WAGENINGEN UR
For quality of life

Lecturing IPRs at Wageningen University;

some initial experiences

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Wageningen University

- Formerly Wageningen Agricultural University
- 4 science fields: Agrotechnology & Food ciences, Animal Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Plant Sciences and Social Sciences
- One Law-professor, specialising in food law

IPRs

- Originally quite important in plant sciences – notably Plant Breeder's Rights
- Becoming very important now, particularly in genetic and food research (patents), geographic information systems and genomics (data) and of course publishing in general (copyright)

Myself

- Trained as a plant breeder / geneticist; worked in developing countries for some time; got interested in the policy and legal aspects of my work; returned to Wageningen mid 90's (TRIPS and CBD)
- Currently: policy research on aspects related to genetic resources (biodiversity) and genetic research (biotechnology and breeding)
- Started an international PBR short course in 1997. Together with Prof van de Meulen, start an IP course in the regular curriculum next year
- Since this year: member of the IP-chamber of the court in The Hague (for PBR-cases)

Main challenges – PBR course

- International PBR course (2 weeks)
  - Deal with vast differences in knowledge levels
  - Deal with different backgrounds: policy makers, trade negotiators, biologists/seed technologists, sometimes lawyers
  - Deal with different levels of development of the PBR system in different countries

Different needs and expectations

- Gradual change from policy to technical aspects of implementation

How to deal with these differences

- 1. Make them explicit !
- 2. initially put emphasis on the basics
  - Objectives of IP systems / historical developments
  - International policy environment
  - Seed systems (where PBR operates)
- 3. stimulate learning within the group
  - Sharing experiences; analysing different situations
  - Over 50% group work
- 4. let participants develop their own ‘home work’
  - What do they want to achieve back home

Main challenges – regular IP course

- No prior knowledge of law with the students
- Different interests of students
  - Science students (geneticists/food technologists) may want to learn HOW to use IP
  - Social science students may want to critically assess the roles of IP
  - Developing country students (approx. 60%) may have special interests
- Limited institutional experience with IP / unclear institutional policy towards IP

We hope to achieve

- Science students should be able to communicate with IP-specialists and include/oversee IP implications in their thesis research
- Social science students should gain interest in researching IP

- A basic knowledge
  - Scientists' level (how to apply etc.)
  - Institutional level (university poicies / private sector)
  - (inter) National level (WTO, developing countries, related rights – TK, CBD)
- A critical mind of what IP can contribute to and how it may block innovation

Our first course in 2010

- Programme of a 12 days' course
  - So: basics and policy (history of IP; law; WTO)
  - IP mechanics and strategies
  - Searching patent databases
  - IPR and research policies, incl. open source options
- Some 50% lectures / 50% group work
- Several guest lecturers from private sector, patent office, etc.

Our first course in 2010

- It will be our first course, so . . . . .
- Still learning and we hope to learn from you!!