

# Prof. Dr. ir. Patrick Van Damme

## faculty of tropical agrisciences

MISSION STATEMENT – DEAN OFFICE IDEAS



1

## My personal situation and position

- ▶ I am retiring from Ghent University as from October 1, 2021, thus becoming **fully available** to commit myself to the maximum to be FTA dean



"I was made Professor Emeritus before my time."

2

## My personal situation and position

so, the FTA **dean position** election comes at **the right and best moment** possible (as my current Ghent tasks are/having been phasing out for a while now)

my qualities and strengths

- ▶ listen before deciding, and **listen with empathy**: first listen, analyse/synthesize, then take well-informed decisions (in consensus)
- ▶ **pro-activity**: 'read the writing on the wall'
- ▶ **availability**, both virtual and *in vivo* – so, presence in Prague will be part and parcel of my duty
- ▶ Recognized and long-term (> 42 years) **experience** (in the tropics): scientific, academic,... with working in/with and **managing** (international) organisations: **leadership**, including conflict prevention and management skills
- ▶ very good in **delegating**, and entrusting people with responsibilities
- ▶ international **network of key persons and organisations** (including CGIAR-centres/system, IFAD, FAO,...)
- ▶ **networker** and **socialiser** (in order to lobby, federate, get acquainted with important persons/organisations...)
- ▶ **language skills** (Dutch (mother tongue), English, French, Spanish, German, Afrikaans... willingness to acquire basic Czech language skills)
- ▶ very well functioning under **endurance/stress** ('no panic'...)
- ▶ distinguish the **essentials** from details – synthetic mind

3



4

## My personal situation and position

my qualities and strengths: experience with similar (management) functions

- ▶ (currently) board chair of International Foundation for Science ([www.ifs.se](http://www.ifs.se))
- ▶ 2021 president Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences ([www.kaowarsom.be/en](http://www.kaowarsom.be/en))
- ▶ past president of European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development ([www.ard-europe.org/efard/](http://www.ard-europe.org/efard/)) (2015 – 2020)
- ▶ (still) president of the Africa Platform of the Ghent University Association ([www.africaplatform.ugent.be](http://www.africaplatform.ugent.be)) (2012 - )
- ▶ past president and chair of the Centre for Sustainable Development, Ghent University ([www.cdo.ugent.be](http://www.cdo.ugent.be))
- ▶ mandates in boards of WWF (Belgium, and Flanders), Society of Economic Botany, NGOs,...

5

## My personal situation and position

my qualities and strengths: experience with similar (management) functions should feed into

- ▶ team-based pro-active management of the faculty, based
- ▶ on presence in Prague/university with a commitment to
- ▶ participate in official meetings as required/expected, in
- ▶ concertation and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders
- ▶ ...

6

## (firm) national position of the faculty

- ▶ our faculty has a unique 'selling' proposition we should be proud of, but also 'exploit'/use to good effect ...
  - ▶ THE reference **tropical agriculture faculty in the country**, with a
  - ▶ unique set of **partner countries**, institutions
  - ▶ long standing involvement in Czech Republic scientific collaboration and research programmes resulting in internationally recognized publications and policy documents
  - ▶ young, enthusiastic staff **teaching in English**, and fluent in several international languages, including English, Spanish,... French... German... Russian... with good connections and working ethos and experience
  - ▶ 'budding' international staff involvement, including through
  - ▶ a fair number of post-docs

7

## International position of the faculty

- ▶ our faculty has a unique 'selling' proposition we should be proud of, but also 'exploit'/use to good effect ...
  - ▶ amongst the **only tropical agriculture faculties** in Europe, and the world, with a
  - ▶ unique set of **partner countries**, institutions (globally: ex-communist countries also in Africa, America and Asia, strong links with Central Asia – bring these partnerships to a higher, international quality level ?!) (FTZ as a key partner for international R&D, supporting sound science-baed development around the world)
  - ▶ long standing involvement in European (and beyond) collaboration programmes (ERASMUS, mobility,...) resulting in internationally validated course programmes
  - ▶ young, enthusiastic staff **teaching in English**, and fluent in several international languages, including English, Spanish,... French... German... Russian... with good connections and working ethos and experience
  - ▶ 'budding' international staff
  - ▶ fair number of post-docs



8

# International position of the faculty

- ▶ our faculty has a unique 'selling' proposition
  - ▶ much-appreciated x recognized involvement in and contribution to international organisations (AgriNatura, YPARD, EFARD,... )
  - ▶ over the years: the faculty's standings in international rankings has risen, but... still some way to go (consolidate ! keep up the momentum !)
  - ▶ **objectives/taglines**
    - ▶ consolidate and improve our standings/rankings
    - ▶ maintain/make the faculty a **key partner** in more international R&D and teaching initiatives
    - ▶ FTA to structurally imbed its international mandate, that should be shared by all

## University World Rankings

Ranking Source	2021	2020	2019
QS World University Rankings by TopUniversities	801	801	-
Academic Ranking of World Universities by Shanghai Jiao Tong University	801	901	901
World University Rankings by Times Higher Education	1001	1001	801
Best Global Universities Rankings by U.S. News & World Report	1030	1003	1023

9

Life Sciences ranking (Shanghai): Charles university: position 154; .... CULS: 208; ...

151-200	Weizmann Institute of Science		2	22.8
201-300	Aberystwyth University		17-23	28.9
201-300	Arizona State University		43-64	23.8
201-300	Auburn University		43-64	35.1
201-300	Ben-Gurion University of the Negev		3-4	29.7
201-300	Claude Bernard University Lyon 1		14-19	26.0
201-300	Clemson University		43-64	35.1
201-300	Complutense University of Madrid		10-13	29.2
201-300	Czech University of Life Sciences Prague		3-5	33.9
201-300	Dalhousie University		0-10	29.3
201-300	Ecole Normale Supérieure - Lyon		14-19	18.4
201-300	Estonian University of Life Sciences		2	27.1
201-300	Hainan University		26-39	31.2
201-300	Heidelberg University		17-24	23.2
201-300	Henan University		26-39	22.3
201-300	Hokkaido University		4-7	39.5

[ShanghaiRanking's Global Ranking of Academic Subjects 2020 - Agricultural Sciences | Shanghai Ranking - 2020](#)

10

## International mandate of the faculty

- ▶ internationalisation
  - ▶ **education** (student/staff mobility)
  - ▶ **research** ((inter)national funding mechanisms, and partners/networks)
  - ▶ relations with/**service** contracts for private partners (industry, NGOs,...)
  
- ▶ (consolidate) the faculty as a hub/physical location for international organisations (YPARD, AgriNatura,...)

11

## International mandate of the faculty

(based on a faculty-wide consultation/hearings with and ideas from everyone concerned under guidance of the vice-dean for internationalisation, involving all stakeholders including **alumni**)

- ▶ review current international policy at University and Faculty level: what's good, what can/should be improved, what is lacking,... : central question: **what is the faculty, c. q. university, outreach, and where can we improve** (SWOT analysis,...)
- ▶ **align** (and where necessary/possible: take the lead in) **with the university's international policy**
- ▶ review and consolidate existing collaborations and networks, and
- ▶ initiate/join new strategic partnerships
- ▶ review/revamp bilateral agreements
- ▶ strengthen the faculty's outreach efforts (also by involving alumni, and participation in fairs)

12

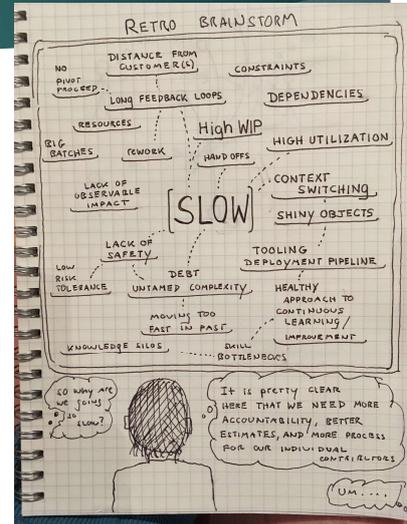
## International mandate of the faculty

- ▶ review the faculty's regional and thematic focus: quid Africa? – in this respect
- ▶ align with the Czech republic government's key geographic/thematic/ODA intervention priorities
- ▶ consolidate collaboration with Czech representations abroad
- ▶ review the finance mechanisms supporting internationalisation
- ▶ support individual researchers, groups, departments,...
- ▶ pro-actively provide training on internationalisation
- ▶ 'lean' on the government's internationalisation policy development (through policy-oriented department/think tank?)

'deliverable' – a 4-year internationalisation strategy

create/re-organise international office around specific regions/region hubs (Africa platform, Asia platform): specialise, focus,...

and... *festina lente* – change should be progressive, will probably be slow, and should respect local 'culture' and sensitivities so as not to 'lose' anyone



13

## Research

- ▶ FTZ is a centre of excellence that participates in numerous (inter)national research projects
  - ▶ consolidate existing collaborations + review them for SWOTs
  - ▶ exploit new ones, and consistently share (new) calls with researchers, and
  - ▶ assist and support in **proposal writing**
  - ▶ **improve English writing skills**
  - ▶ actively attract (and create) partnerships for engaging in novel, but also 'classic' subjects for which FTZ has proven track record
  - ▶ **data management plans**
  - ▶ Promote/attract **ERC grants**...
  - ▶ actively promote within-university, transfaculty collaboration
  - ▶ organise within-university science days, in order to 'get-to-know-your-scientists'
  - ▶ organise (more) international conferences: be proud of and share our achievements

14

## Education

- ▶ FTZ offers course programmes in English that (are able to) attract an international audience of students
- ▶ (given Covid-19, but also international demand for our courses/programmes) offer (and promote) web-based programmes and diplomas
- ▶ point of attention: maintain and increase quality level of diplomas, incl. level of PhDs that should have at least a comparable to higher level than equivalent, foreign programmes

15

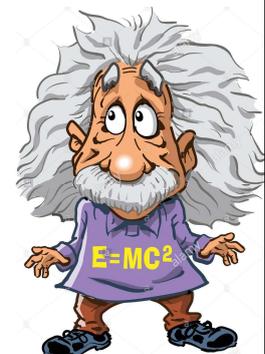
## Education

"I never teach my pupils, I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn."

– Albert Einstein

taglines:

- **dare to think, to reflect, to expect quality !**
- **create an enabling environment, in**
- **concertation and through team work (dean and vice-deans, together with central/faculty administration)**
- **build human capital on a continuous basis**



16

## Publication culture

Tag line: *scripta manent, verba volant...*

- ▶ develop/maintain a consistent excellence, IF-journal publication culture
- ▶ support (individual) researchers through foreign language courses (Academic English; use European money/structural funds to build capacity/improve English)
- ▶ use publications as a way of promoting the faculty's standing in the scientific/academic world
- ▶ (see international rankings... financial basis of the faculty)

17

## Towards a new evaluation culture...

Objective: take up/integrate the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA) principles

- ▶ current evaluation based on publication metrics (number x kind of journal) provides a (too) narrow interpretation of quality: 'good research' is narrowed down to only one aspect
- ▶ classic research metrics do not take into account differences in research disciplines, don't adapt to new evolutions (interdisciplinary research, or societal valorisation of research, and are sometimes counterproductive (discouraging research/application)
- ▶ publish or perish leads to pressure and sometimes problems with scientific integrity
  - ▶ so: bottomline is that quantitative output-oriented evaluations do not enough reflect the kind and objectives of research that has to be evaluated, nor the role that researchers should take up in society

18

## Towards a new evaluation culture...

Objective: take up/integrate the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA) principles

New model = based on **qualitative peer review**, complementing the classic indicators

- ▶ indicators should take into account the evaluation's objective, the target impact of the research and diversity amongst disciplines
- ▶ (Teaching) evaluation results to be used to improve teaching performance, not to punish (in line with this: provide support/capacity building)
- ▶ *in concreto*, when evaluating individual researchers

19

## Towards a new evaluation culture...

Objective: take up/integrate the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA) principles (in line with international developments)

- ▶ based on the **5 most important accomplishments**, with their possible economic and societal impact
- ▶ vision on **interdisciplinarity**, with an explicit impact plan
- ▶ go **beyond mere research output**, and comprise elements of teaching, leadership and 'people management', and
- ▶ **institutional and societal engagement**, with
- ▶ research also comprising peer review, editorial work,...

*caveat*: also this model has flaws,... so need to finetune in collaboration/dialogue with all involved

20

## Communication

FTZ has numerous excellent research groups, we have numerous, highly respected scientists

- ▶ **showcase our successes, strengths**,... and develop
- ▶ an active policy of being present in the classic media, radio, television,... but also
- ▶ using modern communication media,
- ▶ to reach (inter)national, specialised/laymen audience
- ▶ **faculty newsletter** is a very powerful medium to be shared on wider scale via twitter/facebook/whatsapp ...
- ▶ follow/monitor information sharing for greater outreach, popularity,... with a wide community of stakeholders
- ▶ pro-actively provide position papers, to inform policy/politicians/public and prompt debate

deliverable: communication strategy developed, and shared on numerous platforms

21

thank you, děkuji ...  
any questions ? nějaké otázky ?



22