



Wetskills-Oman 2020

Press-release

Third Wetskills in Oman successfully wrapped-up

Team Wave Integration won the third Wetskills Water Challenge in Oman. The team came up with a creative solution to kick-start a sustainable and self-supportive local Water Footprint Network in Oman and combining experience jobs for talented female graduates. The case was formulated by a consortium of Water Footprint Implementation, Oman Water Society, Water Footprint Network and Sultan Qaboos University. These organizations aim to establish a local network for awareness and capacity development including the implementation of the Water Footprint concept. Maartje Wadman, Junior Soil Advisor of Antea Group in The Netherlands, presenter of the pitch for the winning team: “Really would like to thank everyone who made this Wetskills edition still an unforgettable experience. I am sure that I will come back to Oman and that I will join another Wetskills edition.”

Combining two challenges to one concept

The winning team came up with an idea for providing experience jobs for unemployed higher educated women in Oman as accelerator of the creation of the Water Footprint Hub, an initiative of Water Footprint Network, Sultan Qaboos University and Water Footprint Implementation. This hub (as network of organizations with a focus on Water Footprint) could link the young (female) professionals to water farmers water users, as farmers, in Oman. The talents will execute small scaled research for the assessment of water use using tools as Water Footprint Calculator and Water Footprint Assessment Tool. The concept is considered easy to adapt and to expand into other areas as well. There is a business potential present for all partners in the hub and a need for young female professionals in Oman.

Maartje Wadman: “After some interviews it became clear that it is difficult for many young graduates in the water field to get a job. Especially women. This means that the knowledge of these young experts is not fully used. At the same time, more than 80% of the very scarce water of Oman goes into the agricultural sector. The water footprint of this sector is therefore very high. The knowledge of all the young water experts could be used to make this water use more efficient.”

Wetskills: Cross-sectoral collaboration for facing water challenges

23 water talents from Oman, The Netherlands and some other countries came together in Muscat. Between 7 and 17 March, they worked together in teams to come up with out-of-the-box concepts for actual water related cases, posed by local and international case owners. The

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Sultan Qaboos University was hosting the event with partners as the Embassy of The Kingdom of The Netherlands in Muscat, Haya Water, Oman Water Society.

Coronavirus

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) affected the Wetskills programme in Oman. Despite all adaptive measures, the shortening of 2 days and the postpone of the 2nd International conference on Water Resources in Arid Areas where the Finals & Awarding Ceremony were planned, the programme went well, the participants were satisfied, and the results are promising.

The Wetskills supervisors Marcel Rompelman and Ahmed Al-Busaidi (SQU) managed to complete a quality programme in Muscat. Maartje Wadman: *“This year, Wetskills was maybe not always as it is used to be, because of the COVID-19. The conference was cancelled, and it was not always that easy to be flexible. However, we are very lucky and grateful that we could still finish our Wetskills Oman 2020 edition! It was still an unforgettable adventure. The combination of working on a water case and exploring a different country is very nice. At the same time, it is very educational to work together with local people who have a different culture and a different way of thinking. Consequently, you are learning about a lot of different aspects and you will definitely experience the process of self-reflection. Of course, we had enough time to do some sightseeing and experience the country with our local team members.”*

About Wetskills

The Wetskills Water Challenge is a two-weeks pressure-cooker program for students and young professionals with a passion for water, climate and sustainability from all over the world. In transdisciplinary and transcultural teams they work together on water-related challenges. Their challenge: *develop innovative and out-of-the-box solution for water challenges in a fast-changing world.* The challenges are real life and local cases from companies and (governmental) organisations from the water sector.

This was the third Wetskills Water Challenge in Oman. The first Wetskills Water Challenge was organized in 2010 and the Wetskills programme became an independent Foundation in 2015. Since 2010, 44 Wetskills events have been organised worldwide, in 23 different countries. More than 850 participants and 200 organisations have been involved worldwide. The Challenges take place worldwide, usually during international water related events, expert meetings or trade missions.



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More information

Website: www.wetskills.com

Twitter: Wetskills

Facebook: Wetskills

Instagram: Wetskills

Movie of the event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir-z42j5egs&t=2s>

Johan Oost, Managing Director Wetskills Foundation (johan.oost@wetskills.com)

Ahmed Al-Busaidi, Sultan Qaboos University & Wetskills Foundation (ahmed99@squ.edu.om)

Some pictures



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Overview of the cases

Case 1: Turn Energy to Water and back. Creating a cross-sectoral communication

Case owner: Oman Water Society & Water Footprint Implementation

Oman is water scarce country but it an energy-rich country, when looking at large (fossil) energy resources. Energy in Oman is rather cheap and the main catalyst for its economy. Oman is also facing the world's sustainability challenge of lowering the fossil energy and created alternative potential energy production. But is Oman aware that this also affect the use of its valuable and scarce water? And do the various involved ministries for water, energy, but also internal affairs and economy communicate in a transparent way to each other? How could the determination of the Water Footprint of Oman's energy-mix, but also the Carbon Footprint of Oman's water use, create an improved cross-sectoral communication in Oman?

Case 2: Visual Problem Appraisal for Integrated Water management in Oman

Case owners: Van Hall Larenstein

To achieve the ambitions of the National Water Resource Master Plan, it is envisioned that young Omani need to learn about Water management issues in their country. Involved institutions are exploring innovative learning strategies with a potential to accelerate water management knowledge and expertise with an interdisciplinary focus. In the search for a learning strategy that caters for an action-research orientation on water management, Wetskills Oman is exploring the potential of a series of film-based interviews for distance learning (Visual Problem Appraisal).

Case 3: Impact of NON-domestic wastewater

Case owner: Haya Water

Discharging Non-Domestic Wastewater to the sewerage system is an operational, environmental and safety risk. This can also cause accelerated corrosion, generates odours and dangerous gases; sewer network blockage; affect the sewage treatment processes; adversely impact bio-solids and effluent quality. Moreover, discharging Non-Domestic Wastewater to the sewer poses a health and safety risk to personnel working in and around the sewerage system due to substances in the industrial wastewater or their reactions with other substances. This study aims to improve and protect Haya Water assets from discharging of Non-Domestic Wastewater into Haya Water sewage network and STP's.

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Case 4: Chances for Agroforestry in Oman using treated effluent

Case owner: Sultan Qaboos University, department of Soil Sciences

Over 15 years ago a country study was done on the possibilities for forests in Oman. The study showed it is critical to integrate planted trees and forests in more holistic approaches to provide environmental services, biodiversity benefits and meet people's short and long-term needs (i.e. agroforestry). The creation of demonstration sites was suggested. What are the chances for agroforestry in Oman? In what way can treated effluent help in setting up agroforestry?

Case 5: Sustainable embedding of Water Footprint in Oman

Case owners: Sultan Qaboos University, Water Footprint Network, Oman Water Society & Water Footprint Implementation

Water Footprint has the potential to become a leading concept for quantifying freshwater use in Oman. Recent years the Water Footprint Network (WFN) established some hubs worldwide: specific locations with a local network focusing on research, awareness raising and capacity building about Water Footprint. Last year WFN and its implementation partner (WFI) discussed the creation of a dedicated Water Footprint Hub in Oman together with Sultan Qaboos University and potential partners. This hub should do the same as other hubs, but also focus on implementation projects to bring the Water Footprint Theory in practice in Oman. How can the Case Owners set-up a sustainable and self-supportive Water Footprint Hub organization in Oman?

