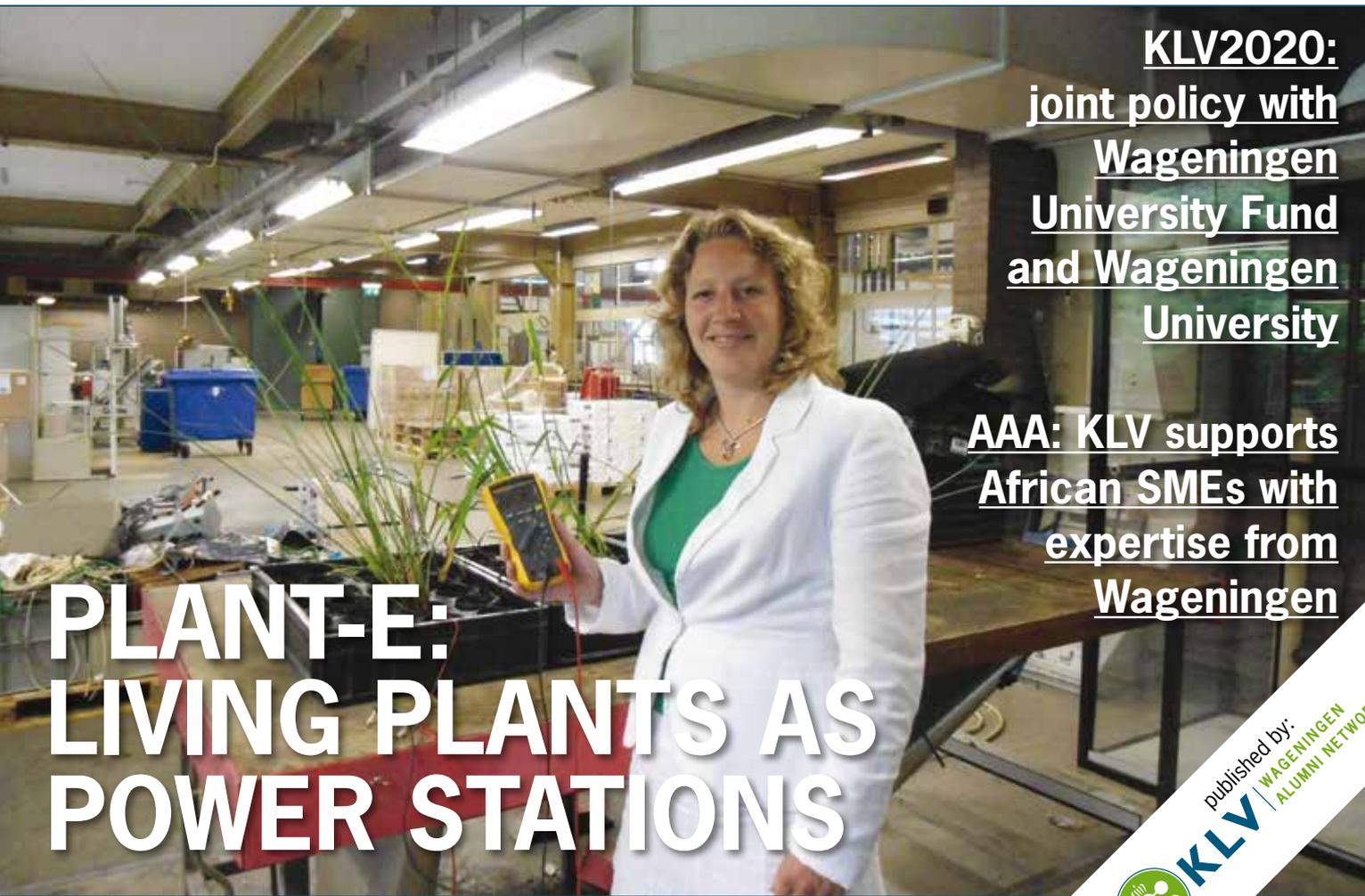


KLV UPDATE

number 3 | August 2013



KLV2020:
joint policy with
Wageningen
University Fund
and Wageningen
University

AAA: KLV supports
African SMEs with
expertise from
Wageningen

**PLANT-E:
LIVING PLANTS AS
POWER STATIONS**



Published by:
KLV | WAGENINGEN
ALUMNI NETWORK

COLUMN

The Crown on our name

During or shortly after the First World War the Genootschap voor Landbouwwetenschap [Society for Agricultural Sciences], one KLV's predecessors, became the 'Koninklijk Genootschap voor Landbouwwetenschap' [Royal Society for Agricultural Sciences] (KGvL). This honourable designation is only awarded to societies and associations that have made a special contribution to Dutch society.

At the time, a society was a club of respectable grey-haired men. However, over the course of time the KGvL developed into an association of and for agricultural scientists within which various scientific study groups operated. In the 1980s the KGvL merged with the Netherlands Institute for Agricultural Engineers (NILI), which in terms of character was more like a trade union for Wageningen alumni. With the approval of the then Queen the royal designation was retained in the new name: Koninklijke Landbouwkundige Vereniging [Royal Agricultural Association] (KLV).

Since 2009, KLV has not used its full name as that no longer accurately reflects the association's activities. Instead the acronym KLV has served as the official name with the addition 'Wageningen Alumni Network'. The royal designation has therefore disappeared from the name and I regret that. This is not due to any particular passion for our royal family but rather because the royal designation is the highest general national recognition that can be awarded in the Netherlands to an association or company.

The Royal Dutch Football Association does use its full name, just like many other Royal Associations. And rightly so in my opinion. You are quite entitled to proudly display an accolade, and if the rest of the name no longer accurately describes the association's activities then we should change the name instead of hiding our history behind an acronym. For example, why don't we call ourselves Koninklijke Landbouwwetenschappelijke Vereniging [Royal Association for the Agricultural Sciences] (also abbreviated as KLV), or Koninklijke Vereniging voor de Life Sciences [Royal Association for the Life Sciences]?

Whatever the outcome, we should not throw out the crown with the bathwater. Instead we should cherish the royal designation that the K in our name denotes. It is a historic honorary title that we should openly display with suitable pride, independent of every political conviction or desire!

Bram Steiner

Honorary member of the 'Koninklijke Landbouwkundige Vereniging'

Photo: Marjet van Veelen



COLOFON

KLV Update is the magazine of KLV Wageningen Alumni Network, the Wageningen Alumni Association, which has been fostering contacts between its members and with the university since 1886. We want our role to be that of a lively meeting forum, both face to face and online. The advantages of KLV membership include:

- a way of keeping up to date about Wageningen's fields of interest
- a professional network
- a link with Wageningen

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You can cancel your membership in writing (address: KLV Membership Administration, Pastoor Buyslaan 25, 2242 RJ Wassenaar) until 1 December of the current year. After 1 December, your membership will be automatically renewed for the next year.

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AAA links Wageningen alumni and African entrepreneurs



Honey production in Uganda.
Photo: Karama Farid

How to feed our world? That was the key question during KLV's jubilee year in 2011. The Africa Agribusiness Academy (AAA) definitely has ideas about this. During the jubilee conference KLV decided to commit itself to the project. Time for an update.

AAA was established in 2009 by a group of entrepreneurs from African SMEs in the agrifood sector. Through their direct links with small farmers they make a contribution towards improving rural incomes and food security. The aim is to encourage their

own entrepreneurship and where specific knowledge questions arise, external expertise is 'flown in'. Via KLV, Wageningen alumni in the fields of agriculture and food technology are now being added to this pool of coaches.

Bram Huijsman, chair of AAA: "KLV is ideally placed to bring together expertise around questions such as: how can you improve the processing of agricultural products and how can you ensure successful branding? We want to link a group of African entrepreneurs

to Wageningen alumni who share their knowledge on a voluntary basis. As these are market-oriented projects we also want to involve market parties in Africa and Europe." Two pilot projects are currently underway: one is about the marketing of honey and another about crop seeds. These are highly successful. AAA has just realised the funding for an ambitious plan to set up a pan-African Academy in a network of 15 countries. Half of the funds for this are coming from the African entrepreneurs. Ethiopia is currently preparing for this. Furthermore, there are plans for a resource centre, training courses and the provision of services.

"AAA focuses on SMEs and that is unique," says Huijsman. "The entrepreneurs especially value business coaching and networking with each other. KLV also found this an inspiring idea. It is a genuine bottom-up story: entrepreneurs teach other entrepreneurs to do business better and invest their own energy, money and time in this. We are now jointly setting up the Academy but ultimately its future is in their hands."

Within the trio, clearly KLV has its own colour. As an independent association, KLV could provide opportunities for public debate, for example. On the other hand it could be argued that tasks such as maintaining an alumni database or carrying out employment market research ought to be the university's responsibility.

Over the next six months a workgroup drawn from the three organisations will further shape the collaboration and we re-define and connect the target groups.

Update KLV2020

JOINT ALUMNI POLICY TO BE REALISED

In the strategy project KLV2020, KLV is thinking about the future. KLV is doing that in consultation with the alumni office of Wageningen University and the Wageningen University Fund that focus on the same target group. How can we strengthen each other, where do each party's unique qualities lie and how we can better match the profiles with each other?

Spotlight on a startup business

PLANT-E: PLANTS AS POWER STATIONS

Marjolein Helder is co-founder and director of Plant-e, a spin-off of the Department of Environmental Technology of Wageningen University that develops applications to generate electricity using living plants. She is also a member of KLV's board.

Generating electricity from living plants? Can you explain this?

“Through photosynthesis plants produce organic matter. The excess part of this production is excreted via their roots. The technology of Plant-e is based on a process in which bacteria convert that organic matter. During this electrons are released that you can ‘harvest’ as electricity with the help of electrodes. Therefore in principle you can generate sustainable electricity at any location where plants can grow. It is a self-sufficient system; nothing else is needed. As long as the plants live the technology continues to work. The principle worked right from the start even though the technology can of course be improved and made more efficient. The system is already more efficient than biomass fermentation, for example.”

How did Plant-e develop?

“I have always been active outside of my research. For the predecessor of StartLife I organised courses in the area of entrepreneurship during which you drew up a business case in one week and then presented it

to a jury. When I took part myself we ended up asking ourselves: why don't we simply do it now? Then things took off really fast. Back in 2009, in the early stages of my PhD, we set up Plant-e. For me the combination researcher - entrepreneur worked really well: it keeps you on your toes and ensures that your research remains focused on the practical application.”

Where does your ambition come from?

“I'm a roll-up-your-sleeves type. I want to do something tangible and useful that contributes to a more sustainable world. Doing research for research's sake is simply not me. Right from the start it was the intention that a spin-off company would emerge from the research to market the technology. One of the reasons why they chose me is that I have always had an affinity with entrepreneurship.”

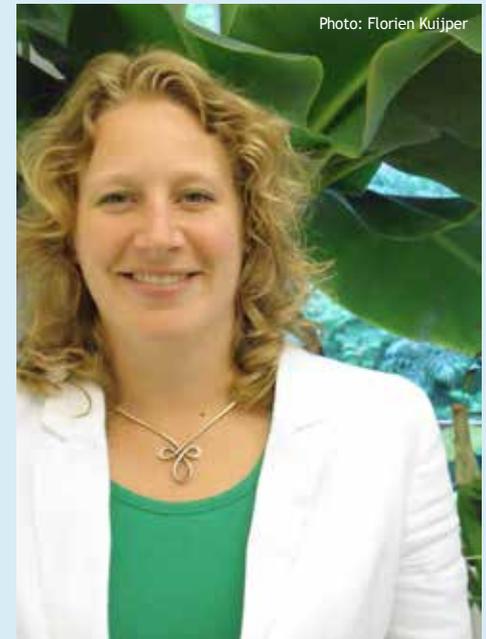
What are you proud of?

“We have already made considerable progress with the development of a green roof that can generate electricity. Just 100 m² of green roof can generate 80% of the electricity an average household needs. Furthermore it looks good, insulates the building and contributes to biodiversity. A 15 m² pilot is running on the roof of the NIOO building and together with the construction sector we are now developing that further. We recently had a stand at a real estate trade fair

and we have won the sustainable innovator pitch of the Dutch green building council.”

What would you still like to achieve?

“Our dream is nature areas that function as power stations. Next year we are starting with pilots in Friesland and Gelderland. We are developing a system of tubes with integrated electrodes that we can insert horizontally into the ground so that the top layer remains intact. The system has an enormous potential: electricity can be generated anywhere on the boundary between land and water. Examples are mangrove forests, rice fields, and the Amazon area. These are natural areas with an intrinsic value to which an economic value can also be added using our technology.”



ACTIVITIES

Unless stated otherwise, please refer to the klv.nl calendar for further details and registration.

SEPTEMBER 2013

FRI 13

Kennisnetwerk Milieu - Lecture - Nanotechnology in the environment
1st lecture on 'Hot topics in environmental quality'. More info: kennisnetwerkmilieu.nl

SAT 14

33th Veluwe run. More info: veluweloop.nl

THU 19

KLV & StartLife - Wageningen Business Cafe

WED 25

Dutch Association of Tropical Forests - Seminar - People first in tropical forests? Are we on the right track?

FRI 27

Kennisnetwerk Milieu - Lecture - DNA in the Dutch delta
2nd lecture on 'Hot topics in environmental quality'. More info: kennisnetwerkmilieu.nl

OCTOBER 2013

THU 03

VWI - King's Castle: debate with leading men on female talent at Wageningen UR

FRI 11

Kennisnetwerk Milieu - Lecture - Veterinary pharmaceuticals and anti-microbial resistance
3rd and last lecture on 'Hot topics in environmental quality'. More info: kennisnetwerkmilieu.nl

THU 17

KLV & StartLife - Wageningen Business Cafe

For Young KLV events check klv.nl/youngklv