



## **Assessment Report**

**Research 2018 - 2022**

**Wageningen Centre for Development  
Innovation (WCDI)  
Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR)**

**Part of  
Social Sciences Group (SSG)  
Wageningen University & Research (WUR)**

**November 2023 / June 2024**

## **Assessment Report Research 2018 - 2022**

*Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI)*

*Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR)*

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## 1 Preface

The Review Committee thanks the staff and the management of WCDI and WEcR for all the excellent preparatory work. We received a clear review protocol and an extensive and well thought-out programme for the on-site visit. The extensive self-evaluations provided a good basis for the conversations and the interviews.

The on-site visit took place from November 5-8, 2024. The programme consisted of internal and external interviews. Internally we interviewed members of WUR Executive Board and the management of WCDI and WEcR, and employees ranging from the senior research staff to young professionals, members of the different teams, support staff and the Works Council. Externally we interviewed different stakeholders and customers of WCDI and WEcR, including national authorities and partners. On the last day of the review, we presented our preliminary observations and recommendations during an interactive meeting with the WCDI and WEcR management. This was followed by a final presentation to the WUR management and the staff of WCDI and WEcR.

We thank all participants for the open conversations and dialogues. We are grateful that customers and stakeholders were willing to discuss their opinions on both institutes with us. The mix of internal and external interviews helped to obtain a balanced view on the current performance of WCDI and WEcR and on the expectations and perspectives for the near future, including on their merger.

The three-day review was intensive but rewarding to us as a review committee. It was also challenging in the sense that the review had to address two institutes in the process of integration, but with a different profile. Searching for a path of integrating these institutes in a manner that, based on their respective strengths, would facilitate the development of a common vision around common objectives while respecting their distinct characteristics and partnerships, was a challenge for the committee and will be a challenge for their management.

However, the presence of a highly qualified and professional staff provides a solid basis to develop the required synergies that would keep motivation high and further develop an appealing and vital role for the future of one Social Science Research Institute (SSRI). The strong and renowned scientific basis and customer driven approach are the foundations upon which this institute will play an important role in the societal debate and at the science-policy interface in the future. We hope that our conclusions and recommendations will help the management of the Social Science Group (SSG) of Wageningen University and Research (WUR) to move forward and strengthen the position of the merged institute even further.

Dr. Tassos Haniotis, chair of the WCDI and WEcR Review Committee  
June 2024

## 2 Introduction

The Review Committee was requested to assess the research institute Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR) and the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) on four main criteria: Quality, Viability, Impact and Statutory Tasks. The report and recommendations of the committee are based on two comprehensive and independent self-assessment reports, on a site visit with interviews and conversations with management, staff, stakeholders and on deliberations of the committee. In its elaborations, the committee was also invited to comment on prospects and challenges stemming from the merger of the two institutes.

### 2.1 The evaluation

Wageningen Research (WR) is one of five so called TO2 institutes (applied technological research institutes) in the Netherlands. Every four years, the TO2 organisations are assessed in their entirety, with sub-evaluation committees for each of the TO2 institutes, commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate. As part of their quality assurance cycle, the individual research institutes that make up WR are additionally evaluated by a peer review committee every four years. The WR institute assessments are commissioned by the Executive Board of WR. The guidance for the institute assessments is derived from the national protocol for the TO2 evaluations.

The main goal of the WR institute assessments is to assess the institute's (inter)national position regarding research quality, economic and societal impact of the research, and viability of the organisation, in light of its own mission. In addition to these three criteria, the institute's performance of statutory tasks will be evaluated. The assessment thereby aids to monitor and improve the overall performance of the WR institutes and their long-term strategy development.

The evaluation criteria (research quality, economic and societal impact, viability of the organization, and performance of statutory tasks), as described in detail with indicators in Annex 2, were assessed in the light of the institute's mission, using a four-point scale (Annex 2). The evaluation committee was asked to report their findings and offer recommendations – in an assessment report - to the Executive Board of WR, the SSG Management Board, and to the Management Teams of the two institutes.

### 2.2 Quality of the information

The committee was provided with the following documents:

- Terms of Reference WR Institute Assessments
- Self-assessment 2018 – 2022 Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR)

- Self-assessment 2019 – 2022 Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI)
- Exemplary Projects, supplement to WCDI self-assessment
- Memorandum 'Towards one resilient Social Sciences Wageningen Research Institute', September 2023
- Protocol voor de monitoring en evaluatie van de Toegepast Onderzoeks-organisaties in Nederland, 2019 (in Dutch, summary in English)

Additionally, the committee was provided with information complementing its assessment (e.g., statistics on various metrics of performance).

The self-assessment reports were prepared in a professional way and were valuable in providing sufficient information and background to draw general conclusions. Questions by the committee during the site visit about uncertainties in the self-assessments or missing details were addressed very quickly.

The committee visited the two research institutes from 5 – 8 November 2023 (see the site visit programme in Annex 3). The presentations during the site visit were well prepared and at the right level of detail, leaving enough room for discussion. They were very helpful in enabling the committee to assess the current performance and prospects of the institute. Moreover, the discussion with the customers was very valuable.

The committee prepared itself by sharing their first impressions and preliminary considerations and judgements at the inception of the site visit. This process established the foci of the site visit. The committee was welcomed by Prof. Arthur Mol, vice president WUR and rector magnificus WU, giving a brief survey of the WUR organization.

During the site visit, presentations were given by the general management and the programme coordinator. In addition, there was plenty of room for short pitches and interviews with programme leaders, team leaders, entrepreneurial researchers, professors and young / new researchers, support staff, technicians and the Works Council. Also a really useful dinner / interview was arranged with customers and stakeholders.

All discussions and interviews were open and constructive in providing relevant information for the assessment. The main conclusions were discussed and agreed upon unanimously during the visit. At the end of the visit, the preliminary conclusions were presented to the management informally and, consequently, to the WCDI and WEcR staff.

### 2.3 Composition of the committee

The committee consisted of eight members and was chaired by Dr Tassos Haniotis. The members were selected according to their expertise in the fields of either WEcR or WCDI.

Dr. Tassos Haniotis, Chair of the committee (focus WEcR)  
Senior Guest Research Scholar, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA); former (retired) Director for Strategy and Policy Analysis in the European Commission's Directorate General C for Agriculture and Rural development (DG AGRI), Greece

Mr. Wim Bens (focus WEcR)  
Chair of the (Dutch) Southern Agriculture and Horticulture Organization (ZLTO), the Netherlands

Dr. Sanne Griffioen-Roose (focus WEcR)  
Director Sustainable Farming, Royal FrieslandCampina, the Netherlands

Prof. Dr. Monika Hartmann (focus WEcR)  
Professor and Head of Department Agricultural and Food Market Research at Bonn University, Germany

Dr. Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg (focus WCDI)  
Advisor and ambassador to the Rise program, Executive in Residence at Schmidt Futures. Former Director of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD), Kenya

Prof. Dr. Dirk Jan Koch (focus WCDI)  
Chief Science Officer of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (special) Professor Trade and Development Cooperation at Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Dr. Chantal Le Mouël (focus WEcR)  
Senior Researcher, National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment INRAE, France

Mr. Mark Schneiders (focus WCDI)  
Board member and Chair of the Finance Committee International Fertilizer Development Center, the Netherlands

Ms. Liza Kozlowksa MA acted as the secretary of the review committee up till and including the site-visit. In March 2024 Dr. Frans van Steijn was asked to assist the committee in collecting the results of the assessment into this report.

## 2.4 Structure of the report

This report contains the assessment of WCDI (chapter 2) and WEcR (chapter 3) with the committee's findings on the formal criteria of research quality, societal relevance, viability and statutory tasks.

The committee's recommendations derived from these findings are summarized in separate paragraphs. Ensuing the planned Social Sciences Research Institute is assessed and recommended upon (chapter 4).

Three annexes are added with the research data of the two institutes (1), the terms of reference and criteria (2), and the programme of the site-visit (3). Finally, a list of abbreviations is added.

### 3 Assessment Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI)

Principal	Wageningen University and Research (WUR) / Social Sciences Group
Management SSG WUR	Prof.dr. J.G.A.J. van der Vorst, managing director Drs. L. van Bommel, director operations
Unit	Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation
Management WCDI	Ir. H. Bruggeman, business unit manager
Research input scientific staff 2022	82 fte (102 persons)
Research expenditure in 2022	13.588 K€
Assessment:	
Research Quality	2.5 (satisfactory to good)
Relevance to Society	2.5 (satisfactory to good)
Viability	2 (satisfactory)

#### 3.1 Mission and organisation of WCDI

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation is one of the nine research institutes within Wageningen University & Research. WUR’s mission is to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life, in the fields of 1. Food, Feed and Biobased Production; 2. Natural Resources and Living environment; and 3. Society and Wellbeing.

WCDI aims to bridge research and education with innovation, change, and capacity development in international development cooperation. It focuses on enhancing the quality of life through sustainable development, particularly in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). WCDI leverages its expertise, including over 80 researchers with experience in international development and extensive global networks, to excel in this area. While other institutes of WUR have individuals engaged in Global South initiatives, WCDI uniquely concentrates on this region, making it the sole research institute within WUR with such a specific geographic focus.



WCDI operates within the realm of sustainable and inclusive food systems, making this transformation central to its strategy. The key challenge it addresses is how to sustainably feed the projected 8.5 billion people by 2030 and over 10 billion by 2050 without surpassing planetary limits. This necessitates socially and economically just food systems, ensuring stable availability, access, and utilization of food. WCDI emphasizes the interconnected nature of food systems and advocates for partnerships characterized by equity, diversity, and solidarity to shape inclusive and sustainable food systems.

Addressing the complex challenges of global food systems requires a systemic transformation, where WCDI collaborates with others to put concepts like inclusion and equity into practice. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), WCDI focuses primarily on UN SDG 2: Zero Hunger, while recognizing the interconnectedness of challenges. Hence, it also supports efforts related to SDGs 17 (Partnerships), 1 (No Poverty), 8 (Reduced Inequalities), and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The motto of WCDI is "Knowledge in Action". It acknowledges that knowledge evolves through continuous development, application, and adaptation. This understanding encompasses various forms of sensemaking, from transdisciplinary interactions to peer review processes, resulting in diverse valid forms of knowledge. WCDI guides knowledge development processes and collaborates with partners to translate existing knowledge into actionable insights.

WCDI outlines four primary value propositions (VP): Facilitating Stakeholder Collaboration, Guiding Sector Transformation, Managing for Sustainable Development Impact, and Fostering Lifelong Learning. These propositions serve as unique institutional strengths and entry points for new projects. Additionally, WCDI has seven thematic clusters focusing on internal learning and service/product development: horticulture, integrated seed sector development, learning for impact, food and nutrition security, climate action, gender and youth, and inclusive agribusiness. Around 75% - 80% of WCDI's work is conducted in partnership with customers in Africa, particularly East Africa, while 20% - 25% is with partners/customers in South and Southeast Asia. This regional focus reflects WCDI's commitment to addressing development challenges in these areas and leveraging its expertise to achieve sustainable solutions.

## 3.2 Research Quality

### *Research output*

Since 2021, WCDI positions itself as a Knowledge Institute and wants to play the knowledge partner role in the projects it is engaged in. The committee sees that the academic outputs are very diverse: from conference papers to academic journals, and from contributions to policy development discussions to presentations during policy conferences. In general, WCDI prioritises non-

academically peer-reviewed knowledge products over peer-reviewed academic articles, focusing on practical application of knowledge. Among its scientific staff, only 15 concentrate on writing peer-reviewed articles, driven by personal preference rather than institutional mandate. Consequently, WCDI has produced six times more professional knowledge products than academic publications, according to statistics from WUR's research output system "PURE". WCDI has a supporting mechanism to help colleagues ensure their publications are registered in PURE, the WUR library system. Next to that, approximately 75% of colleagues actively producing publications have a profile on ResearchGate.

The committee took note of the increased number of refereed articles published in 2021 and 2022. The vast majority of those stem from a dozen of staff members whose academic publications are well read (over 14k reads per person according to ResearchGate) and there are publications that are well cited (Top 10% most-cited publications have FWCI of 3-4).

Though the committee acknowledges that the output of the institute is in keeping with its mission, it also encourages WCDI's effort to establish further growth in the number of peer-reviewed articles in the coming years and engage the staff in academic publishing. This, however, also implies the need for an increase of the resources allocated for publishing, which were absent until recently. As a result, due to the lack of sufficient resources to pay for time of staff who publish, the aim of transitioning into a Knowledge Institute is essentially subsidized with the time of those staff who do engage in publishing peer-reviewed articles.

#### *Quality of the output*

From the documentation, the committee learned that the institute had developed a set of quality-enhancing principles and approvals that included the preparation of a quality assurance protocol. Since 2015, all written reports must follow a set publication process, the quality assurance protocol is additionally intended to increase transparency, trustworthiness, quality and impact of its knowledge related work.

#### *Open access*

In line with WUR policy, WCDI seeks open access for all its academic publications. Other professional reports are always open access unless specifically disallowed by customer policy. WCDI research reports are freely accessible via the university's repository. The documentation showed an increase of open access publications from 67% in 2019 to 86% in 2022.

A Knowledge Manager is since 2020 part of the management team, and there is a knowledge support group and data management team. Since 2021 there is also a Knowledge Agenda. The committee understands that the management structure is currently under review.

In assessing the research quality of WCDI, the committee found that the institute achieves a satisfactory to good level.

### 3.3 Societal Relevance

WCDI's relevance for sustainable and inclusive food systems is at the core of its mission. The institute aims at socially and economically just food systems, ensuring stable availability, access, and utilization of food. WCDI emphasizes the interconnected nature of food systems.

One quality criterion relates to sustainability, which is achieved, among others, by equitable partnerships. Two evaluation reports were analysed for this review, the Hortifresh evaluation covering Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire and the Dhaka Food System program. While both evaluations were positive about the results achieved, there were concerns about the sustainability of the program in two out of the three countries, which also might be a reflection of the lack of equitable partnerships.

To enable staff who are interested in an academic deepening of their career, incentives and facilities need to be put in place (time and resources). Deeply motivated and engaged staff will bring their own networks and decades of experience to shape the work, whereas a fragmented staff culture risks staff to get 'lost' after the 6 months buddy system. Now it seems easy for staff to not engage with other team members due to the project nature of the work.

#### *Customer satisfaction*

WCDI has kept records of the participants' appreciation of the education courses. This was consistently high. Records of appreciation from the partners in the projects were not consistently kept. We recommend that this is consistently done in the future, with respect to both the partners and the donors. From the interviews the committee got a mixed message. In general, the work was rated well, but there was incidental criticism about the project management, in particular the timing in which local partners were involved for handover.

Except for the professional training program, there is no longer a systematic procedure to measure the satisfaction of the customers, and therefore to assess perceived quality and appreciation by WCDI's customers. The presence of a regular, for instance (bi-) annual survey, to measure whether the approach WCDI has chosen is appreciated by its partners and how it can be strengthened would have contributed to a better understanding of the appreciation of the institute by its customers. Project evaluations are done, but this is different from an ongoing and systematic customer satisfaction survey. The latter contributes (and also results in) a focus on donor requirements rather than a project perspective.

#### *Partnership*

The equal partnership strategy, which was introduced midway the review period in 2021, needs to be in line with current developments in the sector, such as the collaborative venture that The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities (The Guild) has developed, together with the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA). This implies less subcontracting and more collaborations in consortia, where possible with Southern institutes in the lead. This also implies more investments to increase the capacities for (academic) partners to (jointly) publish in top-level journals.

There is an opportunity for marketing more WUR knowledge and co-creating knowledge through WCDI with the Global South. Coordination of the different WUR Research Institutes' activities in the countries of the Global South seems often lacking, harming the image of One WUR. During the assessment the committee ran into several examples where coordination among various WUR institutes involved in a project fell short, leading to confusion and irritation for the customer and in the market. We suggest setting up a "Global South Partnership Centre" in the *new SSRI* to manage WUR activities in the Global South. WUR will need to facilitate and stimulate the movement of staff and expertise across its different silos.

A potential existential threat to WCDI and its successor is the increasing adoption of the 'localization agenda' by development agencies, including the Dutch Government. A partnership strategy needs to be developed and needs to be considered as 'hardware' for WCDI. These partnerships constitute an essential investment that is needed to maintain the impact of the institute in the long-run. Funding needs to be requested (from WUR reserves/KB funding) from the executive board for this. As funders are increasingly asking Southern institutes to be in the lead or act at consortium partners, WCDI needs to ensure that it has strong partnerships with Southern institutes with a clear value proposition for these institutes. This will allow WCDI to remain the "go-to" knowledge partner when funding flows will be rerouted directly to Southern parties. Joint marketing of WCDI in long term partnership with a Southern Institution will be an opportunity to attract donors and to build capacity in the Southern partner institution.

The committee has noted that there is room for improvement in recognizing the valuable contributions of local partners. It appears that existing capacities at the local level are sometimes overlooked, leading donor partners to feel the need to encourage WCDI staff to engage more systematically with local partners. Some local partners indicated to feel constrained, despite possessing significant expertise in relevant areas.

In assessing the societal relevance of WCDI, the committee found that the institute is making important steps in realising impact in its changing role of knowledge partner and achieves a satisfactory to good level.

### 3.4 Viability

In the 2019 assessment it was recommended that WCDI should have 'level playing field' access to KB funding as compared to the other research institutes in WUR. This was not realised (2022 75k). Only in 2023 the amount became significantly higher (700k). The committee underlines the importance of access of WCDI to KB funds from WUR which are needed to develop the Knowledge Agenda, disseminate research results, and develop knowledge sharing and learning with partnership institutes in the South.

Since 2019, dependence on funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dropped from 85 % to 65 %. This can be considered as a significant improvement. Nevertheless, there is a need to further diversify funding sources beyond public funding and especially beyond Dutch government. The dependence on Dutch government funding reduces the incentives for the team to seek broader opportunities in the funding environment.

A clear plan for the future is still being elaborated, especially regarding the partnership strategy and the education offer. The committee understands that this problem is close to being resolved but these are urgent issues and crucial for the future of the institute, so this process must have high priority.

#### *Project portfolio*

The order portfolio is well filled with longer term projects, as it has been in the past years. WCDI has successfully shifted from short projects to longer term projects. In the Education portfolio valuable modular and hybrid products were developed during and after the COVID period. There is a challenge to how WCDI Education will deal with the post Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP), Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHO) program, which will be focused on southern knowledge institutes. WCDI's opportunity lies in train the trainer how to work.

There is market strain on the fees and pressure on the staff on revenue. The committee commends WCDI for presenting positive margins despite this pressure. The committee suggests WCDI to make an analysis of its order portfolio, the market segments it is active in, and relate this to potential successes in Topsector-, EU- and bilateral contracts.

#### *Project design and acquisition*

Currently, project designs are falling short in adequately securing equitable partnerships, as reflected by the fact that the aim of establishing three long-term partnerships signed with institutes in the Global South has not been achieved. Instead of formalizing partnerships with existing local institutes in the Global South, the university has set up its own legal entities in the Global South. While a consultant has been hired and has mapped potential partners, a partnership strategy with Global South Institutes is lacking at WCDI and at the WUR. There are already project-based partnerships, a promising sign, but they are still ad-hoc

and not institution based. Conflict of interest makes it harder for WCDI to influence project design and be a thought partner to funders since they also bid for projects.

The institute has difficulties to effectively engage national governments in the Global South hence building local buy-in. WCDI has to invest in understanding the quality and expertise that is already available in countries of the Global South after decades of Dutch investment in capacity building in this region. This would allow for a clear sight on the complementarity expertise needed. Thus, at the beginning of each project the local capacity that already exists should be mapped, then completed with WCDI contributions to fill in the identified gaps. Exit strategies and local capacity building need to be part of the design of every project.

WCDI is recommended to enforce the "One Wageningen" agenda in its external relations so that every part of the university will engage in target countries in close cooperation with the WUR national office. Within WUR and also in the outside world WCDI is a small player. The merge with WEcR is an opportunity to pool resources, develop new products and matter more within WUR.

#### *Human resources*

The committee perceives a risk with respect to staff work pressure given that WCDI staff does most of academic publishing, PhD Supervision and academic peer review in their own time.

The committee acknowledges two positive developments regarding human resources. First, there has been an increase in the number of employees with a PhD in WCDI: from 9 in 2019 to 14 in 2022. There is also an increase in WCDI staff members (now 3) with a dual appointment (also at the University), contributing to a more knowledge-based institute.

When it comes to diversity, the staff and management of WCDI is not representative of the areas where WCDI is operating, posing a risk to the legitimacy of the organisation. A strategy to make the (top of) the workforce more diverse should include a culture-component.

At the round table with staff it was mentioned that the current HR-culture at the institute doesn't facilitate the professional development of more introvert staff members that aren't used to the Dutch culture of negotiation (in addition to the rules and regulations in place) to obtain promotions and additional responsibilities. Apparently the standard objective WUR HR procedures for promotions, that also adhere to WCDI, are not experienced as such.

A strategy needs to be developed for increasing the number of staff members from the Global South at all levels of the organisations, including the top-management. All recruitment panels should at least include one person from the Global South. The upcoming succession of the business unit manager is a good opportunity to diversify management. The current structure through informal "clusters" where there is no line management authority seems weak, and the span of control of the Management Team (MT) members too large. The present 'flat' structure has created a culture where those adept at politics and self-advocacy advance faster.

This risks talent being lost because of the existing culture, not because they lack the ability to perform. There is a need for formal structures to offer “homes” for staff in smaller teams of maximum size 15-20, clustered around their expertise. Staff needs a more structured explanation, guidelines and expectations on what promotions and contract extensions are based on. Also, non-scientific staff should be allowed to progressive pathways.

The committee concludes that great strides have been made in the past years and recognises the opportunities for further strengthening a deep partnership organisation in the future.

The committee assesses the viability of WCDI to be satisfactory.

### 3.5 Recommendations

Based on the above assessment of WCDI, the following recommendations may be summarized.

1. The committee encourages WCDI to accomplish further growth in the number of peer-reviewed publications and engage staff in academic publishing.
2. The committee advises WCDI to develop a strategy to increase the number of staff members from the Global South at all levels of the organisation, including top-management.
3. WCDI is advised to put incentives and facilities in place to encourage staff, especially from the Global South, to expand their academic careers and performance.
4. The committee advises to create smaller expertise clustered teams in order to provide staff with a ‘home’.
5. The committee advises WCDI to consistently monitor the satisfaction of partners and donors in its projects.
6. The committee recommends to set up a ‘Global South Partnership Centre’ in WCDI to:
  - a. manage and facilitate the intended equal partnership strategy, to be considered as ‘hardware’ for WCDI.
  - b. enforce the ‘One Wageningen’ agenda in order to realise a unified and coordinated business development.
7. The committee underlines the necessity of KB funds for developing the Knowledge Agenda, disseminate research results, and develop knowledge

sharing with partnership institutes in the South.

8. The committee advises WCDI to analyse its order portfolio and relate this to potential successes in Topsector-, EU- and bilateral contracts.



## 4 Assessment Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR)

Principal	Wageningen University and Research (WUR) / Social Sciences Group
Management SSG WUR	Prof.dr. J.G.A.J. van der Vorst, managing director Drs. L. van Bommel, director operations
Unit	Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR)
Management WEcR	Ir. O. Hietbrink, business unit manager
Research input scientific staff 2022	286 fte (335 persons)
Research expenditure in 2022	35.294 K€
Assessment:	
Research Quality	3.5 (good to very good)
Relevance to Society	3.5 (good to very good)
Viability	4 (very good)
Statutory Tasks	3.5 (good to very good)

### 4.1 Mission and organisation of WEcR

Wageningen Economic Research is one of the nine research institutes within Wageningen University & Research. WUR’s mission is to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life, in the fields of 1. Food, Feed and Biobased Production; 2. Natural Resources and Living environment; and 3. Society and Wellbeing.

WEcR is the institute for applied social and economic research. It contributes to WUR’s ambitions with sector and domain-specific knowledge, unique data and models and scenario analyses. WEcR’s mission is to improve quality of life by analysing and designing effective incentives and policies. The objective of the research is to support customers in enhancing their policy or strategy, thereby laying the foundation for ‘earning’ more value for customers and partners, the environment, citizens and society. WEcR’s work focuses on socioeconomic insights into pressing global challenges relating to food, nutrition and income security, climate change, biodiversity loss and societies’ health and wellbeing.

For WEcR collaboration with other parties, such as the government, businesses, civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is vital. This is in line with WURs strategic plan: Finding Answers Together.

## 4.2 Research Quality

The committee recognises that WEcR is not primarily focused on developing fundamental knowledge, but scientific excellence is of crucial importance to the institute. WEcR translates fundamental knowledge to insights that are applicable in practice. The committee has observed that scientific excellence is validated through publications in peer-reviewed journals. Producing insights that are applicable in practice requires to develop tools which are well-adapted to what is happening in practice. As the world is changing rapidly, so are the challenges faced by agriculture and food systems. The required transitions are not marginal but actual ruptures, and tools available in WEcR (mainly data and models) must be adapted to analyse and assess properly the impacts of such significant changes. Integrating innovations in data collection, generation of empirical evidence and in models requires effective translation of fundamental knowledge produced by the DSS of WU and by other groups of WUR. This requires increasing relationships between WEcR and DSS on the one hand and between WEcR and the other groups of WUR on the other hand. The committee acknowledges that progress has been made on each point since the last assessment, but there is still room for improvement within the institute.

### *Research output*

In the review period the number of refereed articles has increased by more than one third from 322 to 438 compared to the previous five-year period. While the average number of articles per year in the 2013-2017 period was 64, this has increased to about 75 in the 2018-2020 period and to above 100 over the last two years (2021-2022). The number of publications per full time employed (FTE) has also clearly increased though it is still low with respect to current standards in academic institutions. The committee noted that at WEcR only a limited number of researchers publish their research results in scientific journals. Others write non-refereed scientific reports that support the customers and help in new project acquisition processes. The committee concludes that, taking into account only the researchers who publish, the number of publications per year per researcher appears to be well above the current academic standards.

WEcR's actions included introducing a publication fund, a publication week, hiring more employees with PhDs, establishing a first special professorship, starting a joint PhD programme with WU-Department of Social Science and, explicitly steering on publications in the Knowledge Base (KB) programmes and within Horizon Europe projects. These actions have been effective and should be continued, or even expanded.

WEcR's self-assessment shows that the total citation impact (C) almost quadrupled from 2,525 in the 2012-2016 period to 10,303 in the 2017-2021 period, providing an indication of a sharply rising interest in WEcR's research output within the scientific community. The committee acknowledges this significant progress in the number of citations. However, that this reflects one to one the increased interest in WEcR research within the scientific community holds true only if publications are directed to the same segment of the scientific community over time. It is possible that the increase in citations partly results from the shift from economic journals to multidisciplinary journals, as the latter tend to attract significantly more citations. In such a case, the increase in the number of citations would not necessarily exclusively indicate an increase of interest in WEcR research but can partly be explained by a shift from one audience to another.

Upon reviewing the list of publications, the committee finds a predominance of publications in high-impact multidisciplinary journals (both, generalist publications such as Nature or PlosOne, as well as thematic journals focusing on areas such as food security, climate change, land use, and global environment studies). However, there appears to be a limited number of publications in leading economics journals or agricultural economics journals. This seems coherent with the focus of WEcR on translating fundamental knowledge into insights that are applicable in practice instead of focusing on the development of fundamental (agricultural) economic knowledge.

The committee finds the very few conference papers noticeable, because presenting papers in conferences is the first step in the process of publishing in peer-reviewed journals and might be especially valuable for younger researchers.

### *Recognition*

Work conducted by WEcR is recognised as scientifically sound and reliable. Beyond this it has a very good network. WEcR is highly recognised nationally and internationally for the main tools that it develops: data and models. New developments in data (Farm Sustainability Data Network), and models (Magnet Grids and FarmDyn) are relevant. They go one step further in linking economic values and relationships with biophysical flows. They integrate economic and environmental impacts in impact assessment work, which is coherent with the objective of WEcR towards an integrated approach for impact assessment.

Agricultural policy measures are continuously changing. Global challenges call for the assessment of impacts on all sustainability dimensions. Therefore, there is a continuous need for adapting and improving both data collection and extraction of empirical evidence and models.

WEcR is recommended to develop an explicit publication strategy, including which scientific audience has to be reached; what contribution to the debate is needed, which conferences must be attended and which journals targeted.

### *Model building*

The committee advises to improve the existing models: identify the main limits of the current specifications and data as regards the changes to be simulated and the impacts to be measured. MAGNET is now able to deal with economic impacts and GHG emissions. A first step has already been achieved with impacts on biodiversity. There is still a lot of to do at least in two directions: improve what already exists (representation of livestock production in MAGNET, computation of GHG emissions, linkages between farming practices and biodiversity, but also representation of new agricultural and environmental policy measures). WEcR is also advised to enlarge what already exists (integrate water, biodiversity, integrate human health related to diet, etc.). Data and models may be prepared to tackle disruptive changes. This requires innovative improvements to be jointly developed with Department of Social Sciences (DSS) at WU.

The committee found WEcR to possess an excellent knowledge base with respect to data, markets and models. The institute has a very good infrastructure to carry out this research leading to increased numbers of peer-reviewed, highly cited publications in top-level multidisciplinary journals.

In assessing WEcR's research, the committee found that the institute achieves a good to very good level.

### 4.3 Societal Relevance

WEcR has a strong position as an impartial and honest broker guided by fact-based high-quality scientific research. The golden triangle of data, modelling, and sector & domain expertise, also visualised in the WEcR strategy update 2022-2025, is unique and regarded of high value. By leveraging these key capabilities WEcR enables their stakeholders to make impact. There is a strong appreciation for WEcR's high expertise on data, models & knowledge and providing applied research. WEcR is internationally acknowledged for its way of working and its very high standard is underscored by many stakeholders. This includes its flexibility on crisis management and support, and delivering results in time. For example, support in the process of the "Landbouwakkoord" was specifically mentioned as a key achievement. The attention span is very broad and the area impact is difficult to determine. WEcR's fact-based and down-to-earth mentality is much appreciated, especially in societal debates that are more heated and / or are polarized. The knowledge contributes to the improvement of development programmes, helping monitor sustainability and analyse the circular and bio-based economy, including the sustainable use of land and seas. Given that WEcR is an enabler, accurately determining and specifying its impact is challenging, as its impact is of an indirect nature.

WEcR has been able to create flexibility in their work to help the government with several crises that occurred over the last few years (e.g. Covid-19, Ukraine War).

Since the last review seven theme ambassadors (senior staff) were appointed, each with a specific thematic focus and a strong network, enabling the organisation to better grasp the needs of key customers and 'translate' these to programmes and projects. In addition, they have been active on social media and in traditional media, in meetings with customers, NGOs and civil society. This has been a step in creating more focus and visibility. It is in addition a good way of getting relevant information to the outside world thereby complementing research publication.

### *One Wageningen*

WEcR's collaboration with the WU is growing, yet there is a need to better formalize this cooperation. The appointment of a special professor has been proven successful in increasing the collaboration between the university and the research institute. However, personnel experience challenges related to differing business models and cultural disparities hinder effective collaboration with WU.

WEcR expressed the view that the three units of the Social Sciences Group work together where possible. In the self-assessment WEcR also expresses the necessity to cooperate with other disciplines, such as natural and environmental sciences to guide and establish the necessary system transitions and to tackle pressing global challenges. This collaboration is not formalized.

It is interesting to note that the differentiation between WU and WR is unknown to outside stakeholders. 'Wageningen' is one brand. Impact and reputation management should take this into account. As already indicated by the previous review committee, impartiality of WEcR/WUR is key. All stakeholders acknowledged this as the most important reason for customers to choose for WUR. It is a unique feature, but also something to be managed closely and secured. WEcR is advised to be transparent about all the processes in place that guard its neutrality, both at the front as at the end. These processes need to be formalized and go beyond the training as described in the self-assessment.

### *Impact*

To better claim its impact, WEcR is advised to be more specific on which topics WEcR wants to make a difference. The last years the research topics broadened and this was identified as a risk of losing focus. The seven themes identified in the strategy update 2022-2025 enabling "Fostering socio-economic transitions in the agrifood domain" are broad and overarching. Defining a few "impact themes" would bring focus. Especially on societal debates that are more polarized, WEcR could make a difference and guide the discussions fact-based.

WEcR is advised to continue strengthening its collaboration with the WU-department of social science. Both have key strengths that, when combined, could have added value. Steps on integration have been made by the new professorship. The potential to get more researchers involved in high level publications and more effective translation of fundamental knowledge into insights/tools for applied

research needs to be explored. It is recommended to further invest in the integration, thereby enhancing the knowledge of the university and at the same time the university improving the work and expertise of WEcR. This could also ease publication, as those could be done jointly.

Aside from collaboration with WU, it is also recommended to ensure collaboration with other research institutes, like RIVM and PBL or research groups at other universities. This could also help with remaining the focus on certain chosen topics within WEcR.

In assessing WEcR's societal relevance, the committee found that the institute achieves a good to very good level.

#### 4.4 Viability

The committee found the excellent reputation of the institute to set a solid basis for its future viability. This is also revealed by a very good infrastructure with respect to data and models.

In terms of HRM there have been marked improvements in the personnel age balance (with a positive impact from the trainee program), and in academic training (supporting and supervising PhD candidates). Some gaps were identified with respect to middle age staff and regarding the diversity of the staff. To further future proof the organisation WEcR should focus on attracting young/middle age and diverse talents. The trainee program is a good initiative and activities along these lines are recommended. The renewal of senior researchers and project leaders, as well as modelling expertise, must be secured.

Currently 54% of the yearly income of WEcR is coming from the Ministry of Economic Affairs/LNV. There has been an improvement in the diversification of the funding base, though there remains a high dependence on the Ministry of Agriculture. On an operational level, WEcR has expressed a need to become more resilient in terms of diversification of funding sources. Since the last review the commercial activities have been increased. WEcR is recommended to organize its income model in such a way to guarantee and show independence. For this it is essential to have a part of the budget ring-fenced for funding knowledge base research. EU Research Funding needs to be incentivized. High overheads are a threat for engaging in more EU projects and might endanger future development. Overheads should not be taken for granted, but efficiency analysis should be done at the level of the institution, and the prospects for access to central funding assessed.

WEcR is advised to invest in securing and extending its data and models base to cover new challenges regarding dimensions (social, ecological), chain levels (processing industry, retail level, consumers), and production methods (ecological farming).

WEcR is recommended to install account management including targets to optimize the WUR customer journey. Programme management and coordination of bigger programmes is an area of attention. WEcR is advised to closely monitor the quality of the project management as this is potentially an image risk.

WEcR is advised to foster the integration with the DSS at WU further by joint positions at WU and WEcR, special short-time sabbaticals, and securing again a professor as director of the WUR SSG.

Investing in stronger co-operation is warranted. Fostering socio-economic transition in the agrifood domain is linked to many challenges that are too big and cannot be solved by one institution (silo thinking is not sufficient).

Given WEcR's scientific reputation and very good infrastructure with respect to data and models, the institute has an excellent basis for the future. In assessing WEcR's viability, the committee found that the institute achieves a very good level.

#### 4.5 Statutory Tasks

WEcR's statutory task is carried out by the Centre for Economic Information (CEI), which fulfils national and international obligations, imposed by the Dutch Government, for Eurostat, the European Commission DG-Agri, European Commission DG-Mare, OECD, FAO and others.

CEI's strategy and policy are separate from WEcR, as stated in the ISO-certified quality management system in order to avoid conflicts of interest between the public task and WEcR's commercial interests. The statutory tasks – 'WOT' in Dutch - are independent programme units. There are six WOT units within Wageningen. The heads of the WOT Units report directly to the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and to the WOT coordinator on the WUR Executive Board. WEcR employees conduct activities for two WOT Units: the WOT Economic Information and the WOT Nature and Environment.

The WOT Economic Information (WOT-EI) collects and disseminates data and statistics on the economic and sustainability performance of Dutch agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and forestry. The basis for the WOT-EI is provided by the EU, which requires Member States to monitor the economic and sustainability performance of these sectors.

The WOT Nature & Environment (WOT N&M) ensures expertise and a reliable implementation of statutory research tasks in the policy area of nature and the environment. The WOT N&M's ambition is to identify scientific knowledge and, together with partners, to further develop and apply that knowledge. This involves knowledge of the physical environment, its interaction with the socioeconomic environment and its effects on people, nature and the environment.

The basis of the agreement between WOT Economic Information and WEcR is the WOT contract that was signed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food

Quality and the WR foundation. This contract has recently been renewed for the 2023-2027 period. The WOT contract outlines the tasks to be performed and the conditions under which they must be carried out in order to ensure independence. All WOT activities within WEcR are identified and managed accordingly. The responsibility for ensuring the availability and quality of researchers required to carry out the WOT tasks lies with WEcR.

The projects for WOT Economic Information are conducted by project leaders and staff from the different research groups.

From the interviews with the head of CEI's WOT-units and representatives of the ministry, the committee concluded that WEcR's statutory tasks are accomplished in a good to very good manner.

#### 4.6 Recommendations

From the above assessment of WEcR, the following recommendations may be summarized.

1. WEcR's actions with respect to research output in publications have been effective and should be expanded.
2. WEcR is recommended to develop an explicit publication strategy, including on the scientific audience that should be reached, which conferences should be attended, which journals should be targeted, and what contribution to the debate is needed.
3. The committee advises WEcR to continuously improve existing models and go further in integrating existing models. This will require innovative improvements to be jointly developed with the WU department of social sciences.
4. WEcR is advised to continue strengthening its relations with the WU (SSG and other Groups) and other research institutes like RIVM, PBL and with research groups at other universities. Many challenges are too big and complex to be solved by a single institute.
5. WEcR is advised to be transparent about all the processes in place that guard its impartiality and independence.
6. WEcR is advised to attract more young, middle aged and diverse researchers in continuance of the already made improvements.
7. WEcR is recommended to organize its income model to become more resilient and independent in its funding sources.



8. WEcR is advised to install account management and optimize the customer journey. Programme management and coordination are in need of closer monitoring. A professor as manager of the WUR SSG is recommended.

## 5 Social Sciences Wageningen Research Institute

### 5.1 Introduction

The Social Sciences Group (SSG) of Wageningen University & Research is one of the five science groups within WUR and includes the DSS and the two research institutes, WCDI and WEcR:

- Wageningen University Department of Social Sciences (WU-DSS) focuses on fundamental research and the education of students and training of PhD candidates (about 500 FTE).
- Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR) conducts applied contract research (increased from 240 FTE in 2018 to 286 FTE in 2022).
- Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) focuses on putting knowledge into action (increased from 61 FTE in 2018 to 82 FTE in 2022).

Where possible, the three units of the Social Sciences Group work together, and their back office is integrated. The SSG of WUR sets agendas and promotes transformational change in the socio-economic domain. Societal transitions can only be achieved by changing key social, economic and environmental drivers, including the re-design of institutions and interventions in order to influence the behaviour of individuals. The ambition of SSG is to contribute to these changes through:

- Developing a better disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary understanding of the social, economic, political and communicative dynamics that produce global challenges or facilitate change.
- Offering guidance and decision support to policymakers and practitioners.
- Enhancing critical reflection and capacity development in society.
- Educating BSc, MSc and PhD students and professionals to be able to contribute to these topics.

At the start of 2022, prompted by the SSG Management Board of WUR, WCDI and WEcR began examining potential synergies between the two research institutes. Strategically, this initiative aimed to bolster WUR's socio-economic research capabilities, balancing its predominant focus on technology and biophysics by strengthening societal issues. Operationally, both WCDI and WEcR sought greater resilience through diversified funding sources.

In the international arena, particularly in food systems transformation and impact evaluation projects in low and middle-income countries, staff from both institutes collaborated extensively but sought stronger alignment on a Global South agenda. Various collaboration scenarios were explored, leading the SSG Management Board and the WCDI and WEcR Business Unit Managers to conclude that merging the two research institutes into a single Wageningen Social Economic Research Institute would yield significant advantages, despite the challenge of integrating different organizational cultures.

The committee was asked to review the challenges of this integration process of the two institutes by focusing on the following questions:

1. What are your specific considerations and/or attention points in merging WCDI and WEcR into one social sciences institute?
2. Do you have specific recommendations for the organisation of the institute and management of the domain of the Global South?
3. Do you have specific recommendations for the organisation of the institute and management of the Dutch and EU domain?
4. Do you have specific (culture-related) recommendations on the integration process?

In the following paragraphs, the committee presents its findings with respect to these questions.

## 5.2 Prospects for a Social Sciences Research Institute

In the interviews and internal discussions, the committee has tried to assess the viability of an integrated SSRI by concentrating on three aspects:

1. accomplishing a unified vision for the present two institutes;
2. use the knowledge strength of the two institutes; and
3. co-create and transfer the contextually relevant knowledge.

The potential of a unified vision depends on the compatibility of the profiles of the two institutes. Despite the risk of oversimplification, the profile of the two institutes was presented to the committee schematically as reflected by a “data vs processes” representation. This has the potential to induce tensions while it also has the potential to harvest synergies. It will be important for the management of the SSRI to secure the latter, more specifically, that SSRI benefits from the different expertise of members of WCDI and WEcR.

Both institutes have a solid and well-respected basis upon which to develop synergies. This refers despite some overlap to different expertise with respect to methods (WEcR data driven quantitative modelling, WCDI qualitative based research) and geography (WEcR Global North, WCDI Global South). Making use of these different strengths can lead to a strategic advantage to address pressing global challenges relating to issues such as food and income security, climate change and biodiversity loss. While already today common themes between WCDI and WEcR are present, they are not clearly spelled out. The committee sees that as important, and understands that in the process of the merger an integrated agenda setting is envisaged.

The co-creation and transfer of contextually relevant knowledge seems a challenge. The committee identified the need for prioritisation of non-statutory tasks to avoid resource overstretching. The linking of “data” to “processes” should include local capacities especially when considering the Global South.

A clear common vision for the SSRI is essential. Despite the difficulties in achieving this, developing such a vision could be facilitated by relying on holistic approaches in addressing the challenges stemming from the three dimensions of sustainability – environmental, social and economic – while considering the valuable complementary experience and expertise both institutes can offer in these areas.

Considering the assessments of both institutes WCDI and WEcR and the discussions on the potential of the merger, the committee assesses the viability of a social sciences institute to be good.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations can be considered as broad guidance that could assist in addressing the challenges and exploiting the opportunities of integrating the two institutes into a common management structure:

1. Harmonise the strategy approach of both institutes to clearly spell out a common vision of SSRI aligned with the overall WUR vision.
2. Clearly identify common themes to build upon future strategies in specific areas of Food Systems.
3. Develop a common culture by focusing on complementarities of strengths in “data and processes” with a focus on context relevance and sustainable local impacts.

## 6 Annex 1 Research data

### 1. WCDI

#### a. Personnel (# / FTE)

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Management team	4	2	2	2
Scientific staff	44	50	56	57
Learning & project support	28	28	20	25
Total WCDI	76	80	78	85
Staff departments	14	15	13	17
Total staff	90	95	91	102
Total staff (FTE)	75	79	82	82

#### b. Funding

Funding (k€):	2019	2020	2021	2022
Public funding	1.454	900	509	220
Other public funding	12.059	8.407	11.827	13.345
Top sector policy	35	112	14	2
Private funding	286	134	50	331
Internal funding WUR	206	-149	-35	-310
Total EUR	14.040	9.404	12.365	13.588

### 2. WEcR

#### a. Personnel (# / FTE)

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Senior researcher	71	73	77	82	73
Researcher.	78	78	76	81	97
Research assistant	68	71	85	74	90
Total research staff	217	222	238	237	260
Supporting staff	42	37	39	62	55
Management	19	19	20	20	20
Total staff	278	268	297	319	335
Total staff (FTE)	239	238	266	265	286

**b. Funding**

Funding (k€):	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Public funding	15.647	16.713	16.540	17.812	18.945
Other public funding	4.287	3.846	4.195	3.768	4.422
Top sector policy	3.312	4.167	5.577	4.030	3.699
Private funding	6.639	4.817	5.486	6.197	5.609
Internal funding WUR	1.470	1.655	779	1.607	2.619
Total EUR	31.355	31.198	32.577	33.414	35.294

## 7 Annex 2 Terms of Reference and criteria

(Source: Protocol for the monitoring and evaluation of applied research institutes, 2020)

### 7.1 Key evaluation criteria and sub criteria

Key criteria	Elements to be considered Sub criteria
<p><i>Research quality</i></p> <p>This criterion reflects the research quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as it is perceived in the professional eyes of its peers and competitors (scientific quality).</li> <li>• as it is appreciated by clients for usefulness and reliability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific quality</li> <li>• Output</li> <li>• Knowledge / experience / training</li> <li>• Esteem / authority / visibility</li> <li>• Strategic choices / targets</li> <li>• Position / share in Topsector- and EU-research programmes and other renown competitive research programmes</li> <li>• Client satisfaction</li> <li>• Collaborations that add synergy / critical mass</li> <li>• Acquisition strength as appears from e.g. portfolio</li> <li>• Case studies that indicate the research strength</li> </ul>
<p>Societal and economic impact</p> <p>This criterion reflects the institute's impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as it appears from the knowledge utilisation by users. The evaluation is based on information about knowledge utilisation by various user groups (client questionnaires or interviews / surveys about knowledge utilisation).</li> <li>• as it appears from the efforts to promote knowledge utilisation by users. The evaluation is based on information about the actions that the WR institution undertakes to promote the utilisation of research results. The question about impact thus becomes a question about how the WR institution connects with which stakeholders. This concerns e.g. the organisation of demand-</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic relevance of research for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government (contribution to national policy / Topsectors)</li> <li>• Private industry</li> <li>• Economy (contribution to innovation agenda's etc.)</li> <li>• Public in general (contribution to social theme's in the national policy)</li> <li>• Customer orientation / knowledge utilisation</li> <li>• Role in public debate / opinion / agenda setting</li> <li>• (Inter)national visibility (EU-, Topsector-programmes etc.)</li> <li>• Successes in economic value creation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new business cases and start-ups</li> <li>- intellectual property</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Visibility in Steering committees / media</li> <li>• Volume and ratios of money flow</li> </ul>

<p>driven research for stakeholders, performing research in partnership with users, helping users to utilise the research results, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Customer relations in public and private arena</li> <li>● Collaborations with prominent knowledge institutions</li> <li>● Case studies (narratives) that support these indicators</li> </ul>
<p>Performance of statutory tasks This criterion reflects the overall performance of statutory tasks for the government, including support during incidents and crises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quality of statutory task performance (scientific soundness, quality of results, and timely reporting of results)</li> <li>● Overall organisation and efficiency in performing routine and specialized analytical tasks</li> <li>● Overall organisation and adequacy in supporting government policy</li> <li>● Quality and speed of support during incidents and crises</li> <li>● Adequate contingency plans (not always relevant)</li> <li>● Proactive renewal of the range of duties</li> <li>● viability</li> </ul>
<p>Viability of the organisation</p> <p>This criterion reflects the attractiveness of the institute’s activities towards its stakeholders and the feasibility of their strategic plans and business plans. It gives an indication of its competitive strength, the robustness of the institute and its continuity.</p> <p>It also reflects the institute’s abilities to operate in an efficient and effective way, supported by its management, leadership and skills of its employees.</p> <p>N.B. The market is a broad window that includes the total of customers. It includes the industrial clients but also governmental clients, NGO’s and in some cases the general public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Customer appreciation (in the past and expectations towards the future)</li> <li>● Strategic plan and marketing strategy (focus on needs of industry and general public)</li> <li>● Competitiveness</li> <li>● Strategic investments (strategic expertise (KB))</li> <li>● Innovative strength (through examples)</li> <li>● Order portfolio analysis / analysis of market segments / successes in Topsector-, EU-calls, bilateral contracts</li> <li>● Attention for critical mass and synergy</li> <li>● Collaboration (internal / external) especially with the counterparts within WUR</li> <li>● Quality of the SWOT (focus on portfolio, staff, facilities, business model / finances)</li> <li>● Organisation structure</li> <li>● Leadership</li> <li>● Skilled project-/programme-leaders</li> <li>● Human resource management, recruiting and retaining good personnel</li> </ul>



## 7.2 Key-criteria on a four-point scale

Score	1	2	3	4
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
Quality	The group's research has clear weaknesses and is insufficiently appreciated by its stakeholders.	The group's research shows some weaknesses but is generally of good quality. The research is respected by most stakeholders.	The group conducts good and respected research for its stakeholders.	The group conducts very good and highly respected research for its stakeholders. The research is highly respected world-wide.
Impact	The group is insufficiently connected to its stakeholders. Also the utilisation of its research products is insufficient. The strategic importance for the economy (or policy-making / agenda setting) is minimal.	The group has good connections to stakeholders in general but falls short on some aspects. Also the utilisation of its research products is generally good but falls short in certain places. The strategic importance of this knowledge utilisation for the Dutch and European economy and/or resolution of societal challenges is generally substantial, but not in all respects.	The group has good and substantial connections with its stakeholders. Its research is used by its stakeholders. The utilisation of its research products has strategic influence on the economy (or policy-making and agenda setting) in the Netherlands and Europe and / or is of great use for challenges that society has to face nowadays.	The group has very strong structural connections to stakeholder groups. Its research products are used on a large scale. The utilisation of the research products is of great strategic importance for the economy (or policy-making and agenda setting) in the Netherlands and Europe and / or is of great use for challenges that society has to face nowadays.

Score	1	2	3	4
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
Viability	<p>Group with significant weaknesses. Not well positioned and insufficiently equipped for the future. The strategy has clear deficiencies. Problem might be of internal (strategy, expertise) or external (market related) origin. Group is facing problems, caused by internal deficiencies. Management is responding not adequately. Decisions made on a rather ad hoc basis. Significant improvements are achievable.</p>	<p>The group has a good strategy in general but in certain parts there is room for improvement. The groups is generally well-positioned and well-equipped for the future, but shows some deficiencies. Not too innovative and not very competitive. In general the management do what is required and are not too exciting. Prerequisites for achieving good quality and impact in terms of finance and staff and facilities fall short on certain places.</p>	<p>Good group with strong focus and strategy and sufficient critical mass. Innovative and competitive. The group is well positioned and equipped for the future. The strategic plan is adequate and well thought out. It has not used all the opportunities yet and with a few adjustments its attractiveness will improve. Management is solid and stimulating. Nevertheless some improvements might be worthwhile considering in respect to finance, staff and / or facilities .</p>	<p>Very strong group with strong focus and strategy and sufficient critical mass. Very innovative and competitive. The group is very well positioned and equipped for the future. The institute is very attractive to its stakeholders. Good strong, proactive management. Decisions are correct and timely. The strategic plan is highly adequate and well-thought-out. Highly satisfied employees and staff. Prerequisites for optimal performance in terms of finance and staff and facilities are present.</p>

Score	1	2	3	4
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
Statutory tasks	Inadequate performance of tasks, as demonstrated by repeated complaints or deficiencies in output or testing methods Poor contingency plans with severe flaws.	Tasks are performed as agreed, and output meets the requirements. Contingency plans are adequate.	High level of service: high customer satisfaction and high level of anticipation of customer needs. Good solid testing methods. Contingency plans are reviewed regularly and exhibit no flaws.	Very high level of service and support, combined with high quality output and excellent customer satisfaction. New needs are anticipated and quickly met. Testing methods are developed to perfection and very advanced. Perfect contingency plans.

## 8 Annex 3 Programme site-visit WCDI and WEcR

Wageningen and The Hague, 5 - 8 November 2023

Sunday 5 November 2023		
16.00	Meeting between the chair and secretary of the committee	Tassos Haniotis, Liza Kozlowska
17.30	Drinks and dinner review committee and management SSG, MT WCDI, MT WEcR	Committee  Jack van der Vorst, Lisa van Bommel, Hedwig Brugman, Olaf Hietbrink, John ten Böhmer
19.30	First meeting committee (agreement on approach, allocation of roles, initial findings)	Committee
Monday 6 November 2023		
9.00	Welcome and opening by Rector Magnificus Arthur Mol	Committee  Arthur Mol, vice president WUR, rector magnificus Wageningen University Jack van der Vorst, Managing Director Social Sciences Group Lisa van Bommel, Director of Operations Social Sciences Group Hedwig Bruggeman, Business unit manager WCDI Olaf Hietbrink, Business Unit manager WEcR Ebru Cengiz, policy advisor at the Corporate Strategy Accounts department
9.30	Strategy/ Operations Organisation and strategy SSG WR (retrospective, future developments) Operations (staff departments) WCDI (positioning/ strategy) WEcR (positioning/ strategy)	Committee,  Jack van der Vorst, Managing Director Social Sciences Group Lisa van Bommel, Director of Operations Social Sciences Group Hedwig Bruggeman, Business unit manager WCDI Olaf Hietbrink, Business Unit manager WEcR Ebru Cengiz, policy advisor at the Corporate Strategy Accounts department

11.00	Internal reflection time for the committee including break	
11.45	<p>People development  Conversation with Director Operations, head HR, business unit manager and researchers</p>	<p>Committee  On behalf of WCDI and WEcR:  Lisa van Bommel, Director of Operations SSG  Nicole de Vries, a.i. Head of the SSG Human Resources department  Hedwig Bruggeman, Business unit manager WCDI  Gonne Beekman, Team leader Green Economy and Landuse  Titia Leutscher, Manager Organisation &amp; people development WEcR</p>
12.15	BREAK en walk on the campus (if possible) and to Radix	Committee and part of committee with WCDI focus
12.30-13.30u	<p>Researchers career conversations WCDI  Round table conversations with (young) researchers about career development (Including lunch)</p>	<p>Committee members WCDI-focus,  On behalf of WCDI:  Matthijs ter Beek, portfolio support group  Herman Snel, project manager Advisory staff  Eunice Likoko, policy advisor-Gender and Nutrition Advisory staff</p>
12.30-13.30	<p>Researchers career conversations WEcR  Round table conversations with (young) researchers about career development (Including lunch)</p>	<p>Committee members WEcR focus,  On behalf of WEcR:  Johanna Steketee, Staff member education/ research  Thijs de Lange, Research trainee  Nina de Roo, Advisor Dialogue processes and en science-society interaction in Food systems  Jop Woltjer, researcher performance and impact agro sectors  Adam Walker, researcher international policy  Maria Narranjo-Barrantes; researcher Green economy and Landuse  Gonne Beekman, team leader</p>

13h30	Scientific and research quality & WEcR Statutory tasks	
13.30 – 15.00	Scientific and research quality WCDI	<p>Committee members with WCDI focus</p> <p>Marion Herens (online), Food and Nutrition Security Expert Advisory staff Thirze Hermans, project leader advisory staff Kat Pittore, Advisor Food and Nutrition Security Advisory staff</p>
13.30 – 15.00	<p>Scientific and research quality WEcR</p> <p>Statutory Tasks WEcR Economic Information and Nature &amp; Environment</p>	<p>Committee members with WEcR focus</p> <p>On behalf of WEcR Hans van Meijl, chief economist WEcR Nico Polman, researcher green economy and Landuse Lan van Wassenauer, Senior Scientist Hans Vrolijk, head of the Statutory tasks Thomas Mattijssen, researcher</p>
15.00	Internal reflection time for the committee	
15.45	Relevance and impact of WCDI	<p>Committee members with WCDI focus</p> <p>On behalf of WCDI Abishkar Subedi, Senior Advisor, Genetic Resources and Seed Systems Irene Koomen, Senior Advisor Adaptive Agriculture Bram de Groote, Advisor sustainable Food systems Marianne van Dorp, Manager business development (MT member) Paul Heijmering, Manager education for professionals (MT member)</p>
15.45	Relevance and impact of WEcR	Committee members WEcR focus

		<p>On behalf of WEcR:  Arjen Daane, senior business developer  Willem Ruster business developer  Roel Jongeneel, Researcher International Policy  George Beers, Project manager Innovation- and Risk Management and Information Governance  Yuca Waarts, Senior researcher sustainable chain development</p>
17.15	Walk to Omnia building	
17.30	Key research/ knowledge development in the spotlight	<p>Committee</p> <p>On behalf of WCDI and WEcR:  Bart de Steenhuijsen Piters, Senior Researcher Food Systems / Food &amp; Nutrition Security  Herman Brouwer (online), Senior advisor Multi-stakeholder collaboration for food, agriculture and nature  Olaf Hietbrink, business unit manager WEcR  Hedwig Bruggeman, business unit manager WCDI</p>
18.00	Transfer to HDWB	
19.00-21.00	Dinner and deliberations committee members	Committee
<b>Tuesday 7 November 2023</b>		
9.00	Internal reflection committee	Committee
10.15	Transfer to The Hague - WTC	<p>Committee</p> <p>Jack van der Vorst,  Hedwig Bruggeman,  Olaf Hietbrink</p>
12.00	Key research/knowledge development in the spotlight (Including lunch)	<p>Whole committee</p> <p>WCDI (cornerstone products):  Yeray Saveedra Gonzalez:  Transforming sectors to address food systems goals</p>

		James Mulkerrins/Tossa Harding: Lifelong learning principles and practice  WEcR: Koen Boone (TSC) Hans van Oostenbrugge/Geert Hoekstra/Marloes Kraan (Sector/visserij)
13.00	Stakeholder conversations I WCDI International Organisations (live & online)	Committee members with WCDI focus  Jelmer van Veen (BuZa, confirmed) Erik Slingerland (BuZa, confirmed) Paula Schindeler (BuZa, confirmed) Pedro Garzon Delvaux, FAO Dhaka (uncertain) Arnoud Hamелеers IFAD Wilma van Esch (BuZa, confirmed)
13.00	Stakeholder conversations I WEcR LNV (live & online)	Committee members with WEcR focus  Gerty Horeman (ipv Ino) Tim Verhoef (strategie) Paul van Zijl (IGA/Stikstof) Arjen Doosje (IGA/Stikstof) Marcel van Raaij (EIA)
14.00	Stakeholder conversations II WCDI Dutch Government, organisations (live)	Committee members with WCDI focus  Rutger Groot, Director East West Seed Loren Motamedi RVO Andre de Jager, SNV
14.00	Stakeholder conversations II WEcR EU (live & online)	Committee members with WEcR focus  Sophie Helaine – (Head of Unit DG Agri/EU) (o) Giampiero Genovese (JRC/EU) (o)
15.00	Internal reflection time for the committee	
15.45	Stakeholder conversations III WCDI	Committee members with WCDI focus



		Ivo Demmers, Director NFP Petra Hamers OxfamNovib Marcel Senou UniBenin
15.45	Stakeholder conversations III WEcR	Committee members with WEcR focus  Hans Bogaard, FMO Albertine van Wolfswinkel Cargill Olivier Chartier Ecorys Brussel (o)
17.00	Internal reflection time for the committee	
18.00	Dinner, including positioning social and economic Research – narrative	Committee  Jack van der Vorst, Lisa van Bommel, Hedwig Bruggeman, Olaf Hietbrink
21.15	Transfer to Wageningen - HWB	
Wednesday 8 November		
9.00	Committee members discuss results and formulate draft conclusions	Committee
11.30	Share conclusions	Committee  Jack van der Vorst, Lisa van Bommel, Hedwig Bruggeman, Olaf Hietbrink
12.15- 13.00	Closing of the review in the presence of vice president WUR, management board SSG, MT WCDI, MT WEcR and presentation of the preliminary results	Committee  Arthur Mol, Jack van der Vorst, Lisa van Bommel, Hedwig Bruggeman, Olaf Hietbrink,  All colleagues WCDI and WEcR invited, hybrid meeting Online connection with WCDI and WEcR colleagues

## 9 List of abbreviations

AU	African Union
BDM	Business Development Manager
BHOS	"Buitenlandse handel en ontwikkelingssamenwerking" - Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
BSc	Bachelor of Science
BU	Business Unit
BO	"Beleidsondersteunend Onderzoek" – policy supporting research
CBD	Convention on Biodiversity
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CIAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
CIFOR	Centre for International Forestry research
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSA	Corporate Strategy & Accounts
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG	Directorate General
DG-INTPA	Directorate General International Partnerships
DGIS	"Directeur-generaal internationale samenwerking" – Department of International Collaboration
DSS	Department of Social Sciences
ENSP	Ethiopia-Netherlands Seed Partnership
EKN	embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
EZK	"Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat" – Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate
F&C	Finance & Control
F2F	Face-to-face
FAO	Food and Agriculture organization
FLL	Fostering lifelong learning
FSC	Facilitating Stakeholder Collaboration
FTE	Full-time equivalent
FWCI	Field-weighted citation impact
GAIN	Global alliance to improve nutrition
GIZ	"Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit"- German Development Agency
HC	Head count
HEAT	Hostile Environment Awareness Training
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IFAD	International fund for agricultural development
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IFPRI	International food policy research institute
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KB	Knowledge Base – Funds for WUR, provided by LNV, to maintain a solid knowledge base in the policy domains of LNV.
KIT	"Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen" - Royal Tropical Institute
KM	Knowledge Manager
KSG	Knowledge support group
LMIC	low and middle-income countries
LNV	"Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit" – Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
LO	Liaison Office
LPS	Learning & Project Support

M&C	Marketing & Communication
M4SDI	Management for Sustainable Development Impact
ME&L	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSc	Master of Science
MSP	Multi stakeholder partnerships
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MT	Management team
NFP	Netherlands Food Partnership
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NL	Netherlands
NUFFIC	Netherlands Universities Foundation For International Cooperation
NWO	"Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek" – Dutch Research Council
OKP	Orange Knowledge programme
PhD	Doctoral degree
RVO	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SNV	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation
SSG	Social Science group
SWRE	Stichting Wageningen Research Ethiopia
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TKI	"Topconsortia voor Kennis en Innovatie" – Topconsortia for Knowledge and Innovation
TO2	Federation of Dutch applied research institutes
ToC	Theory of change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework on Climate Change Conference
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
VAT	Value Added Tax
VP	Value proposition
WA	Wageningen Academy: develops programmes and organizes courses for professionals from business and government
WB	World Bank
WCDI	Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation
WEcR	Wageningen Economic Research
WEnR	Wageningen Environmental Research
WOT	"Wettelijke onderzoekstaken" – Legal Research Tasks
WPR	Wageningen Plant Research
WU	Wageningen University
WUR	Wageningen University & Research
WR	Wageningen Research

Secretarial support  
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