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Directeur Instituten KNAW  
Prof. Dr. Theo Mulder,  
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Dear professor Mulder

On behalf of all scientific advisory board (WeCo) members, I am sending you our response on the CBS Fungal Biodiversity Centre (CBS-KNAW) SEP evaluation report.

Overall the WeCo is happy with the thorough and positive review of CBS-KNAW by the evaluation committee. We also support most, but not all of their recommendations. Below we summarize our comments on a few points of agreement and also some minor points we feel that are departures on our views.

- 1. CBS-KNAW budget.** The WeCo strongly supports the comments made by the evaluation committee on limitations of the present CBS-KNAW budget. To achieve the ambitious but realistic goals set out by CBS-KNAW as unique world-leading centre for fungal biodiversity, the funding is far below what is required. The CBS-KNAW has expanded and benchmarked its collection to a world-class level in the last six years. This has given CBS-KNAW enormous outreach achieved by an excellent hardworking research team. In contrast to this clear progress, the CBS-KNAW budget has actually declined since 2002. This is also a great concern for the WeCo and was stressed by the evaluation committee. To remain a world-leading institute the CBS-KNAW has to compete with countries like China and Thailand, where fungal collections are being expanded to search for natural products with various biological activities including medicines, enzymes and health compounds. Increase in financial support by the KNAW headquarters is particularly important to explore new research lines with the fungal collection as a rich resource. These include their plans to further develop bioinformatics, new products and medical mycology.
- 2. Bioinformatics at CBS-KNAW.** The WeCo does not support the conclusions drawn by the evaluation committee on the quality of Bioinformatics Division. The WeCo judges that this division has performed very well during the reporting period. It has given the collection (now more than 80,000 species) a global outreach that is accessible to everyone. The WeCo felt strongly that the Bioinformatics Division had made substantial contributions to the vitality of CBS-KNAW as a whole, and also that it had developed some e-resources of considerable value and novelty. We therefore do not agree with the view that it was performing below the level of the top-performing divisions at the CBS. The WeCo supports the conclusion of the evaluation committee that the field of "Functional

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Bioinformatics” needs to be further developed, but this next step could not have been made without the enormous achievements of the present Bioinformatics Division in the last six years. The expansion into Functional Bioinformatics needs additional budget for CBS-KNAW as well as a few young talented postdocs.

3. **Medical Mycology at CBS-KNAW.**

With the retirement of prof. Sybren de Hoog, the CBS-KNAW needs to set up a new research area in medical biology. The evaluation committee proposes that the former research group of prof. De Hoog will merge with the “Yeast Group” lead by Dr. Boekhout. However, the WeCo is in favor of recruiting a new talented scientist outside CBS-KNAW. He/she can develop this new research area in collaboration with one of the University Hospitals in the Netherlands. The appointee should get all support and freedom to develop such an area that would provide great opportunities for national and international collaborations. The view of WeCo was that the appointee needs not hold similar interests to prof. de Hoog and that candidates be drawn from an international pool by a bespoke committee with both internal and external representation.

4. **New product development at CBS-KNAW.** The WeCo supports the conclusion by the evaluation committee that this is a very powerful research area that is well backed up by the rich resource of the fungal collection. This research area has enormous potential for national and international collaborations with academia and industry, but also requires new investments in talented personnel with expertise in bioinformatics and biochemistry (enzyme and secondary products) and equipment.

5. **PhD supervision.**

The WeCo supports the recommendation by the evaluation committee that both national and international PhD students should become member of a local or national graduate school allowing evaluation of PhD research and teaching by comparable national and international criteria.

6. **Conclusion.** We hope that central KNAW management supports new investments in CBS-KNAW which is a world renowned centre of expertise in world mycology, that needs more financial support to remain a vibrant global player in the rapidly changing field of fungal genomics and metagenomics.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Pierre J.G.M. de Wit  
Chairman of the WeCo-CBS  
on behalf of all members.