

PROJECT MANAGER CORALIE VAN BREUKELEN-GROENEVELD

# Keeping an eye on the big picture

*Teamwork is a priority for environmental specialist Coralie van Breukelen-Groeneveld. As a project manager at Bayer CropScience, she coordinates the development of new active substances and the associated products for crop protection. To get all her co-workers on board for their common goal, she relies on both her organizational talents and communication skills.*

What interests her most is the big picture. "I always like to see how things are related and how they fit into an overall system," says van Breukelen. The 42-year-old from Holland – who spent several years of her childhood in South Africa – recognized that very early in life. This fundamental curiosity is also what motivated her to major in environmental science at Wageningen University in the Netherlands, where her area of specialization was biology and chemistry. She discovered that her main interest lay in subjects like sustainability and environmental protection. Human health was also one of her passions from the start, and ultimately prompted her to finally choose toxicology. What effect do substances have inside the body? How does the environment alter an active substance? Why and how does an active substance change? "These are questions I'm still thinking about today," says van Breukelen.

## Developing new crop protection agents takes patience

After earning her degree, she started her career at an institute for food and nutrition research in Holland. "For research I was simply too impatient, always trying to find the broader context as quickly as possible," she says today. So she initially worked in new substance risk analysis for the Dutch authorities. She then joined Bayer CropScience in early 2003, putting her analytical skills to work representing the company's innovative active substances before the European Commission and the European Parliament. "The first few weeks were really difficult," van Breukelen recalls. At the beginning of her job, she had to familiarize herself thoroughly with all legislation on crop protection. "It was a mountain of dry, legal texts," she relates. "And I now know that the development and registration of new crop protection agents requires nearly as much patience as the research," she says with a grin. As project manager, she spends every day managing the tight restrictions imposed on the development of new crop protection agents. Her responsibilities in Global Project Management at Bayer CropScience start immediately after research ends. And the path of a promising substance from discovery to application



Scientist with foresight: environmental protection and sustainability are issues close to Coralie van Breukelen-Groeneveld's heart.

in practice is long. After researchers have synthesized a new molecule and verified its efficacy, numerous additional steps then follow. "We must prove that the substance is not harmful to humans, has no unacceptable impacts on the environment and is effective against the targeted pest. Only then can we satisfy the requirements of the supervisory authorities," van Breukelen summarizes.

But that's not all. "Even during development, we must consider how we can produce and market a new product as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible – but also effectively and in sufficient quantities." Her projects therefore range from a broad-spectrum herbicide for rice farmers in Asia (see *research* 26 "All-round talent for rice fields") to a universal fungicide with a new mode of action. For her, this is the perfect assignment. "I'm right where I always wanted to be!"



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