



## **Show it!**

### Interpretation sustainability Wageningen UR 2013 + 2014

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## **Table of contents**

|     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| 1   | Motivation   | 5  |
| 2   | State of affairs at the end 2012                     | 6  |
| 2.1 | Results of operational management at the end of 2012 | 6  |
| 2.2 | Results of activities proposed by PwC                | 6  |
| 2.3 | Sustainability at Wageningen UR                      | 7  |
| 3   | Interpretation of sustainability 2013 + 2014         | 8  |
| 3.1 | Continuation from 2008-2012                          | 8  |
| 3.2 | Show it!   | 8  |
| 3.3 | Pre-conditions                                       | 11 |
|     | Appendix 1. Proposal information and communication   | 12 |



## 1 Motivation

Sustainability/Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an important pillar in the primary process of research and education. It is expressed in the mission of Wageningen UR - 'To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life' - and in the ambition of Wageningen UR. The ambition is to be the prime knowledge institute in Europe in the domain 'Healthy Food and Living Environment' in 2020 and to be a prominent partner on a global scale.<sup>1</sup> In short, Wageningen UR stands for sustainability.

But just how sustainable is Wageningen UR really in terms of its primary process and operational management?

Studies performed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in 2008 showed that sustainability definitely plays a role within Wageningen UR, but that it had been further developed within the primary process of education and research than within the operational management.<sup>2</sup>

Wageningen UR then set to work to improve the sustainability of the operational management. In 2009, the Board of Directors/Executive Board expressed the ambition to achieve the sustainability level of *Voorlopen* (Leading) with regard to the operational management of Wageningen UR.<sup>3</sup> Amongst other things, this means that Wageningen UR is to take an integrated approach to sustainability by applying proven technology and propagating this to the public.

Once the ambition level had been determined, the next step involved formulating an action plan, '*Versneld naar een duurzamer bedrijfsvoering*'.<sup>4</sup> This plan describes what is required in the short and long term in order to reach the desired ambition level. The focus in the short term is on realising a number of actions.

These actions are formulated within the areas 'construction and energy,' 'purchasing,' 'mobility,' 'catering,' 'waste,' 'education and research,' and 'sustainable employee'. The emphasis in the long term is on guaranteeing these actions through changing the organisation and the attitude of the employees, as well as on the process that is required to that end.

The period 2010-2012 was dominated by the implementation of the action plan. The issue now, at the end of 2012, is to take a critical look at sustainability within Wageningen UR and to determine how we can have Wageningen UR maintain *and* demonstrate its sustainable quality.

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Plan 2011-2014 Wageningen UR, Wageningen UR, 2011, 49p.

<sup>2</sup> Sustainability scan 2008 Wageningen University and Research centre, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2008, 30p.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum Sustainability Wageningen UR, Wageningen UR, 2009, 28p.

<sup>4</sup> *Versneld naar een duurzamer Bedrijfsvoering* (Accelerating towards more sustainable operational management), Wageningen UR, 2010, 16p.

## 2 State of affairs at the end 2012

### 2.1 Results of operational management at the end of 2012

The action plan '*Versneld naar een duurzamer bedrijfsvoering*' stipulates pre-conditions for guaranteeing sustainability in the operational management. These pre-conditions and the results that were achieved are shown in table 1.

Table 1. The pre-conditions for guaranteeing sustainability as formulated in the action plan '*Versneld naar een duurzamer bedrijfsvoering*' and the results achieved in 2010-2012.

| Pre-conditions for guaranteeing   | Status end 2012* | Explanation  |
|---|------------------|--|
| Sustainability is anchored in the organisation – from top to bottom – and forms an integral part of the operational management process. | +/-              | The organisation is clear, the familiarity is lagging behind, and so sustainability is not yet anchored in the organisation.   |
| Reporting on sustainability.  | +/-              | A start was made in 2012 with an initial sustainability report 2011. Subsequent steps will result in integrated reporting of research, education, and operational management (through integration in the annual report). |
| Clarity on possible financing of activities.  | +                |  |
| More coherence between education, research, and operational management.   | +/-              | Green Office Wageningen (GOW) has made a start. It is clear that it will be as successful as Green Office Maastricht, provided that GOW is given a clear position within Wageningen UR.                                  |
| Plan for internal and external communication.   | +                | Clear plan for 2010-2012. A different phase, requiring a different approach, after 2012.   |

\* +: guaranteed; +/-: partially guaranteed; -: not guaranteed.

It is evident from table 1 that major steps were taken in the period 2010-2012. However, two years proved to be too short to anchor sustainability in the organisation. And so the pre-conditions have not been fully met and sustainability is therefore not yet adequately secured. Standing still is a step backwards, particularly if one considers the ambition 'Leading' as previously formulated. Major efforts have already been made, and expectations are that a slight push in the right direction will suffice to anchor the concept of sustainability. It is obvious that information/communication has a role in this respect.

### 2.2 Results of activities proposed by PwC

Further to the sustainability scan, PwC proposed four activities with respect to the operational management in order to reach the same level that applies to the primary process. These activities and the results achieved are shown in table 2.

Table 2. The activities proposed by PwC in 2008 further to the sustainability scan and the results achieved at the end of 2012.

| Activities for operational management   | Status end 2012* | Explanation   |
|---|------------------|---|
| Executive Board is to establish a vision, strategy and goals regarding sustainability.  | +                | Ambition 'Leading' and action plan ' <i>Versneld naar een duurzamer bedrijfsvoering</i> ' has been formulated with the parties concerned and the stakeholders.  |
| Putting together a sustainability study group with members from the Science Groups, but also from the staff and line departments. | +                | The Task force and the Steering group have been organised such that they represent all of the parties concerned regarding the operational management.   |
| Description of responsibilities regarding sustainability both horizontally as well as vertically. <sup>1</sup>                    | +                | The responsibilities that lie with the Facilities and Services Unit (in consultation with C-HRM) and the organisational units (Quality, Working Conditions, and Environment, among others) are clear. |
| Establishing an implementation plan that stipulates activities on the level 'who, what, and when'.                                | +                | ' <i>Versneld naar een duurzamer bedrijfsvoering</i> '.   |

<sup>1</sup> Horizontal: what is managed by the Facilities and Services Unit, and what is the Science Groups' own responsibility; Vertical: for every layer within the organisation, from Executive Board to implementing employees.

<sup>2</sup> +: implemented; +/-: partially implemented; -: not implemented

It is evident from table 2 that all of the proposed activities for the purpose of achieving the same level as that of the primary process have been carried out.

### 2.3 Sustainability at Wageningen UR

Sustainable operational management is only part of a sustainable Wageningen UR.

The 'core' business is the primary process: education and research. The influence that is exercised via the primary process and, with that, on society, is huge.

At the end of 2012, both the Task Force and the Steering group 'sustainable operational management' came to the following conclusions with respect to a sustainable Wageningen UR:

- Reporting on sustainability is only comprehensive if education, research, and operational management are integrated in the reporting process;
- Organisations are being compared in terms of sustainability more and more often. Other universities in the Netherlands consider sustainability to be their focus, whereas Wageningen UR observes sustainability as its basis. This basis must be univocal, transparent, and known to the stakeholders. If Wageningen UR fails to comply with this, then sustainability will eventually prove to be disadvantageous to Wageningen UR, by scoring low in benchmarks, the allocation of projects and perhaps the number of students who opt for Wageningen UR.
- Sustainability/Corporate Social Responsibility criteria are:
  - o observed as allotment criteria for projects;
  - o observed as a basis requirement for the pre-registration for projects.

Note 1: There is an increasing demand within various organisational units of Wageningen UR for clarity on CSR within Wageningen UR. ESG, for example, is allotted approx. 25% more commissions due to the fact that it has the ISO 26000 independent statement. Potential clients for Imares, ASG, and Wageningen International are requesting a Wageningen UR statement in the sphere of CSR.

Note 2: The Tendering Act 2012 that is to become effective in 2013 states that government authorities must stipulate clear requirements with respect to CSR.

### 3 Interpretation of sustainability 2013 + 2014

#### 3.1 Continuation from 2008-2012

Wageningen UR observes the Deming circle as steering model.

*The Deming circle describes the four activities that apply to every improvement in organisations. The four activities ensure a better quality. The cyclical nature guarantees that quality improvement is continuously the focus of attention. The categorisation stems from the scientific process as formulated by Francis Bacon (Novum Organum, 1620): hypothesis – experiment – evaluation.*

*The four activities of Deming are:*

*PLAN: Study the present-day work activities and devise a plan to improve these work activities. Establish specific goals further to the improvements.*

*DO: Implement the improvement(s) as planned in a controlled test environment.*

*CHECK: Measure the result of the improvement and compare it to the original situation and test the result against the established goals.*

*ACT: Make adjustments on the basis of the results found during CHECK.*

*The essence of this vision is that every employee who is part of a production process or other process can assess and improve his/her own method of working in this way. As it is, the actions of the employee make up an individual sub-process of the process on a higher level. The management is to see to the analysis of the higher processes; the board is to do the same for the primary operational processes.*

PwC conducted the CHECK with respect to the degree of sustainability at Wageningen UR in 2008. Phase 2008-2010 concerned the ACT phase, formulating the ambition and Action plan for the operational management, the so-called PLAN phase. The Action plan was implemented in the period 2010-2012, the so-called DO phase. Chapter 2 is the CHECK phase of the PDCA cycle for the purpose of realising a more sustainable operational management.

The results at the end of 2012 give cause to end the PDCA cycle towards a more sustainable operational management and to entrust the Facilities and Services Unit with the supervision. It is furthermore essential ensure univocal and transparent communications regarding:

- the operational management;
- sustainable Wageningen UR, meaning including the primary process of education and research.

The line of approach regarding the communication of sustainability in 2013+2014 is 'Show it!'

#### 3.2 Show it!

The interpretation of sustainability at Wageningen UR 2013+2014 is shown in table 3.

In this interpretation, a distinction is made between a sustainable operational management and a sustainable Wageningen UR.

The interpretation of the sustainable operational management is in turn a new incentive for the interpretation of the ambition 'Leading' and, by formulating Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linking the operational management to education and research, provides that extra push in the right direction in order to be able to warrant sustainability in the operational management. Demonstrating a sustainable operational management will contribute to guaranteeing this for the future as well.

The interpretation considers both education and research, as well as the operational management. Sustainability is the basis of education and research. This basis will be linked to the sustainable operational management in the interpretation of sustainability 2013+2014.



Table 3. Interpretation of sustainability at Wageningen UR 2013+2014.

| Objective  | Activities  | Results of sustainable operational management   | Results of Sustainable Wageningen UR  |
|--|---|---|---|
| Demonstrate what Wageningen UR stands for and what we are doing = Show it! | 1. Interpretation of the ambition 'Leading'                                 | 2013: Re-assessing the ambition 'Leading' + formulating and implementing the actions and KPIs within the sphere of construction, energy, waste, catering, staff, purchasing and mobility, interpreting the ambition again and putting it into words in the form of actions and then in measurable KPI(s).<br>2014: Reporting and evaluation in spring and autumn on the actions and KPIs in MT Facilities and Services Unit (in the line organisation).   | Sustainability is a clear point of special interest in the Strategic Plan 2015-2018.<br>(Note: this is also the case within the Strategic Plan 2011-2014)   |
|  | 2. Linking education, research and operational management                   | As Green Office Wageningen (GOW), the new generation of students takes an intermediary role. The emphasis in 2013 will be on starting up the GOW. Within that scope, the focus will be on acquiring a position within the organisation. The results described in the 2014 annual plan will be achieved in 2014.   | Every six months, the Sustainability group <sup>1</sup> tests the course taken and the progress with respect to sustainability/CSR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- five KPIs relating to sustainability at Wageningen UR<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- stakeholders dialogue</li> <li>- dilemmas/challenges</li> <li>- points of special interest for the reporting</li> <li>- assurance reporting, if applicable<sup>3</sup></li> </ul> |
|  | 3. Creating awareness, sustainability is to be anchored in the organisation | The gauging rule for sustainable operational management is the CO <sub>2</sub> footprint. It is to be carried out again for 2013 in connection with the expected changes compared to 2011 further to putting the new education building Orion into use and other real estate developments.<br>Information and communication <sup>4</sup> through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- informing staff and students by means of internal campaigning for sustainable operational management and the National Sustainability Day;</li> <li>- involving future end-users in the plans and developments with sessions with action/KPI holders and staff.</li> </ul> | Formulation of well-founded ISO 26000 independent statement or a comparable instrument that suits the wishes and needs of clients and Wageningen UR.<br><br>Wageningen UR is univocal and transparent on the subject of sustainability/CSR of Wageningen UR on the Internet and in its communications.  |

<sup>1</sup> The members of the Sustainability group are the director of the Facilities and Services Unit (chairman), the director of Corporate Human Resources, the director of Corporate Communications & Marketing, a representative on behalf of the directors operational management, a business developer, the director of Education, Research & Innovation, representative(s) of the Student Council, and a policy officer for sustainability (secretary). The chairman of the Sustainability group is accountable to the Executive Board/Board of Directors.

<sup>2</sup> The five KPIs are formulated by the Sustainability group and added as measurable management information to the quarterly reports so that the Executive Board can make CSR a subject of discussion during the quarterly consultations with the management.

<sup>3</sup> It was considered upon formulating Sustainability Wageningen UR 2013+2014 to not yet include assurance as part of Sustainable Wageningen UR. Expectations are that the deployment of Wageningen UR will not be able to match the impact and the result of assurance of the integrated annual report.

<sup>4</sup>Information and communication is aimed at promoting awareness and sustainable behaviour on the part of employees and students (see appendix 1).

### **3.3 Pre-conditions**

The pre-conditions for the interpretation of sustainability Wageningen UR 2013+2014 are:

- the Executive Board / Board of directors has the final responsibility;
- supervision under the responsibility of the director of the Facilities and Services Unit;
- recognising one's own responsibility further to sustainable operational management;
- cooperation of the Sustainability group
- functioning of the GOW, including realistic positioning within Wageningen UR;
- €50,000 per year for out-of-pocket expenses.

## Appendix 1. Proposal information and communication

- Working towards a more sustainable operational management is not a project but rather a process.
- Behavioural change focuses on the more sustainable behaviour of employees in their daily routines and creating possibilities (opportunity) to that end, using key players, that render the behaviour possible.

It is proposed to promote the awareness and sustainable behaviour of the staff via two tracks:

- a) Structurally informing staff and students, and
- b) Involving future end-users in the plans and developments.

### **Sub a. Structurally informing staff and students;**

Initiatives, developments, results (best practices) are monitored and structurally brought to the attention of the staff and students.

**The proposal** is to set up an internal campaign for sustainable operational management to that end.

Actions are formulated as part of this plan, for example: a notification on Intranet every second and fourth Thursday of the month, a monthly discussion/poll on a sustainability theme on Yammer (to be announced via Intranet), an up-to-date sustainability site on Intranet, organising matters in the Week of Sustainability/special sustainability.

The policy officer for sustainability oversees all of the actions and initiatives and ensures an active flow of information with the support of CS (advice and implementation).

Sources include sustainable developments at the various knowledge units, the thirty actions as these have been formulated within the domains Construction & Energy, Waste, Mobility, etc. The Green Office Wageningen, the decision-making process of the Executive Board and initiatives at comparable knowledge institutes may also serve as input for the coverage.

Points of special interest:

- Stimulating interaction and discussions  
(to give people the opportunity to become 'connected' with a matter)
- Ensure that messages contain answers to:
  - Why are we doing this -> consistent linking of the intended change and strategic goal Wageningen UR towards a more sustainable operational management.
  - How are we to go about this -> explain the approach and whether or how the staff can assist/interaction).
  - What will this solve or improve (for you, for us).

**Sub b. Involving future end-users in the plans and developments:** The staff and the students demonstrate sustainable behaviour because it is an option. Sustainable behaviour then becomes matter-of-fact; not because it is mandatory, but because it makes one's daily routine less complicated, easier and less costly ('Don't make me think'). Examples: double-sided printing; light switches that switch on/off automatically.

Here, the next move is up to key players (consisting of project managers/staff in the facilities and services process/communication/HR and ER&I) as a leading coalition that can directly influence the work processes that concern the staff and students. They ensure that the staff and students have the opportunity to behave in a sustainable manner. Desired behaviour can be realised in this way – without tedious persuading aimed at the support of the staff/students. An important condition in this respect is that the focus is on the wishes and needs of the users in developing new work processes and work systems. Resistance should be prevented beforehand, not afterwards. It is therefore wise to timely involve future users in new proposals (see Involvement).

Explanation further to the involvement of staff and students in proposals concerning sustainable operational management:

There are advantages to actively involving staff and students in the proposals and developments concerning sustainable operational management:

- 'In-house' knowledge and ideas are used in searching for and finding innovating solutions in the organisation's operational management. Regarding the primary process of science, this offers opportunities to promote the interdisciplinary character of research, which greatly boost the quality of the research.
- Involving critical staff and students beforehand will increase the chance of success and the acceptance of new measures. It should be communicated as part of the implementation of new processes and systems that the staff and students contributed to the solutions.

Preparations are currently underway in thirty projects for new and more sustainable work processes and work systems that will offer the staff and the students the opportunity to demonstrate more sustainable behaviour. As mentioned before, it is wise to involve the wishes and needs of the future users early on in coming to new proposals.

**The proposal** is to organise a session with project managers and the staff who are currently working on more sustainable systems and work processes. The following aspects will be discussed during this session:

- Make it clear that the success of a project depends on how the wishes and needs of the future end users are involved during the project. That the success of the change depends upon how they steer towards motivation, opportunity and capacity (Triad Poisz, see the box below) within the project. And being able to answer questions as described under 1b (Why this project, How are we to go about this, What will this solve for you and/or us). Also taking into account the multicultural aspects in the international working environment of Wageningen UR.
- Make it clear that they can receive support from communication professionals beforehand in organising the interaction with future end-users and organising support.
- Make it clear that they can use an existing Brainstorming Group Sustainability during this project. Perhaps they can also use the existing brainstorming group sustainability that consists of employees and students and that currently examines issues regarding Purchasing.
- Make it clear that they can use GOW: Inform project managers of the possibility of using the GOW; an intermediary function that stimulates the coherence between research, education and operational management (work placements for students, research assignments, suggestion box, amongst other things).

### **Explanation of the Poisz Triad mode**

*A successful approach to behavioural change entails simultaneously working on three factors from the Poisz triad model, namely:*

**Motivation:** As the ultimate users of services, scientists and students are potentially, in view of their intrinsic motives, motivated to act in a more sustainable way in their attitude and behaviour. In other words: to use the opportunity that the organisation has to offer them for more sustainable behaviour. This motivation is boosted if they are involved in various ways on the basis of their scientific knowledge in the dilemmas and in devising possible solutions. In other words: use the sustainable knowledge, ideas, and critical view of scientists and students in realising the operational management of the organisation. Another aspect in implementing measures is that one is to take into account the simple fact that scientists are also human. In the end, they too opt for the easiest solution ('Don't make me think') Moreover, the self-referential orientation of these players requires that the 'sense of urgency' be consistently emphasised and propagated and that the choices made be substantiated, ('there is no such thing as the ideal solution'). This gives meaning to the new methods of working within the broader context of sustainability (e.g. Practice what you preach).

**Concerning opportunity:** A hindering factor in creating involvement on the part of scientists and students is time. And time has meanwhile become money for this group as well. The trick is therefore to sometimes use knowledge 'for free' within the sub-projects and to sometimes have one pay (in the form of having students conduct a literature study or set up a test arrangement). Also take into account international players with little or no idea of what their own role can be in achieving sustainability.

**Concerning capacity** one should take into account the various cultural backgrounds of the scientists and students; for example, the separation of various types of waste and using a thermostat to regulate the heating is not matter-of-fact to everyone. This should be considered when implementing services or measures.

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