrepreneurship, acquisition of grants, intellectual property rights and the management of interdisciplinary projects. Click [here](#) for more information / registration.

ENLP Essentials Programme

The ENLP Essentials Programme is open to all food, nutrition and dietetic professionals across Europe who want to become more effective at managing non-scientific/soft-skill challenges such as communication, interpersonal skills, leadership and strategic influence. Due to the ongoing pandemic situation, the seminar will be delivered virtually and will comprise a total of 8 days across a 6-week period and all participants are expected to commit to attend for full days (09:00-18:00 CET) on all of the following dates: 22 & 23 March 2021, 29 & 30 March 2021, 12 & 13 April 2021, and 19 & 20 April 2021. Click [here](#) for more information / registration.

Calls and grants

Fellowship Programme: Data Science/Artificial Intelligence Fellowship Programme

Young researchers at WUR (PhD candidates, postdocs, lecturers, junior researchers) will be given an opportunity to further develop and profile themselves in the DS/AI field. This Fellowship Programme is an opportunity for you to make your expertise and knowledge about DS/AI widely available and apply it within your organization. The DS/AI Fellowship Programme is open to WU and WR employees.

You can find the application form and more detailed information (selection criteria, review board, etc.) in this [intranet group](#).

Distinguished Women Scientists Fund 2020

In 2012 the Dutch Network of Women Professors created the Distinguished Women Scientists Fund, a travel grant. This travel grant is intended for female postdocs, up to 3 years after obtaining a PhD and residing and working in the Netherlands, who would like to travel abroad within the framework of their research. Click [here](#) for more information.

Invitation to Nominate for the Volvo Environment Prize 2021

The Volvo Environment Prize Foundation invites universities, research institutes, scientists and engineers as well as other individuals and organizations to submit nominations for the Volvo Environment Prize. The Prize consists of a diploma, a glass sculpture and the Laureate is awarded a prize of SEK 1.5 million. Click [here](#) for more information.

the National Survey on Research Integrity (NSRI)

The National Survey on Research Integrity (NSRI) has launched!

You are eligible to join if you are a researcher spending at least 8 hours per week on research tasks in a Dutch University or University Medical Center in the Netherlands.

Please check your email for a mail from Lex Bouter our lead PI at (webint@tns-nipo.com), and join the survey. It takes approximately 20 minutes and every voice counts! Click [here](#) for more information.

Guide to Creative Commons for Scholarly Publications and Educational Resources available

The Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), together with the Dutch consortium of university libraries and the National library of The Netherlands (UKB) and The Dutch Research Council (NWO), has published a handy guide on licensing of scientific publications and teaching materials.

The updated (derivative) guide aims to help researchers answering questions through short clear-cut chapters and frequently asked questions. You can download the guide [here](#).