



@AeresUASIntOffice



#Alumni - Aeres UAS (University of Applied Sciences) - CAH Dronten

## Dear alumni,

All of the sudden we are in the midst of summer.. students graduated, our alumni family has extended. The year was over before we knew it! After two years of COVID restraints we were able to restart our international activities again. We take pride in the fact that during the last years we have been able to continue in-class education for most of the time except those weeks when the country was fully in lockdown.

Travelling, however, came more or less to a stand still which really impacted our internationalization activities. Although we had so much more online meetings with international partners we noticed that we got disconnected. We really had to rebuild our partnerships again. At the same time our staff is involved in quite some international consultancy work in which we assist universities as well as companies in the field

of agricultural education. Many of those projects slowed down as we were limited by online training and advice options. We were excited to reconnect again!

Aeres always has put great emphasis on internationalization in its education, but we plan to take that to a new level in the coming 5 years. We aim to increase the number of international students at our university (*all three faculties*), both within existing programmes as well as in new programmes. Internationalization should be part of our educational day to day life, also for Dutch students and teachers. The last years we have felt in various ways how connected we all are with people in other parts of the world: an event in another country has an impact on our daily lives. We want to prepare our students better than ever before to operate within that world. We will focus on Europe, but have our linkages outside of the European Union as well.

For me personally this means that I am given the opportunity to further build the international strategy of the university as Head of Internationalization. I will team up with Wil Bekkering, as Director Internationalization.

My role as a team manager for the team of International Studies and Consultancy will be taken over by Wieke Hetsen. Wieke has contributed to our international programmes for many years, among others as course coordinator. I will certainly miss the team but I leave the team in good hands and I can't wait to see how we will all join forces and bring internationalization to the next level.

We are looking forward to meet you all in November during our International Week in Dronten and the alumni event during that week!



**Natasja Spaargaren**  
 Head International Studies  
 & Consultancy

## Food Business Alumni Scholarship Fund

Dear alumni,

Over the years, Aeres University of Applied Sciences has continued to build a reputation for excellence. This is achieved through the hard work of both our teachers and students. And we would like to continue to do that. However, we recognize that there are international candidates for our programs who can be great additions but are unable to enrol due to financial difficulty. For this purpose, we would like to create the Food Business Alumni Scholarship Fund to provide much-needed scholarships for Aeres international students. Recipients of this scholarship will be prospective and current undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, strong academic merit and who give back to Aeres University and local community.

Attracting talent from abroad is of great importance to an internationally oriented country like the Netherlands. With the knowledge, experience and networks they bring from their own country, they strengthen the quality of education in the Netherlands. By creating international classes, Dutch students also benefit from this.

With the collective power of hundreds of our alumni, we can ensure future students a great Aeres experience. Any donation you make will help us reach our milestone goal of 50,000 euros per year. You can choose to become a regular donor or by making a one-time donation. Additionally, your donation can be matched by your company, who values the expertise that our training provides them in highly qualified

personnel. We would then like to look together at what Aeres University of Applied Sciences could do for you. This could include linking an (*international*) student to your company or organization.

Would you like to know more about AISF or would you like to make a financial contribution? Then please contact mrs. Anja Hetsen ([a.hetsen@aeres.nl](mailto:a.hetsen@aeres.nl)).

Make a difference today. Give to the Food Business Alumni Scholarship Fund. Thank you again for your valued support.

Best regards  
 Emmanuel Anom



## I like when I see people grow, then I see progress!



**Name:** Hermann Schilt

Working in Dronten: since 2003

**Master's degree:** Agricultural Professional Practice (University of Glasgow, 2017-2021)

**Responsibilities:** coordinator and teaching staff of Rural Development program (2003 – 2011), coordinator International Horticultural Management program (2011 – 2018) and teaching staff in the same program (up until now), teaching staff of Dutch taught programs (up until now).

**Can you bring us back to the day when you arrived at Aeres (back then the university had a different name) and tell us how did you end up in education?**

**H:** I was working after graduating from horticultural college (in Dutch educational system level MBO 3). I started to work in different countries: South Africa, Israel, Canada. The work was mainly flower related. After seven years I realized that my education was not enough. Actually somebody helped me to see it.

Then I said: "OK, I need to have higher education." So first I went to college again, because I needed MBO 4 level. So after seven years of working I went back to school. Because I had motivation they allowed me start after Christmas and within half a year I could complete MBO 4 level instead of 1.5 years. And then could continue with the higher education, similar to what Aeres is offering. I went to the University of Applied Sciences in Leeuwarden (Van Hall Larenstein nowadays), because I could directly start my studies there. In Dronten I had to start a prep-course first. But I had seven years work experience and I knew exactly what I wanted.

When I finished my studies I became a salesman for a cooperative. This cooperative was selling seeds, fertilizer and crop protection products. I was advising and became a horticultural specialist. The company merged and then I went working for the umbrella organization Cebeco. There I started with a project in Czech Republic for three years from 1992 – 1995

related to cooperative development. It was very nice, I liked it a lot. But I was 240 days away from home. During that time I also met Harmien (*Hermann's partner*). So those were too many days away.

After finishing the project I went back to my former job, and started to live together with Harmien in Almere. For two years I was responsible for starting a knowledge transfer centre for the salesmen of the cooperative. I was horticultural specialist for Agrifirm and did knowledge dissemination. Because of the merger there were many people within the company who had more or less the same job. Then I saw some "politics" inside the company, and I don't like politics. At some point I was fed up with the politics and said that I would start working for myself: agricultural business tours. I liked it, I did it earlier for Cebeco in Czech Republic. While working in Czech Republic, I was three weeks there and one week in the Netherlands. That one week was meant for office work, but I did not like it too much. So when a colleague said that they have a group of foreign visitors, I would gladly take and show them around. I knew a lot of people in my neighbourhood. I called and asked if I could come with a group of visitors, there was always a positive reaction. So I went to places like onion storage, greenhouses, etc. I started this business in 1998, until 2003.

Natasja (*our current team manager*) had some tour requests for me, she worked for Agrotransfer, a part of CAH Dronten back then. And I have always been in contact with the CAH in Dronten. Then I also learned to know Natasja and at a certain point she called me. She said that I have experience in Eastern Europe and they were starting with a course for Eastern Europe for rural development. She then asked: "Maybe it is a job for you?" That is how I came into the picture. I should have started on July 1, 2003, but I started on June 1, 2003 to learn people before the summer holidays. It was a very good step. It was an unpaid month, but I learned a lot, I learned many people. Later on these people were very busy, ►



but I met them already before. In September 2003 I started with the first group of students.

### So you are working in education already for 19 years!

**H:** Yes! Last I had to make a summary about myself for the Kenyan students. It came down to: 7 years of practical work; 16 years of cooperative work; and 19 years of education.

### Most of your work experience/standing is in the field of education.

**H:** True. But I have to be honest – I did a lot of education-related activities in the cooperative, because I like new developments. For instance, when we started with a new [liquid] fertilizer I did a course myself in Aalsmeer first. And then I had to transfer this knowledge to the farmers.

### Nineteen years in education from 2003 to 2022 - many things have happened, e.g. technological developments. If you now look back, how were the students when you started teaching them in 2003 and how they are now in 2022? What differences do you see in student population, what has changed?

**H:** It is difficult to answer. I started with 45 foreign students. From Spain, Hungary, Poland, everywhere

actually. Nowadays I have international students only from Romania (*Erasmus students*) and some French students. So there is a big gap. I did not work much with the Dutch students, maybe sometimes a course of seven lectures. But I have always seen a difference between the Dutch students and the international students. The international students were much more engaged and they were working harder and better. That is my opinion. With an exception - in 2008 I had a class full of Hungarians, one guy from Ghana and one lady from Latvia. They were talking Hungarian most of the time, not attending classes. That was the only class I could not handle the way I would have liked.

### So there are also not so nice experiences... But which student, which event you still remember with a big smile on your face? Something that maybe you have done, or a student, but it is definitely something that you will never forget.

**H:** Antonio was my first student. During the Introduction week he heard that his mother was very sick and he went back home. I told him that I can keep in the class until January when the groupwork will start. And help him with Blackboard. In May his mother died and he came back to Dronen for another year. We had a good contact. After 2006 we went for holidays to his place (*Galicja, Spain*).

And still I have contact with him, even if it is once a year. During Corona times we were in touch. He was working in Romania and when I was there for a project we contacted each other and met in Cluj Napoca.

### You always have liked learning new things, looking for new things. You are also a frontrunner when it comes to applying technology in education. How do you see the role of technology in education?

**H:** I was a key person in the IT group for our team. And I tried to introduce MS Teams. It was not a success for two years actually. And then Corona came and within one week everybody was using MS Teams. There needs to be a necessity/trigger to use technology otherwise you cannot get it into peoples' minds. But when you started using it, you can see it is really nice. I like to use MS Teams for meetings, where otherwise people would have to travel many kilometres to attend. Last two weeks I also had to deliver lectures to the Kenyan group through Teams, but interaction is missing. So it is not my favourite tool to use for classes, it is not optimal, but at least it makes it possible. I believe it could be improved. Also if there would be better Internet connection in these countries, the application of this tool could be extended. ▶



## Are you yourself a believer of online education or offline education?

**H:** Mixed. Online education can deliver theoretical part, but practical aspects are almost impossible to deliver online (*like I had with the Kenyan group*). I also had it with the Dutch students through the first months of Corona (*April, May*). Then I had the impression that all people were planting potatoes, the mobile was there in the cabin with camera off, muted. Answers to the questions sometimes appeared in the chat.

The other time there was a course for a project abroad and we had to deliver the last lecture about tulips. At the time in the Netherlands they were just flowering. So I took my iPhone, set the video mode on in MS Teams and in that way I could explain exactly what was happening there. And they could follow the process, that is interesting! And one time a student did it for my class. He was in North-Holland and in 45 minutes he did an excellent job and explained how to enforce tulips for flowers. And nobody had to drive to North-Holland. But then again – you need to have a good Internet connection.

## Almost time to retire. Some are eager to do so, some less, and some even come back. How do you feel about the retirement?

**H:** Do not expect that I will complain (*smile*). I would like to do something else. My hobby is history, especially of the area where I live in (*polder*). I was already involved for many years in that as the chairman of the historic foundation of my village and I will continue doing that. I have many connections and maybe I can guide Lelystad with their new heritage centre, that looks nice to me. As a volunteer I can go to the Waterloopbos (*Dutch national monument*) and be a tour guide. I did a course to be in the general assembly for the Water board. Next year are the Water board elections, but I am not sure I want to run, because then I need to join a political party.

I will also have time to photograph and develop photos in Lightroom and Photoshop. So many time consuming hobbies.

## Do you know approximately how many pictures do you have by now?

**H:** Not everything is digitalized, but I have around 45.000 pictures. Many doubles, so I need to throw them away. So then I probably have 20 000. I save them all on a hard drive, year by year, thing by thing. In this was I remember things. For instance, my neighbour died in 1994, and his son asked me last



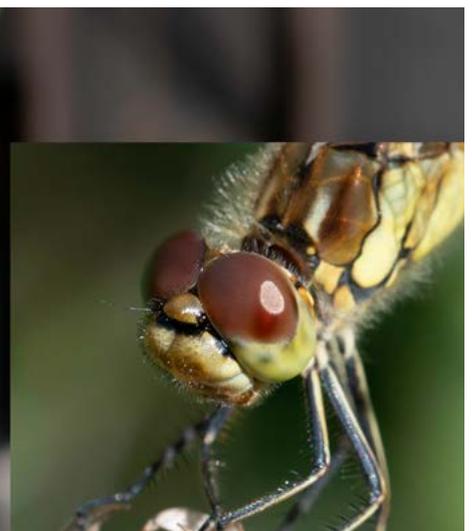
Hobby  
photography -  
squirrel



Hobby photography - heron



Hobby photography - dragon-fly in garden



month how did I know it? But in 1994 I was in Great Britain and I made photos there. So I connect such occasions to these facts.

## What do you like the most in the job of an educator?

**H:** To explain and to see people understand. To get them enthusiastic to innovate themselves, to learn. When I see people grow, then I see progress. And that is what I like.

## And in case you don't see progress...?

**H:** Then I am not a good educator (*smile*). But I don't give good marks to those who don't work. We had once two students from the same partner university. One did not perform, but expected to pass our courses. The other one was a "weak" student at the beginning, we had to help a lot. But at the end we saw growth, the student took initiative and was

motivated. Both students got the opportunities. One of them messed up, whereas the other one took the opportunity and responsibility.

## What would you wish for your colleagues, our alumni, our future students?

**H:** I hope that all of you will do your work with so much enjoyment as I have always done. And that my colleagues can continue to support people to be better, to be innovative, to strive for the better world. I hope that the government will lift a bit the control mode, that we will get our freedom back. At the beginning I felt like an entrepreneur at the university, my own boss. But nowadays it is impossible, looking at all the forms that need to be signed etc. I hope the common sense will come back and prevail. I think that is important for the whole world. ■

## People around the world, in essence, are the same!



Enjoying every bit of it



Martin's  
birthday party  
in Dronten



Going Dutch on a bicycle



Graduation CAH July 2006

**Name:** Martins Gustavs  
**Academic year:** 2005-2006  
**Study programme:** Rural Development  
**Home university:** Latvia University of Agriculture  
*(now: Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies)*

### Can you tell us what was the reason why you decided to go and study in Dronten?

Well, back then I was really interested in going to study abroad through the Erasmus program. And I was particularly interested in the Netherlands. Looking at the possibilities my home university offered, I chose to go to Dronten to study rural development.

### What were the biggest differences in educational system when comparing your educational experience in Latvia and the Netherlands?

The most outstanding differences? First of all,

in Latvia I was following an academic course/ programme. The educational approach was very academic, with lots of theory, which is fine. But to me it was lacking the connection with the reality. And that was the most positive difference. In Dronten, at the university of applied sciences, the subjects taught were touching theory, but immediately they were looking for real-life situations where theory applies and can be applied. Basically, the theory was put in practice. That was the most outstanding thing about Dronten. And, of course, the approach itself. It was not so competitive, in a good way. There was not a big pressure to be excellent, more like be good, follow the course and understand the topic. Probably in the Netherlands they are stimulating excellence, I am not saying they are not. But back then it seemed to me that there was not a big emphasis on it. Whereas in other parts of the world you have to be the best, whether you understand the topic or not. But on paper you have to be the

best. In the Netherlands it was more about the idea, understanding, understanding what you are learning and putting that to practice. And I think that was great!

### It seems that you enjoyed educational approach in Dronten. But were there any cultural differences that were hard for you get used to/accept?

Well, this is a tough question, because over time I have been in touch with the Dutch for many years after the graduation. At this point it is difficult for me to distinguish which differences I noticed during the studies and which later. At this point I would rather say what was beneficial. And that is - being surrounded by different cultures. What really made a difference was team work, group work with other students, interaction on the campus. There were maybe differences in how teaching staff was communicating, but most of the differences were from the interaction with other international



New Zealand



In New Zealand, after crossing the Pacific Ocean



In Sydney, Australia



Patagonia



Marble Caves in Chile

students. But it definitely had a good impact; to see and realize that different places in the world think differently. And none of the ways of thinking are wrong, they are different, because they have different backgrounds. Instead of judging "he thinks weird" or "he thinks differently, I don't get it," rather analyse why they think so and try to understand where their thinking comes from. That was definitely beneficial. I cannot really pick out a few and say those were the biggest differences. In general it was an international community and it was really "healthy" for me, a still developing mind, to see different ways of thinking and take that onboard.

**What did you do after graduating the university in Dronten? A researcher from Aeres actually concluded that graduates who studied in a competence based programme in the Netherlands (and Dronten has such programs) more often use this international experience in their present job, more often supervise others and have a 9.9% higher income compared to the other graduates.**

Well, that is a long story, also because since a lot of time has passed. While still studying, I had an internship at the Dutch Embassy in Latvia, which connected me to the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. Soon after they invited me to manage the Chamber (it was a small organization). And I was ambitious looking young fella. I did that for around three years, until the crisis came and cut all my budgets, effort and everything what I have done by half. That was painful enough for me to see, so I left. Also because it was an NGO, I realized that the way you needed to fight for funding was not necessarily my thing. A side note: I do believe in NGOs working for great causes around the world. But in my case it was a business

club being an NGO. The funding was relying on the Embassy funding; the times were challenging.

After that I was living in the Netherlands for nearly a year. Had fun, refreshed my brain and came back to Latvia. There was an open position for a manager at a Dutch transport company, its subsidiary in Latvia. I applied for it and was selected. I built this subsidiary in Latvia from zero up to 160 employees within nearly four years. That has probably been my greatest achievement when it comes to management. After that there were some personal events that brought me to the idea that there's more to be done for myself. So I set myself on a journey which included sailing. Not just sailing, but sailing oceans and traveling the world as a backpacker! I did that for four years. I managed to sail two oceans: the Atlantic Ocean back and forth and the Pacific Ocean from Panama to New Zealand. Those were really beautiful times, also with backpacking, not only sailing. I saw nearly whole South America, Central America, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, islands in the Pacific (southern part). It's been great! And I am very grateful to myself, that, while it has not been economically favourable for me personally, it was definitely a great experience and I do not regret a single thing about it.

After my world travels I have come back to my home country. There were personal events happening [with my relatives]. Being back here, where I am now, I have my little IT-related business, which is brand design and developing websites. I also have other business ideas in mind. Let's say that I am trying to make a businessman out of myself right now.



Sailing in 2016

Companion during the trip  
across the Pacific OceanMagnificent  
natureWith Latvian flag  
at the harbourAt Chichen  
Itzá in 2015

Do what locals do



Why not

**You have travelled the world, studied in the Netherlands for a year. Already during your studies you realized there are different people around the world, with different cultures, different backgrounds. Through your travels you had a chance to see different countries, maybe even experience these cultures yourself. What are your observations after your world travels?**

Speaking in terms of culture and people, I have two main conclusions. Before I began with my travels, a lot of people were scared for me. They were: "OMG, you are going to all these countries, you don't know what the people are about...". There were cliché-kind of things brought up to worry me. But when I travelled, I realized that basically the things that people told me that I should worry about or scary me, those were not really the things to be scared of. A silly example: "Where are you going to sleep in that country?". Well, you can sleep in a hotel or hostel, or you can arrange couchsurfing. But you will find your way there just like in your own country or any other

country. There are hotels, hostels; there are people that welcome travellers. When it comes to these general worries people had, I can imagine that for someone who is in a daily routine, for such people it might be scary. They might not know exactly where what is. But you can find anything around the world, just like you can find it in your own country.

And the second conclusion is also about people. After travelling the world I realized that people are culturally different – yes! But, in essence, they are all the same. Good people are good people, bad people are bad people for a reason. In the core they still are all the same. They love, they are friendly (or not), but the essence is the same. When it comes to the worry about being safe somewhere else – it is pretty much the same. If you are downtown/city centre – you are safe. If you are outskirts of a big city, you might not be safe. When you are in the countryside, you are definitely safe, because bad people do not hang out in the countryside. So those just general society rules that apply in your country, also apply in another

country. There are different appearances, but you can find your way everywhere around the world.

**By the way - good luck with your entrepreneurial dreams. At the end I would like to ask - what would be your wish to the fellow alumni?**

This message does not only apply to alumni, but to everyone. There are certain things that were big dreams for me, and I have fulfilled them. The feeling is nothing like, even if you had struggles or difficulties along the way; or you have questioned yourself along the way. So the message is – follow your dreams! Don't be shy about them, don't evaluate them as being too big or small. If those are your dreams – get out and do something to reach them. That will make you feel most alive ever! ■

*Note\*: for more photo impressions from Martin's travels, follow him on Instagram [@oceanorseman](https://www.instagram.com/oceanorseman)*



## Congratulations on your graduation! The new members of Aeres international alumni family!

On July 14, 2022 there was a graduation ceremony in Almere where we handed out diplomas to the European Food Business graduates. On July 15, 2022 we had another ceremony in Dronten, where we congratulated International Food Business, International Equine Business Management, and Livestock Production students. In total 27 students received a Bachelor degree, from whom 11 students graduated cum laude (*with distinction*). Congratulations and welcome to the Aeres International Alumni family!

*Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.* [Henry Ford]. Never stop learning, achieving and dreaming!





Once every ten years, all the horticultural greats gather during International Horticultural Exhibition. Experts from all over the world come together at Floriade to present green solutions that make our cities more enjoyable, beautiful and sustainable. Within the theme 'Growing Green Cities', more than 400 national and international participants showcase their latest green innovations, solutions and applications. From state-of-the-art solar roof tiles to amazing vertical façade gardens and from the best ways to grow tomatoes to the latest pruning techniques. You can see, taste and experience it all at Floriade in Almere.



New school building Aeres



Beside all the inspiring gadgets and innovations, you can also simply enjoy all the natural splendour on the site. You can take a stroll through the many flowering gardens, the inspiring arboretum and feast on exciting dishes or immerse yourself in the varied art and culture programme. There is something for everyone. Aeres Almere is also located on the Floriade terrain – you can always come and visit us. By the way, our university building has received the Circular Award 2022 in the category Public buildings!



Floriade inspires you to live greener and healthier. After a day at the Expo you will go home inspired and full of ideas. This is an invitation to visit greenest and healthiest city of the Netherlands: Almere. The Expo is open daily from 10.00 – 19.00 and will run until 9 October 2022. ■

For more info check: [floriade.com/en](https://floriade.com/en)

