

Your Majesty, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome in Wageningen, in this beautiful lecture room of our new teaching building Orion. Great to be here with so many. A very special welcome to you, Your Majesty. We are extremely pleased and honored to have you with us today. It is the first and probably only time that we asked for the Princess and received the Queen. Fantastic. Also a special welcome to our keynote speakers, Mr Henk Kamp, Minister of Economic Affairs, and Mr Jason Clay, Senior Vice-President Market Transformation of the World Wildlife Fund.

The theme of this year's opening is *Responsible Growth*. Economic growth is important to improve people's prosperity and realize a better quality of life. Food & agri is an important growth area, as the demand for food will strongly increase in the coming decades, especially for animal protein. At the same time, the impact of the production on natural resources and the environment should be minimized. *More with Less*, so to speak. For that, productivity and efficiency is key. And that is exactly what the Dutch sector is good at and known for and for what we are being asked to collaborate from all over the world. Therefore, I have chosen this time to highlight our international activities. These activities require much hard work from many people. Work that is not always visible to everyone and, therefore, easily overlooked. Work that altogether made up almost 80 million euros of our total turnover of 660 million last year.

Let me start with the EU, where we are active in more than 450 projects in the FP7 funding program, the highest number of all in the Netherlands. Last year it brought in over 40-million euro project money. These projects are typically carried out with partners from 5 to 10 countries, offering an excellent opportunity to strengthen our network. With one such a partner, the University of Hohenheim, we extended our mutual collaboration during the Royal State Visit to Germany, just before summer. An example of an extensive network is the so-called KIC, Knowledge & Innovation Communities, focusing on the application and valorization of knowledge. We as Wageningen UR participate in the community on climate change, Europe's largest public-private innovation partnership. A KIC on food is in progress. The EU has also funds for joint teaching programs and for outstanding individuals. Last year it was Professor Fons Stams from our Microbiology Lab, who received the prestigious Advanced Research Grant of 2.5 million euros for his excellent scientific work. This all makes us well prepared for the upcoming Horizon 2020 funding program, supported also by the top-sector policy of Minister Kamp.

Worldwide we have projects running in over 90 countries. Most of them have been initiated and are run by individual professors and researchers, and focus primarily on the development of knowledge. Based on this network we are building up a growing number of joint initiatives that focus on the implementation. For us an important growth area, especially for our applied institutes, and together with private industry, this is a growing export market for our economy. These are the initiatives for which we have people on the spot to participate in the local developments and establish long-term relationships.

The first one to mention in this regard is in Chile, and concerns a Centre of Excellence in Food. This center is aimed at improving the quality and valorization of important Chilean products, such as fruit, vegetables and fish. We run the center and participate in the projects. The center started in 2012 with a 30-million euro program and is well underway. The foundation for this initiative was laid in 2009 during the State Visit of the then President Bachelet.

The second one to bring to attention is China. Here we have had projects running for already many years. In the past few years, the demand has increased considerably, as China's number one priority is food security and food safety. Two years ago we received the Mayor of Beijing, thanks also to the Mayor of Amsterdam, whose visit has led to an agreement on a 15-million euro program. The first project in this program focuses on the dairy sector and is about to be signed by Beijing city, the Chinese Agricultural University, Royal Friesland-Campina and us. Another project is the joint Sino Europe Agricultural Development Center in Fujian Province, focusing on applied research, and located at the Wageningen Road. And later this month we will sign an agreement with the CHIC Group in Shanghai on providing training courses for the private industry through our Wageningen Academy.

The next example is based in the US and called The Sustainability Consortium. This market-driven initiative was started some years ago by Walmart and now includes 80 leading international food and non-food companies, including companies from the Netherlands such as Ahold, DSM and Unilever. The initiative aims at improving the sustainability of consumer goods, based on scientific knowledge through the Life Cycle Analysis approach. It was ranked last year in the US top-10 of world changing ideas. We lead the European office, which was opened in 2011 by Queen Máxima. WWF is also participating.

Another area of expansion is Eastern Europe, where we are active in the Russian Federation and, more recently, also in Turkey. These countries have in common a big internal market and increased interest from the private industry to invest in food & agri. They often have an infrastructure in place, but lack the knowledge and experience in the domain and therefore are far behind our productivity levels and quality standards. That is why we focus here on education and training and on very practical management support.

And then there is Africa, the continent with which we have a long-standing and extensive relationship. Each year we teach hundreds of African students in Wageningen and we have a large number of projects running on location. Traditionally these projects were funded by government agencies, but for some years the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has become a big sponsor and more recently private donors from the Netherlands stepped in. For the latter we owe many thanks to the Wageningen Ambassadors, our prominent alumni, who initiated the Africa Agribusiness Academy. They were able to raise two million euros for this project, which was kindly doubled by the Dutch government. The initiative especially supports entrepreneurship and acts as a training center, a network association and a database of best practices. The ambition is to grow into an academy with over 3000 active members in 15 African countries.

Let me finish this tour around the world in Singapore, where we made a start to establish our first official university teaching program abroad, in close collaboration with Nanyang Technological University. This program starts next year in food technology and if successful, will be extended. The official agreement was signed during the Royal State Visit in January.

Your Majesty, ladies and gentlemen, these examples show that food & agri is an enormous growth area worldwide and a strong pillar for the Dutch economy. This makes it all the more important to continue developing our knowledge and our food & agri sector in the Netherlands. New technologies such as genomics and precision agriculture offer tremendous opportunities to further realize *More with Less* and by this remain a leading and attractive partner in the future.

Considering that future, we are extremely pleased and proud that so many young people are interested in our domain. In our BSc-program we have 20% more new students starting today than last year. The highest increase of all universities in the Netherlands. Together with the new MSc-students, among whom many from abroad, this leads to a record-high enrolment of 2500 students. We are also pleased and proud that the students valued us again as the best university of the Netherlands, eight years in a row now. Quality is key in our approach. That is why we recently asked for a numerus fixus, the first time after more than 30 years. We did that for Nutrition & Health, our biggest and fast growing BSc-program. This gives us the opportunity to regulate the future enrolment at a well-balanced level.

And finally, the governance of our organization. Today we bid a formal farewell to Margreth de Boer, who joined our Supervisory Board eight years ago and chaired it for the past six years. We owe her many thanks for all the time and effort to help guide us into the right direction. Best wishes also to Job Cohen, who has taken over her position since yesterday, and to the other members of the Supervisory Board. We trust to continue the good collaboration.

In the Executive Board, both Tijs Breukink and Martin Kropff have recently been re-appointed for a third term of 4 years, starting October 1. I myself will finish my third term on March 1 next year. A good moment to step back and hand over the baton to someone else. I am going to concentrate on my running advisory and supervisory boards and hope to add a few more activities.

Therefore, Your Majesty, ladies and gentlemen, it is for the last time in my current position that I would like to wish our staff and students another successful year and declare the academic year 2013-2014 open.

Dr. Aalt A. Dijkhuizen
President & Chairman of Wageningen UR
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