

Support for Wageningen talent

University Fund Wageningen seeks to support talented people involved in Wageningen education and research. Three high-potential students or graduates talk about what one of the University Fund's named funds has meant to them.

'Studying in Wageningen has opened up new avenues'

Monica Agaba from Uganda obtained her Master's degree in Nutrition and Health from WUR, thanks to a scholarship from the Anne van den Ban Fund. This fund enables promising students from developing countries to study at Wageningen University & Research so that they can then contribute to the sustainable development of their country. Agaba: 'This was such a great opportunity for me to gain more knowledge and develop professionally.' When she finished her Master's thesis, her supervisor encouraged her to write an academic article based on the thesis. 'That took a lot of time but it has paid off and now the article has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Nutritional Sciences*. I am so proud of that. The opportunity to study at WUR has opened up new avenues for me.' Agaba is back in her home country now, and working in the Family Life and Consumer Studies department at Kyambogo University, in Kampala. 'We are

developing a proposal that looks at the current health-beauty paradox in Uganda, where overweight and obesity in women of reproductive age are seen as beautiful and as evidence of health and wealth. It is a multidisciplinary study which combines Nutrition Sciences with Behavioural Sciences.'

'I believe there is still so much we in Uganda can invest in when it comes to research. Hopefully I can make a serious contribution to our health.'



Monicah Agaba

UNIVERSITY FUND WAGENINGEN

University Fund Wageningen enables activities for students and researchers at Wageningen University & Research that cannot be financed through other channels. The fund supports talented individuals, facilitates groundbreaking research and boosts the impact of Wageningen expertise by stimulating entrepreneurship. All this is made possible by the support of thousands of donors and philanthropic contacts through, for example, annual donations, legacies or the establishment of a named fund.

'I have gained new insights and contacts'

Niccolò Bassetti, a PhD student in the Biosystematics Group, received a grant from the Huub and Julienne Spiertz Fund (HJS). This fund invests in young agrobiologists and crop scientists to promote research, with a particular focus on sustainable food production. To this end, the fund offers an annual stipend of up to 1500 euros to be spent on an international study tour or attendance at a conference.

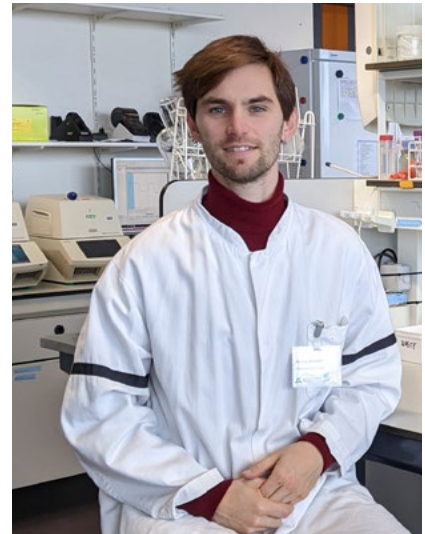
Thanks to the grant, Bassetti was able to go to the 2019 Congress of the International Society for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions in Glasgow. 'This is one of the biggest conferences in this field. Thousands of people attend, including many top scientists.'

It would have been difficult for him to attend without the grant. 'You do have

funding as a PhD student, but conferences are extremely expensive.'

For him the conference was a great opportunity for discussions with other researchers. 'My research focuses on interaction between plants and insect eggs. Which is in some ways similar to the interaction between plants and microbes. And the only other lab in the world that is working on the same topic was at the conference.'

He also got the chance to draw attention to his research and to look around at other research related to his field. 'I gained new insights into the issues and which techniques you can use. I also did some networking that could lead to new collaborations outside my national network.'



Niccolò Bassetti

'The recognition I got has helped me'

'I started at university in 2016 and was also training fulltime at the top sport centre Papendal,' says Emma Oosterwegel, student of Soil, Water, Atmosphere and a heptathlete. It proved difficult to combine student life with elite sport. 'I had injury trouble and my university results suffered. That was a wake-up call for me to take things a bit easier so that I had time to train and to go to the physio.'

Oosterwegel submitted an application to the Fund Niels Smith, which offers one talented young top sportsperson per year a 'helping hand' in combining their passion with their studies. In 2019, she received a grant worth 1500 euros. 'It helped me enormously. As a novice top athlete, you haven't had many "real" successes yet, which makes it hard to find sponsors.

And yet elite sport isn't cheap, especially on a student budget. I take expensive supplements, for example, and extra protein to support my training.'

The grant not only gave Oosterwegel a financial boost. 'It was also tremendously motivating, because people believed in me even though I hadn't had any major successes yet.' She has certainly had such successes since then. In 2019 she came seventh in the athletics World Cup in Qatar, and in 2021 she got the bronze medal in the heptathlon at the Olympic Games. 'I'm really proud of that! The recognition that I got and the fact that people believed in me have helped me get where I am now.' ■

www.universityfundwageningen.eu/namedfunds



Emma Oosterwegel