

Louise Fresco

University Professor, University of Amsterdam



Current academic positions

Prof. Louise O. Fresco (1952) was appointed a University Professor at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) in June 2006. In this position, especially created for her, Professor Fresco specialises in the foundations of sustainable development in an international context.

Louise Fresco is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), a non-resident member of the *Académie d'agriculture de France* in Paris and the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry in Stockholm, a corresponding member of the *Real Academia de Ingeniería* in Madrid and a member of the Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities.

Fresco further holds a visiting professorship at the Institute of Earth Sciences at Stanford University and at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation in Palo Alto, in the United States. She is also an Honorary Professor at Wageningen University and taught previously in Stanford, Stockholm, Leuven and Uppsala.

Other current activities

Outside academia, Louise O. Fresco holds many positions in international and national advisory and supervisory boards, councils, and committees.

In 2012 Louise O. Fresco was appointed Extraordinary Member of the Dutch Safety Board. In that same year she also became a member of the Strategy Experts Panel of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Rome. Since 2011 she serves on the advisory council of The Hague Institute for Global Justice. She was appointed by the Crown in 2008 as an independent member of the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) where she since 2011 also serves on the executive committee. In 2011 she became a member of the Dutch-French Cooperation Council in The Hague.

At the end of 2010 Fresco joined the Shell Foundation as an external member of the board of Trustees. Since 2010 she participates on the scientific advisory committee of the OCP Group (Office Chérifien des Phosphates). In May 2010 she was among the members of the

InterAcademy Council's international scientific team appointed by the United Nations to investigate the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

She was named a Non-Executive Director and a member of the Corporate Responsibility and Reputation Committee at Unilever in 2009.

From 2006 Fresco is a member of the Supervisory Board of *Rabobank Nederland*, one of the largest banks currently operating in the agricultural sector worldwide. Also in 2006 she became a member of the

Trilateral Commission and a member of the Governing Council of the United Nations University.

In addition, Fresco is also a member of the Advisory board of the Amsterdam symposium on the History of Food in the Low Countries and a member of the jury of the Johannes van Dam Prize, both founded in 2013. She joined the Board of Trustees of Unisca Amsterdam, became a member of the editorial board of *De Gids*, a literary magazine and Chair of the Advisory Committee of Tedx Amsterdam in 2011. From 2010 she holds seats on the Board of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and on the Council of Advisors for the World Food Prize. In 2009 she was the initiator of "Film & Food" in Spui 25, the Academic Cultural Center in Amsterdam. She is a member of the AtoZ Forum, the Reading & Writing Foundation in The Hague since 2008. From 2007 she chairs the *Compagnie Fonds* and its Board of Professors of the Maritime Museum in Amsterdam. She is a member of the Board of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation since 2006.

Previous academic, advisory and professional activities

Fresco was granted her doctoral degree with honours from Wageningen University in 1986, where she specialised in tropical agriculture.

As professor of plant production systems at Wageningen University from 1990 until 1997, where her research focused on tropical regions, Fresco had a major hand in the educational reforms that advanced interdisciplinary cooperation between the fields of plant-breeding and soil science and the social sciences. During this period she was also involved in extensive fieldwork in Spain, West Africa and Latin America. Since beginning her fieldwork career with UN projects in Papua New Guinea and

Zaire/Congo in the latter half of the 1970s, Fresco's work has taken her to more than 60 countries outside Europe and North America.

From 1997 until 1999 she was director of research at the Agriculture Department of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome, and in January 2000 went on to become that organisation's assistant director-general for Agriculture. In this position, which she held until May 2006, she was responsible for all technical activities in the areas of agricultural production (including nutrition from 2005 onwards).

Prior to these activities she held posts as chair of the (Dutch) Advisory Council for Environmental and Nature Research and as co-founder and chairing member of the Land Use and Land Cover Change Project (LUCC) of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP).

From 1986 onwards Fresco served in various capacities at the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), for example as evaluator at the International Potato Institute. She long held a seat on the Board of the West African Rice Development Association in Ivory Coast and also sat on the Board of the Asian Vegetable Research Center in Taiwan.

In the 2005/2006 academic year, Leiden University appointed Fresco as its Cleveringa Chair, and in 2006 she was selected to deliver the Rabobank Duisenberg Lecture at the annual WB/IMF meeting in Singapore.

From 2006 until 2007 she served as chair of the panel for the review of the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP), a program set up jointly by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) and the International Human Dimensions of Global Change Programme (IDHP).

As a member of the Delta Committee in 2007-2008, she was involved in the design of a long term plan to protect the Dutch coastline and hinterland from the consequences of the expected rise in sea level and climate change.

She has also served on the jury of the Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences. In June 2011 she was appointed as chairman of the National Platform Rio +20.

Last but not least, she was a member of the jury of the 2011 (Dutch) Libris Literature Prize.

Writing and lecturing to national and international audiences are important activities, for a selection see below. As a leading thinker, she was honoured with an invitation to speak at the annual TED Conference in Palm Springs in 2009.

Lectures

- Food, Scarcity and Abundance, Stockholm, 2013 (English)
- *Al door het zeggen van het woord*, Abel Herzberg lecture, 2012
- *Feiten in overvloed*, Kohnstamm lecture, 2011
- *Van de vette streken der aarde en overvloed van koren*, Westhoff lecture, 2010
- *Vlees noch vis*, AUV lezing UvA, 2009 / Neither Fish nor Flesh, AUV lecture Russia, 2011 (Dutch & English)
- Louise Fresco on feeding the whole world. TED USA 2009 (English)
- *De smaak van het zonlicht*, Lecture for acceptance of the Groeneveld Prize, 2008
- *Het einde van de universiteit*, Dies lecture University of Amsterdam, 2007
- Biomass, food and sustainability, Rabobank Duisenberg Lecture, 2006 (English)
- *Nieuwe Spijswetten*, Cleveringa lecture, 2005
- *Schaduwdenkers en Lichtzoekers*, Huizinga lecture, 1998

Publications

Fresco has a long list of publications to her name, both in academic journals and in the popular media. Science Magazine recently published her editorial *The GMO Stalemate in Europe*.

She writes a fortnightly column for the leading Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad* and is a frequent contributor to a wide range of national and international radio and television programmes.

In addition to her scholarly publications, Fresco has also authored or co-authored eight non-scholarly books in Dutch, including three novels.

In October 2012 she published her book 'Hamburgers in Paradise, food in times of scarcity and abundance'. This book reflects three decades of travels throughout the world in search of how food is produced, how it is consumed and how we can use the lessons of the past to design food systems of the future.

She is a member of the PEN worldwide association of writers, which advocates freedom of expression and acts on behalf of writers who are oppressed for their views, as well as of the Dutch Writer's Guild (VvL).

In 2012 she has been ranked by the Dutch newspaper *The Volkskrant* number nineteen, as second woman, in the 'Top 200 of most influential Dutch people'. In the 'Top Sustainability 2012' of the newspaper *Trouw* she is number twelve. She has been ranked by the monthly magazine *Opzij* number one in the 'Top-100 2011' of most influential women in science and education.

References:

[Website Louise O. Fresco](#)

[Science: editorial The GMO Stalemate in Europe](#)

[TED: Louise O. Fresco on feeding the whole world](#)