

# Shape responsible change

Strategic Plan 2025-2028



**WAGENINGEN**  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



## Our invitation

This Strategic Plan is an open invitation to Wageningen University & Research (WUR), our staff, students and partners to explore nature and its potential with us, to improve the quality of life together.

The world is changing rapidly, planetary boundaries are being crossed and (geo)political tensions are rising. The urgency to act is clear, we must be courageous and willing to make choices. There is no silver bullet or single solution available for the transitions that are needed, but a diversity of perspectives and expertise are needed to discuss and help address dilemmas, along with an integrated approach that encompasses all scientific perspectives. And that is exactly how we work.

At Wageningen University & Research we are committed to balancing the need to safeguard the wellbeing of our planet and its diverse species, and the need for humans to produce food and nourish a growing population. As a leading knowledge institute in this domain, we provide high quality knowledge to understand the fundamental processes of life and society, analyse and address the global challenges and contribute to accelerate possible transformation pathways. The role of science is evolving, and our researchers and teachers are increasingly working in a polarising society. We are working to develop the best possible ways to share our knowledge to the benefit of our society.

In the coming period, Wageningen University & Research will strengthen its strategic partnerships and explore opportunities with a broader set of partners that complement our expertise. Together, we aim to co-design, co-develop, and co-create new knowledge. The combined efforts of these partnerships will result in more comprehensive and effective solutions than could be achieved individually.

This Strategic Plan provides the groundwork for the Strategic Agendas of our Science Groups and staff departments, outlining plans and actions to achieve both personal and collective ambitions. Our people and students are our greatest asset, and we are committed to providing a healthy and inspiring working environment for the diversity of talent we nurture. We aim to empower our people to explore, innovate, and excel. We invite you to join us in developing new solutions, creating new ideas, and educating responsible changemakers. Together we will contribute to a sustainable future.

Let's reimagine living on planet Earth. Let's work together on our continued role in society, all over the world.

Sjoukje Heimovaara, Carolien Kroeze,  
Rens Buchwaldt  
*Executive Board*



# WUR narrative

For over a century, Wageningen University & Research has been on a remarkable journey, rooted in agriculture and blossoming into a purpose-driven, interdisciplinary force playing our part in tackling global challenges. This is not the story about how Wageningen University & Research arrived here; this is about what comes next and our continued role in society all over the world.

Throughout our history, we have strived to strike a delicate balance between humanity's need to produce food and nourish a growing population, and the requirement to safeguard the well-being of our planet and its diverse species. Without a thriving and healthy planet Earth, human beings' ability to sustainably produce and use essentials like food, clothing, and energy diminishes. It is a simple truth that underscores the interconnectedness between our survival and the wellbeing of our shared environment. We are part of nature; we cannot live apart from it.

Our knowledge and understanding of these complex and wicked problems have evolved, and so has our sense of radical responsibility. Climate change, the misuse of land and sea, biodiversity loss and the fragility of our ecosystems have pushed humanity to the edge of existence. This pivotal era, aptly named the Anthropocene, bears witness to humans' irreversible imprint on our fragile planet. We need planet Earth. Planet Earth does not need us.



## *Let's reimagine living on planet Earth*

WUR's duty is clear: we must find new ways to live on and with the planet. To ask the right questions, fuel our curiosity, educate students and professionals, forge bold partnerships, engineer solutions, and push the boundaries of discovery and innovation, all with one purpose: to create and champion a future where production and consumption systems are in harmony with nature, globally.

We are uniquely positioned to deliver knowledge, innovations and professionals in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are Wageningen University – a single faculty educating

students and professionals and conducting critical curiosity-driven research into our complex challenges. And we are Wageningen Research. Eight research institutes complement the University by delivering applied innovations.

Everyone – students, researchers, teachers, staff – has an intrinsic and pragmatic drive in shaping that sustainable future, exploring and creating new knowledge and solutions. Together, we aim to get things done. Our diversity in thought, approaches, disciplines, and nationalities enables us to deliver, in the Netherlands, Europe and beyond.

Together we challenge and embrace the global food system, in balance with nature, always: from soil microbes to food security, taste, and sustainability. We find answers to the intricate global challenges around sustainable food systems, biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, global health, climate-proof futures, biobased and circular society, and sustainable water and land use. They require complex, interconnected, systemic rethinking to be effective. That is our approach, that is the way we work.

With over a century of education and research by passionate people, partnerships and impact, we look to the future with a genuine sense of expectation and hope – a future where nature and humans live in balance.



# Mission, vision, values and ambitions

## Mission

For many years Wageningen University & Research has adopted the mission 'to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life'. This mission is unashamedly ambitious in reflecting our drive to maximise the potential of WUR as a force to accelerate the transitions requires to achieve a more sustainable world for all life on Earth.

## Vision

The vision of WUR is to strike a delicate balance between the well-being of our planet with its diverse species and the needs of humanity for healthy food and environment. We tackle this global challenge by asking the right questions, fuelling curiosity, educating students and professionals, forging bold partnerships, and pushing the boundaries of curiosity-driven and applied science.

## Prerequisites

Prerequisites and values lay the foundation for what our organisation cares about and provide the basis to work on our mission and vision. They also give a common purpose to all the people in our committed knowledge community. The prerequisites we have identified for the organisation are: *integrity, independence, transparency, social safety and diversity & inclusion*. For a number of the prerequisites guidance is given through codes, such as the [integrity code](#), aligned with the Netherlands code for research integrity, and the [Social Safety Code of Conduct](#). Various instruments safeguard these prerequisites, including the scientific integrity committee and the confidential counsellors and our [Diversity & Inclusion activities and programmes e.g. Gender+ equality plan](#).





## Values

In addition to the prerequisites Wageningen University & Research has set out a number of values that are seen as essential elements of our profile. They guide our identity, behaviour and decision-making, shaping our organisation's culture, direct our strategy and provide a clear sense of purpose for employees, students and partners. Our contribution to responsible innovations and transformation is guided by the principle of sustainability as being ecologically sound, socially fair and equitable, economically vital and digitally smart. We take *responsibility* by offering a socially safe, diverse and inclusive working and learning environment based on *trust*. We support *courage*, dare to listen, speak out with integrity and nuance, and embrace dialogue to address difficult topics. *Curiosity* pushes our boundaries of learning and produces knowledge to safeguard the wellbeing of the planet. We *collaborate* with other parties based on an independent but accountable position, leveraging on open, respectful and transparent ways to address intricate global challenges.



## Ambitions

The world is in the midst of radical change involving geopolitical shifts, planetary boundaries being exceeded, a global battle for talent, decreasing trust in government and institutions, and a digital revolution. Amid these developments WUR is not losing sight of the importance of the global challenges as described in the SDGs. These are also reflected in the six themes we identified to describe the areas we work on. The transition to a better future has begun, but it is not advancing at the necessary speed and scale. Within this dynamic environment, WUR will continue to contribute to our long-term ambitions on a global, organisational and individual level.

### Global

As an independent world leading university and research organisation in our domain, embedded in society, we deliver knowledge to accelerate the required transitions in our domain. We educate learners to become responsible changemakers for science and society. Collaboration with partners is essential to achieve these goals.

### Organisational

WUR aims to foster a transparent and resilient organisational structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to enhance effectivity, efficiency and adaptability. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive working environment that promotes a healthy work-life balance for staff and students, both socially and physically. As a sustainable organisation, we also practice what we preach.

### Individual

To support these ambitions, we strive to have all staff, students, and alumni take great pride in their affiliation with WUR and to engage collaboratively on global challenges. We continuously inspire our team by offering personalised development opportunities and career flexibility, recognising and valuing each individual's contributions to our collective effort.



# People, culture and organisation

WUR's greatest asset is its staff, our highly committed knowledge community. They are essential to realise our ambitions. We feel that Wageningen University & Research has a unique culture as indicated in the narrative; *'Everyone – students, researchers, teachers, staff – has an intrinsic and pragmatic drive in shaping that sustainable future, exploring and creating new knowledge and solutions'*.

## People

The importance of employee wellbeing and empowerment are essential to organisational success, diversity and inclusion, and employee development. We aim to provide a healthy and inspiring working environment for the diversity of talent we nurture. This is why we continue to work on enabling our people to maintain a healthy work-life balance. We also prioritise providing suitable and efficient workspaces while accommodating remote work.

WUR is committed to being an inclusive organisation, with equal opportunities for all, irrespective of race, gender, ability, faith, ideology, sexual orientation, or age. We aim to create an environment where employees and students never feel the need to hide or minimise any part of themselves. A just culture in which people feel safe and connected and where people and their relations take precedence over 'human resources'.

We know that our employees and students wish to be part of an organisation that has a positive impact on the planet and society. We will continue to empower them by providing back-up in the public debate and support to safely express their academic views in a polarising world. Doing so we offer a protected and inspiring environment for independent and high-quality research and education.



## Culture

Wageningen University & Research fosters a culture that attracts, nurtures and champions the best local, national and global talent, in an environment where everyone feels recognised and rewarded. Incentives for recognition and reward related to activities beyond education and research will contribute to that, as will diversification of and mobility between career paths. The Academic Career Framework reflects the aspired symbiosis between personal development and the organisation's ambitions, and nurtures excellence, flexibility and team performance. WUR prioritises building high-performing teams and recognises the diversity of team members roles. We enrich our culture at both the personal and team level by setting clear frameworks, reflecting on expectations, and providing constructive feedforward.

WUR is committed to creating a working environment that is based on trust and the associated responsibility. For this we need (personal) leadership and clearly defined roles. Integrity and compliance are important components in which we train our students and facilitate our staff members, to act with integrity.

In the coming years, we will enhance our systems and processes, further developing the concept of trust within our organisation and the way we interact with one another. Feedforward mechanisms will be incorporated at the organisational level to promote transparency and responsibility. We acknowledge the tension between external accountability requirements and our desired trust-based environment and will be transparent about regulatory burdens.

Our main ambitions for our people and culture:

- An enhanced culture based on trust and responsibility, that promotes inclusiveness, transparency and inspiration, and where people feel safe and connected. Increased attention to the development of high-performing teams that recognise the diverse roles of individuals, with a strengthened ownership for the personal development of students and staff.





## Organisation

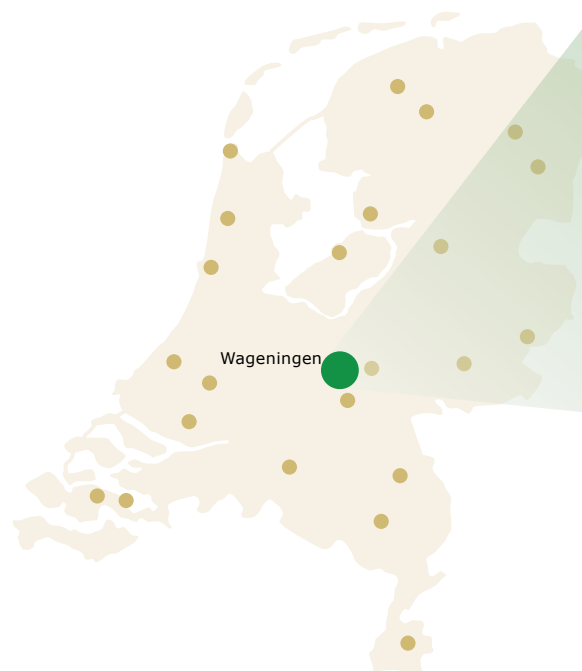
Wageningen University & Research has grown as an organisation in recent years to meet the many demands in our domain. While expecting the need for our contributions to continue, we also recognise that greater uncertainty and challenges lie ahead. Our organisation, therefore, needs to further build on our collective expertise to realise WUR's mission. This requires trusting each other in our professional roles and taking responsibility both as individuals and as an organisation.

### Resilient employer

As the context of work changes, WUR aims to be a resilient employer, maintaining a reliable and solid foundation while fostering a more flexible and open organisational structure. This offers employees greater personal freedom and accommodates their diverse needs and aspirations. We will adjust our practices to align with the evolving context and internal ambitions, aiming to provide a sense of connectedness and belonging, even when employees are not all simultaneously on campus.

### Campus, hubs and facilities

Over the past 15 years Wageningen Campus has developed into a lively and safe place where students, researchers and employees interact. It is a green and sustainable hotspot, with an exemplary regional, national and global function and appearance. Over 200 innovative organisations have settled at Wageningen Campus and the planned development of Wageningen Campus-Oost, will further stimulate the overall thriving ecosystem.



In addition, WUR goes beyond the Wageningen Campus with specialised unit and field test locations throughout the Netherlands. These hubs are an important asset to the organisation providing places where research and innovation is put into practice, acting as living labs and facilitating close interaction with stakeholders. The hubs will be better connected to and more explicitly identified as an inseparable part of Wageningen Campus.

Our state-of-the-art facilities, equipment and expertise are a key feature of the campus. A large proportion of the equipment is part of Shared Research Facilities offering all organisation in our domain the opportunity to use the advanced research facilities and high-tech equipment.







### **Digitalisation**

Wageningen University & Research aims to leverage on new digital approaches to enhance service quality by fostering an innovative culture and ensuring the secure design and implementation of improved processes. 'Easy Service' and 'Time for You' are key operational principles to simplify working life for colleagues and students. Our strategic and balanced Digitalisation Roadmap ensures responsible, secure, and sustainable operations and support. To harness

the opportunities and mitigate the threats of digitalisation, data science and AI, we offer training programmes for students, researchers and staff. Knowledge security remains a priority for both individual researchers and the organisation. While AI is at the forefront of innovation, its impact stretches beyond technological feats, as it intertwines with environmental, ethical, and social dimensions.

### **Sustainability**

Our contribution to responsible innovations and transformation is guided by the principle of sustainability as being ecologically sound, socially fair and equitable, economically vital and digitally smart. This is also leading in the choices we make in our business operations. WUR's extensive knowledge about sustainability is used to make our business operations more eco-friendly. Students and researchers are involved in making business operations more sustainable, for instance by strengthening biodiversity on campus and education programmes.

Our main ambitions for our organisation and facilities:

- To be a resilient, reliable and solid employer, that offers individual employees greater flexibility in career paths.
- To better connect Wageningen Campus and WUR hubs throughout the Netherlands.
- To offer an overall strategic and balanced programme for digital technology (the Digitalisation Roadmap) for responsible, secure, and sustainable operations and support.
- To lead the way in sustainability in our own business operations.



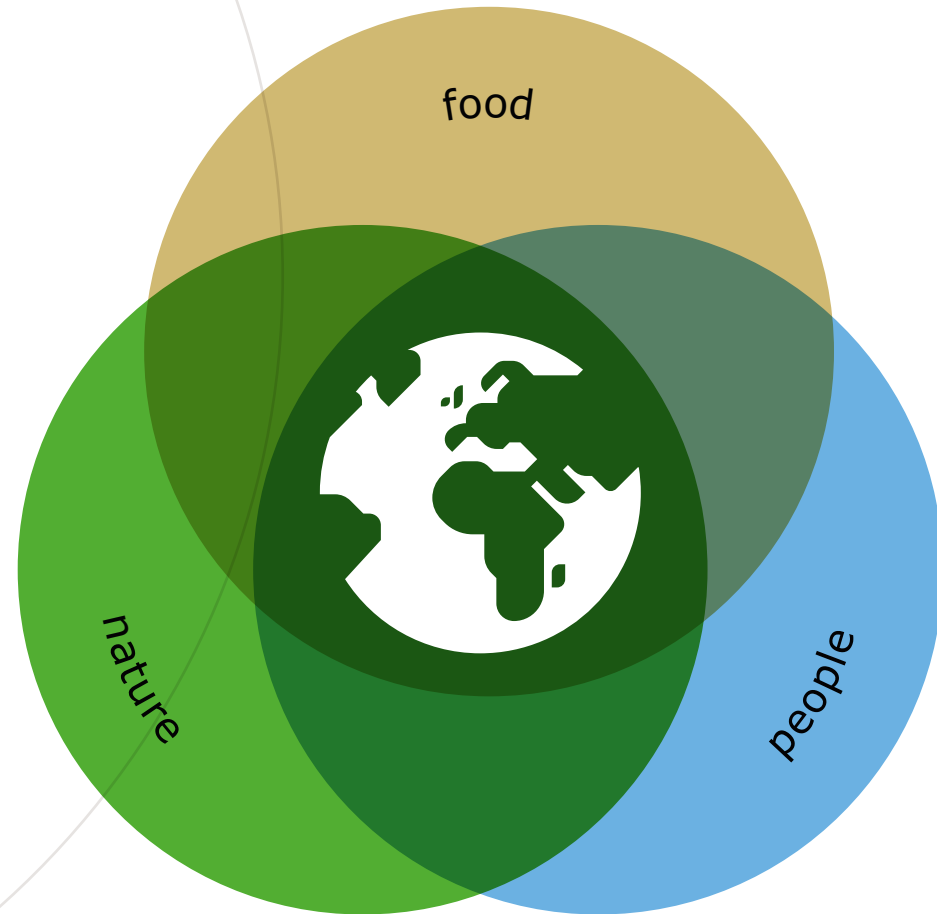
# Domain and themes

WUR's domain encompasses food, nature and people with a focus on creating a balance at their intersection. Our world faces complex and intertwined challenges, with difficult trade-offs between the various goals and interests. WUR's research inspires ways to address tomorrow's challenges, studies the options in relation to choosing between potential solutions, explains the insights of the trade-offs and advises on how to combine uses that best serve the interests of different stakeholders and the environment.

## WUR approach

Within its domain, Wageningen University & Research is a prominent and leading university and research institute. The combination of five main features make us stand out from other scientific organisations:

- The strong domain oriented focus of our work.
- The combination of eight research institutes and a university, enabling us to work from curiosity-driven to applied research.
- The combination of a technical university with social and natural sciences, enables us to work in mono-, multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary ways.
- WUR collaborates with partners from government, society, industry and research, from very local to international partners.
- The field stations and research locations throughout the Netherlands make it possible to work in regions where many of the stakeholders are located. This expertise from across the country is targeted at national issues with global relevance.
- This is the WUR approach, and this is the way we work.





## Theme Sustainable food systems

Sustainable food systems provide sufficient, affordable, nutritious and safe food for all without compromising the economic, social and environmental bases required to ensure food security and nutrition for future generations. The transition to sustainable food systems is a complex challenge involving food production, processing, distribution and consumption. The systems must be economically viable, ensure social justice and a fair wealth distribution of food, and be compatible with greenhouse gas reduction targets and biodiversity recovery.

WUR studies agricultural and aquatic food systems globally. Our scientists contribute to the entire food system, push the frontiers of knowledge on the molecular functioning of plants, animals and micro-organisms and detail the building blocks of nutritious and safe food. We develop new algorithms to analyse and improve crop health and animal welfare and performance. In addition we contribute to the development of autonomous robotics to prevent labour conditions and price from being a barrier to improved production systems.

Our aim is to contribute to the sustainable resilient and adaptive food systems and to deepen insights into how sustainable food systems function. This includes balanced sustainable production and consumption, nutritional security for all, equitable and thriving value chains within planetary and ethical boundaries, and positive social, environmental and economic impacts. WUR educates people in system-thinking and co-develops living labs to develop sustainable food system concepts worldwide.

## Theme Biodiversity and resilient ecosystems

As the interplay of microbes, plants, and animals is the foundation for healthy ecosystems, sustainable food systems and climate mitigation, it is essential to stem any further loss of species and ecosystem degradation. Biodiversity has various values, including an intrinsic one. A significant change of thinking and acting is required in the way we produce, consume and interact with nature, in order to bend the curve of biodiversity loss.

WUR studies biodiversity and resilient ecosystems integrally, from molecular interactions to societal implementation. From communication between plants and insects in pursuance of develop more diverse and disease-resistant agro-ecosystems, to economic interventions that help farmers and other actors transition to nature-positive food systems. From innovative monitoring techniques such as eDNA for coral reef restoration, to exploring the systemic barriers that limit the agency of local communities to protect and restore ecosystems.

Our aim is to foster resilient ecosystems and to ensure a thriving global biodiversity in a world where people feel responsible for each other and for nature and where resilient ecosystems and biodiversity are highly valued. To achieve this WUR will deepen insights into complex ecosystems, including the human-nature relationship, to identify the causes of decline, understand the consequences, and present alternative practices for conserving, restoring and sustainably using terrestrial and marine ecosystems and their services. Educating our students and society at large, we promote practices in support of biodiversity conservation and restoration.





## Theme Global Health

The health of people, animals, plants and ecosystems are all greatly affected by global developments such as climate change, environmental pollution, the spread of infectious diseases and the rise of non-communicable diseases. This is a global challenge, and an integrated view is required to sustainably balance the health of people, animals, plants and ecosystems. There is a clear need to shift to sustainable food production within a resilient ecosystem, with special attention paid to healthy diets for people and animal welfare.

WUR studies health in a holistic way, by taking an integrated approach, which recognises that human health is closely connected to animal, plant and environmental health. Our transdisciplinary efforts encompass understanding the interaction between microbiomes in ecosystems, animals, plants and humans. Additionally, we focus on pandemic preparedness. We explore the role of nutrition in health and disease, and we aim to create healthier and more sustainable food environments.

WUR's transdisciplinary approach contributes to strategies and practices that reduce lifestyle-related, foodborne and zoonotic diseases, prepare for future pandemics, minimise the burden of disease and ill health, improve food safety and fulfil nutritional needs across the life span and around the globe. Our commitment is to foster health and sustainability through integrated, innovative, and inclusive solutions.



## Theme Climate-proof futures

Greenhouse gas emissions are at peak levels in human history. Changing weather patterns are leading to greater extremes, that cause floods, droughts, wildfires and heatwaves. Sea levels are rising, threatening densely populated low-lying countries and delta regions.

WUR studies climate change from various perspectives, aiming for a better fundamental understanding of climate and socio-ecological systems. Our integrated studies look for ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation), contribute to the energy transition, reduce the vulnerabilities to climate change and increase the adaptive capacity of socio-economic systems (adaptation). WUR's approach to nature-based solutions effectively mobilises a combination of mitigation and adaptation strategies.

WUR is committed to working towards a carbon-neutral and climate-proof world. We support societal transitions, creating mechanisms that enhance the capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management especially in vulnerable areas like deltas and small island developing states. We will continue our contributions to effective mitigation and adaptation strategies and educating our students and society at large.



## Theme Biobased and circular society

The fully circular and fossil-free society of the future will rely on a mix of renewable resources. In addition to wind and solar energy, biomass will be required to produce energy, materials and services. It is essential that we maximise the reuse of water, residual nutrients and materials in production processes. This also includes the reuse of byproducts from various stages in food production, including food loss and waste.

WUR research covers all scales and levels: from biobased products, circular systems for sustainable agricultural practices, biofuels, biomaterials, biochemicals and bioenergy to thinking through the required transition pathways to a biobased & circular society and understanding the relevant economic, cultural and political mechanisms.

Our ongoing support for developing a biobased and circular society is aimed at creating closed cycles where agriculture, food & materials, production & consumption, and energy are optimally interlinked. Together we can drive forward a sustainable and resilient future and contribute by educating a new generation of experts.

## Theme Sustainable water and land use

The competing claims on water and land are increasing due to population growth, higher food and bio-based production, and the energy transition. The pace of change places enormous pressure on land and water resources and the quality of water and soils. Water and land use have to adapt to the more extreme situations caused by climate change such as droughts and floods.

WUR studies these competing claims, the options for choosing between them, and ways to combine uses that best serve the interests of stakeholders and environment. Nature-based solutions are linked with technological and socio-economic innovations. We study the efficient use of water, water quality and wastewater treatment, the effects of agricultural practices, the way climate change is shaping land and water-use patterns, changes in the marine environment and their likely effects on nature.

Our overall contribution to meeting the challenges related to land and water use will develop and educate strategies and practices that offer fair access and distribution to both, along with their associated natural resources as an integral part of the essential transitions in society.



# Research, education and impact

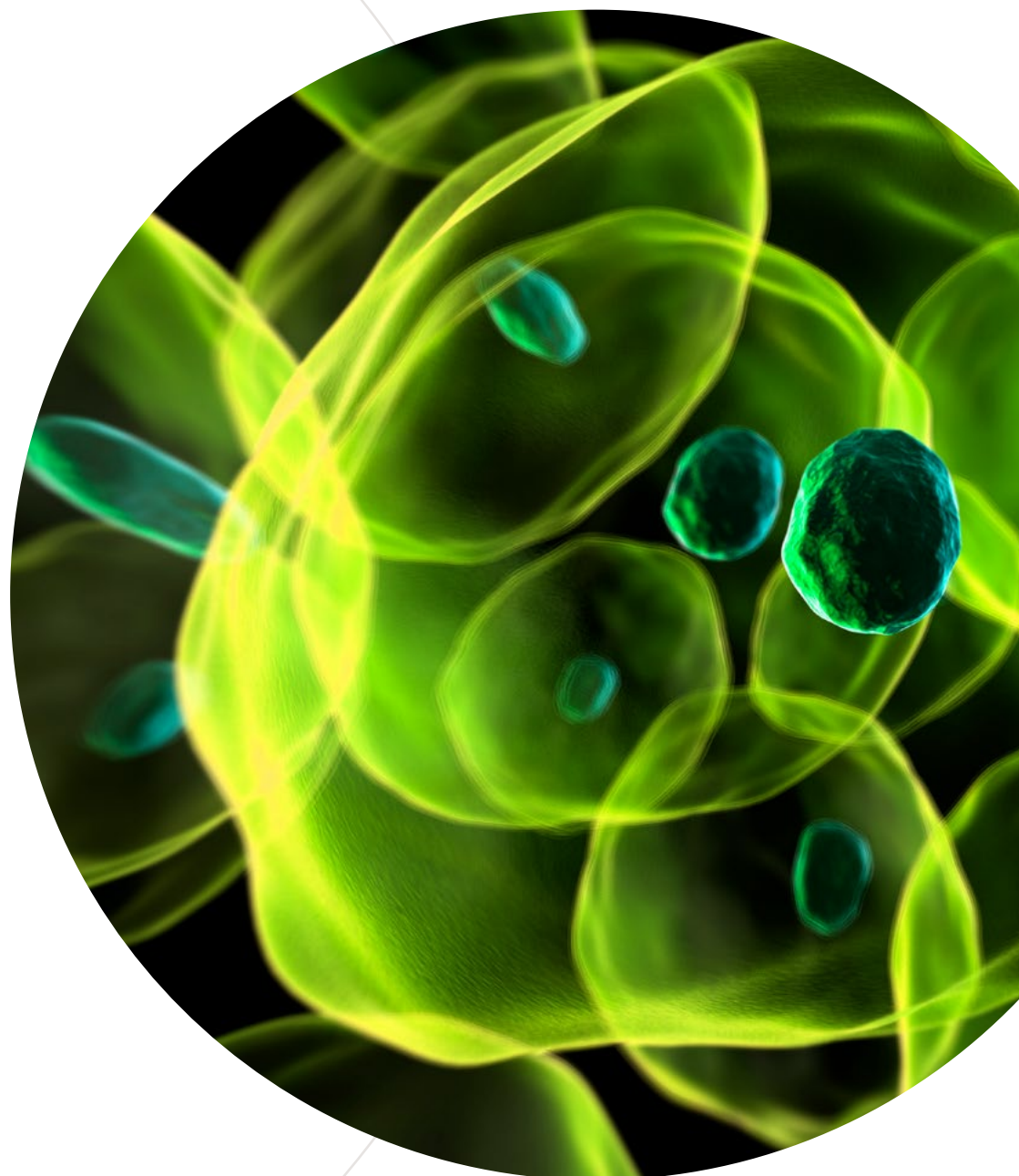
## Research

Wageningen University & Research is recognised as a pillar of scientific research in its domain, a reputation that is built on excellent and independent research. We strive for high quality in everything we do and consider the quality of our work more important than the quantity. Our research is either scientifically innovative, societally innovative or both. The ability to combine monodisciplinary strength in multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches and to cover the range from discovery science to application-oriented research in our domain, enables us to provide different insights and offer alternative pathways. WUR's research can be conceptual, agenda-setting or applicable in the real world (field labs), on a local, regional and global scale.

### **Curiosity-driven and innovative research**

Solutions to today's problems are built on curiosity-driven knowledge developed in the past, while addressing future challenges requires ongoing development of new concepts and frameworks, underscoring the importance of curiosity-driven research. Curiosity-driven research at WUR is a cornerstone of its mission to advance knowledge and address the world's most pressing issues through innovative and interdisciplinary scientific inquiry. As a result WUR continues to stimulate and facilitate curiosity-driven sciences, while providing an enabling environment for rapid translation of science into practice.

Monodisciplinary strength combined in multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary approaches, facilitated by the combination of technical, social and natural sciences, provides many possibilities. WUR will particularly stimulate bottom-up initiatives and facilitate unexpected collaborations that align with the (crosscutting) themes.





## Strategic enhancement

We aspire to teach and encourage intellectual rigour, through robust training in methodologies and critical and reflexive thinking. As such we create a culture where all research and research modes are valued, and time is made available to think. A culture where creativity is encouraged and where we have courage to support high-risk and high-reward work across the spectrum and give people the freedom and trust to operate effectively. We embrace developments and policies in Open Science and based on Findable, Accessible Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR) data in line with national policy. We ensure that all supporting structures (facilities, infrastructure and staff) are in place, easily found and accessible.

To reinforce our research portfolio, we continuously analyse what kind of knowledge development is required or which research areas need to be stimulated for the future. Regular research assessments monitor and evaluate the quality and impact of our research. The Chair Plan 2025-2028 of WUR contains the portfolio of regular chairs and identifies the key strategic points, both in developing this portfolio and in the organisational structures of the chair groups.



## Embracing digital innovation

Digitalisation has many opportunities to offer, which we will explore, prepare, utilise and integrate. Adapting and enhancing data science and artificial intelligence can provide scientific advancements in our domain which would otherwise be unthinkable. WUR is recognised and positioned as an organisation with advanced expertise in responsible and sustainable development and use of digital technology, over all its research and education domains. Our ambitions focus on the responsible use of data science and AI as helpful methods that can be adopted in all our domains, to further advance, and transform scientific practice.

Wageningen University & Research has created an environment that fosters curiosity-driven research, based on a foundation of disciplinary strength, while at the same time supporting the innovation capacity of research. Our main ambitions for research:

To stimulate and facilitate time and space for curiosity-driven sciences, enhance multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary research and facilitate unexpected and crosscutting collaborations

- To have mechanisms in place that support dynamic evaluation of our research portfolio in the natural, engineering, data and social sciences and a mechanism that structures evaluation and governance of research quality.
- To focus on the responsible and sustainable use of data science and AI as essential methods to be adopted and advanced in all our domains, and transform scientific practice.

## Education

Since its foundation in 1918, Wageningen University has been an internationally oriented university which educates students from around the world to address challenges at a local, national and global levels. Our 'Vision for Education' embodies a shared vision for the future, grounded in our values and principles. This vision outlines three directions for the future: stimulating ownership for personal development, cultivating an inspiring learning community, and developing a world-oriented curriculum. Our education is highly valued by our students for many years. We continue to build on the strengths of our education such as high-quality scientific knowledge, our interdisciplinary approach, a rich and small-scale learning environment, flexibility in our learning arrangements, and a diverse academic community.

### Responsible changemakers

We encourage the development of responsible changemakers for science and society. Our graduate profile reflects our mission and values, aiming to inspire learners in their personal development and study-career planning. A responsible changemaker generates impact by pushing the boundaries of science and contributing to finding solutions for the challenges we are facing globally. This may involve focusing on a singular problem, or adopting a holistic, system thinking approach. Our task is to help students determine how they envisage their contribution supporting their journey from pre-university to degree education, and from degree education to PhD/EngD programmes and continuing education.



The increasing speed of knowledge circulation underscores the importance of fostering a culture where learning is seen as a continuous, life-long activity and our education ecosystem is eminently suitable for that. We are committed to developing open educational resources, ensuring that educational content and learning materials are available for use in various contexts and by diverse target groups. To enhance the integration within our education ecosystem, we create continuous learning trajectories, encourage the exchange of course contents, promote mixed classrooms, organise student challenges and explore new forms of learning. We embrace the possibilities of data driven methods and Artificial Intelligence and develop responsible ways of including them in our education programmes. As Artificial Intelligence changes the concept of knowledge, it is important that all learners are able to use AI responsibly.

### Adaptive education portfolio

Our education is of a high quality and we aspire to better align our education portfolio with the current and future needs of students, professionals and society, while also better reflecting our research strengths. The WUR themes clearly convey the future-oriented nature of our education portfolio to learners and society. To achieve an adaptive portfolio we will establish clear procedures and mechanisms for portfolio renewal, embedding this within the current organisation. Our education ecosystem will focus on seven spearheads:

- Positioning and content of our BSc programmes
- Continuing education as a core education activity
- Impact of AI on all aspects of education
- Fostering a world-view for our internationally oriented programmes
- Faster translation of research developments into education
- Further improvement of the quality of our PhD programme
- Development of our recently started EngD programme into a mature education programme.



## Collaboration in education

WUR is not alone in facing the challenges of our society and a greater impact can be achieved through collaboration. We ensure a coherent and sustainable network of national and international education relationships to foster learning relevant for the challenges in our domain. We will intensify our existing collaborations both in the Netherlands (e.g. [4TU](#) and [EWUU alliance](#)) and abroad (e.g. [ELLS](#), [Agrifood5](#)) and will further strengthen our work with vocational education institutions, societal partners and other organisations. This is crucial for developing responsible changemakers for science and society. A strategic collaboration framework for education will be developed to create a coherent and sustainable network that supports WUR's educational ambitions. We aim to be at the forefront of initiatives, both in the Netherlands and Europe, promoting a higher education infrastructure that facilitates learning journeys across institutions and throughout life.



### Our education ambitions:

- To foster the development of responsible changemakers for science and society.
- To increase the adaptivity of our education portfolio to improve its match with the needs of students, professionals and society and better reflect our research strengths.
- To ensure a coherent and sustainable network of complementary national and international education collaborations that expand learning opportunities related to the challenges in our domain.

## Impact

As global challenges grow in complexity and urgency, it is vital that we use our scientific knowledge to deliver scientific and societal impact. We contribute to global challenges through impactful research and education, and key contributions to societal debate and agendas, leading by example in our own operations, co-creation with our partners ensures a long-lasting impact for society.

### Impact pathways

The impact of our education, via degrees and continuing education, is one of the largest contribution that WUR makes to global society. Our [alumni programme](#) covers graduates active in over 160 countries, who are making a difference through their

work, network and personal lives. We stimulate the involvement of alumni in creating new initiatives and partnerships that further enhance our contribution to science and society.

Implementing WUR's research outcomes in science and practice is the most eminent impact approach to having societal impact. To further enhance our organisation's opportunities to do so, we will implement a different way of working, involving a more unified, long-term and programmatic strategy, that builds on our project output. Enabling partners to have an impact is facilitated through collaborations with businesses, government bodies, NGOs and citizens.

The challenges facing the Dutch regions and WUR's ability to facilitate regional transitions requires specific attention and will involve interactions between people at Wageningen Campus and its hubs throughout the Netherlands. Transdisciplinary research (integrating knowledge across academic disciplines and with non-academic stakeholders) and participatory research (carried out by scientists and stakeholders where different perspectives and interests are taken into account) will be important in these collaborations.

### **Entrepreneurship and business development**

Collaboration with industry partners, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and the economic valorisation of research are crucial aspects of our impact. We are committed to enhancing entrepreneurship and encouraging the creation of new businesses that implement WUR knowledge and inventions. Aspiring entrepreneurs and teams can rely on targeted pre-incubation support at [StartHub](#), while spin-offs and start-ups can be accelerated by [Start Life](#). To translate innovation into practice we will continue extending co-creation with industry partners and other stakeholders, including Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) such as those facilitated and financed by the Dutch 'TopSectors' policy.

The rapid rise of AI and digitalisation is shaping further development application options on campus and with partners elsewhere. We will ensure that our research and business development teams are aware of the opportunities for creating impact with data science and AI tools. Additionally we will facilitate easy access to knowledge for partners and stakeholders to co-create impactful solutions.

### **Societal agenda**

The role of our researchers in society is changing. Perspectives and opinions can differ within society, within science, and between society and science. This requires greater reflection, awareness, internal discussion and possibly more guidelines on the role of the organisation in society as an honest knowledge broker vis-a-vis the role of individual scientists. WUR's contribution to societal debate and agendas has increased, including work on [spatial planning of the Netherlands](#) and [WUR perspectives on the future of agriculture and nature](#). To overcome polarisation and gain a better understanding of various perspectives we will continue to invest in [organising dialogues](#) both within and outside the organisation. Staff will be trained to effectively utilise dialogues to improve research. WUR provides its researchers with back-up in the public debate and science policy interface.



Given our drive to create collaborative pathways that have a sustainable future impact, our main ambitions:

- To have societal impact by putting research outcomes in science & practice through a more collaborative, long-term and programmatic way of working.
- To enhance entrepreneurship and business development in order to realise impact in society for the transitions we face and to create value for our organisation and partners.
- To increase our contribution to societal agendas and debate, to empower our people to do so with scientific integrity and in a safe manner, and to listen to and learn from what moves society, e.g. through dialogues.



# Collaborations from local to global

The global challenges we face require collaboration across both national and disciplinary borders. Partnering with various organisations and individuals, Wageningen University & Research strives to create the best possible knowledge, insights and innovations for scientific and societal impact. We collaborate with Dutch ministries like the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (LVVN) and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), and other governmental bodies such as other ministries, provinces and cities. Collaborations are also abundant with non-governmental organisations, industry and of course knowledge organisations. Our broad international orientation and interdisciplinary knowledge make us a highly valued partner worldwide, and participate in high-tech endeavours. All our cooperations are carefully chosen and must adhere to our 'principles of collaboration'. By applying the principles to project collaborations, we work hard to ensure that all collaborations contribute to the mission and vision of WUR, that the safety of our students and staff is safeguarded, (scientific) integrity and academic freedom are guaranteed, human rights are endorsed and that the collaboration contributes to an open flow of ideas and data. We will continue to offer tools, guidance and support to our staff who enter into collaborations and prioritise creating awareness on the value and content of the related principles.

## Balanced partnerships

Wageningen University & Research has a long and rich history of international collaboration. As a knowledge partner in major agro-technological developments and innovations we are committed to stimulate balanced partnerships that embody equality, reciprocity and sustainability. These partnerships drive societal impact and create new opportunities. International collaboration is seen as a two-way street, providing expertise and learning and growing from our partners.

Extensive partnerships with both local and international partners have been established In Low & Middle Income Countries (LMIC) where the Wageningen Global Sustainability Programme continues to stimulate interdisciplinary research focussed on SDG. With the upcoming mix of challenges in opportunities in Africa, we are co-developing a regional research agenda with our African colleagues. New funding is being actively pursued from foundations and development finance institutions, with the University Fund Wageningen playing an active role in exploring fundraising options. We anticipate a shift from short-term projects to more impactful long-term initiatives, and co-creating new funding schemes with partners.





## Science-policy interface

Wageningen University & Research is skilled in process management and working with stakeholders at a local and regional level, to drive transformational change. Our 'dilemma-based approach' fosters discussions on emerging techniques and issues, generating potential solution pathways. We plan to further develop approaches for international application. By combining our innovative methods and approach, WUR aims to address global challenges and maintain leadership in its domain. We are focused on developing strategic partnerships to strengthen the science-policy interface, in particular with the Dutch ministries, the agencies based in Brussels and Rome and specific partners worldwide.

The LVVN is an important partner for which various research tasks are conducted including policy-oriented research (BO), and statutory research tasks (WOT).

## European partners

Wageningen University & Research is a very active partner in Europe, through our involvement in strategic networks and strong relationships with institutional partners. We have been successful in the Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation, and the annual Mansholt Lecture provides a solid foundation for the science policy interface with European institutions. The European Parliament and Commission play an important role in Dutch national legislation and vice versa. The European science policy interface must also therefore take place in The Hague, in collaboration with Dutch ministries on national and European challenges. WUR is keen to strengthen collaboration with selected partners in more strategic partnerships. Europe serves as a major stepping stone to international fora, we aim to strengthen cooperation with European partners that share our strong international focus.

Given our overall ambitions and the need for partners worldwide to create the best possible knowledge, insights and innovations for societal impact the main ambitions for collaboration:

- To maximise global impact through initiating balanced partnerships guided by thematic priorities that reflect an approach grounded in principles of equality, reciprocity and sustainability.
- To engage with strategic partners and alumni to strengthen the science-policy interface.
- To explore possibilities for Europe to serve as a major stepping stone to international opportunities.





# Our commitment

Everyone at Wageningen University & Research is dedicated to achieving our ambitions outlined in this document and ready to undertake the necessary developments. We foster the many current thriving activities and projects that contribute to accelerating the transition towards our overarching ambitions. Next to that, we determined seven core areas of change identifying the areas in which we want to advance in the coming years. Just like the long-term ambitions they are formulated at an global, organisational and individual level. These seven core areas of change incorporate the concept of responsible changemakers and enable us to track progress on our formulated ambitions. They will be further operationalised as part of the realisation and provide guidance for the Strategic Agendas of the Science Groups and Staff Departments.



## Global

- 1 Increase the orientation of our collaborations towards balanced partnerships grounded in equality, reciprocity and sustainability.
- 2 Enhance the engagement with the science-policy interface, societal agendas and dialogue



## Organisation

- 3 Dedicate more time and resources to curiosity-driven sciences, while stimulating unusual collaborations and multi- inter- and transdisciplinary research approaches.

- 4 Ensure responsible, secure and sustainable utilisation of digitalisation opportunities across our research, education and operations.
- 5 Improve adaptability of our research and education portfolio through mechanisms for ongoing dynamic evaluation.



## Individual

- 6 Strengthen our culture that is based on trust and responsibility, fostering inclusivity, transparency and inspiration promoting safety and connection among people.
- 7 Focus on cultivating high-performing teams that recognise the diverse roles of individuals, with increased emphasis on the personal development of both students and staff.

## Keeping the strategy alive, agile and assessable

The commitment, ownership and personal buy-in of all staff and students are crucial if we are to realise our ambitions with WUR's mission and ambitions providing essential inspiration. The Strategic Plan will cascade through Science Groups and Staff Departments, aligning WUR's overall strategy with each group's Strategic Agenda. We invite everyone in the organisation to connect and contribute to WUR's ambitions. Performance and development talks will reflect individual contributions to the Strategic Plan

within the team efforts and team meetings should nurture mutual learning. Existing activities will be leveraged to keep the conversation on the Strategic Plan alive and we will work to practice what we preach.

In a rapidly changing environment, it is vital to anticipate internal and external developments and continuously improve. The Strategic Plan serves as a guiding mechanism rather than a controlling one. An open atmosphere of trust is necessary for discussing changes, where individuals can speak up if progress lags or ambitions become unattainable. There is adaptability to change course or even destination during the Strategic Plan period.

Assessing progress requires systematically measuring and evaluating how we are performing relative to our goals and objectives. This process of monitoring and steering is embedded in our existing planning and control structures. Since numbers can have different meanings in a diverse community, the information behind the data is of vital importance. Existing dashboards provide useful information on the basic condition of our organisation and most importantly create awareness and stimulate discussion about progress. Ensuring an unambiguous interpretation of progress is crucial if we are to achieve our shared objectives.

So, let's reimagine living on planet Earth. Let's work together on our continued role in society, all over the world.



**Our commitment**

# Colophon

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