

## Curriculum Vitae - Willem Ferwerda

Name: Willem H. Ferwerda  
Date of Birth: 8<sup>th</sup> July 1959, Dutch  
Contact: +31 621822539;  
E-mail: [willem.ferwerda@commonland.com](mailto:willem.ferwerda@commonland.com)  
Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/willem-ferwerda-1540135>

Ferwerda is founder of Commonland, which he started in 2013 supported by the Rotterdam School of Management (Erasmus University), the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management and the COMON Foundation. Commonland is a systems developer of large scale holistic landscape management and restoration projects, bringing landscape-wide solutions on biodiversity, carbon, regenerative agriculture and communities. Therefore Ferwerda developed the 4 Returns framework for holistic landscape restoration and integrated landscape management, an approach that is both practical and adaptable, and enables landscape stakeholders to co-create a long-term vision and collectively act upon it. It is based on the Ecosystem Approach (that was endorsed at COP5 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity).

From 2013-2024 Ferwerda was CEO-Founder of Comonland. In May 2024, Ferwerda handed over his executive responsibilities to a new Managing Director. As Founder, he dedicates his time to policy, publications, landscape finance, guiding landscape initiatives, while sharing his expertise with foundations, governments and companies in boards and advisory roles.

From 2000-2012, Ferwerda was director of IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN NL). There, he structured and built out the organisations from 5 to 50 fte, led major ecosystem grant programs, among other things, and was the initiator of Leaders for Nature, an international network of CEOs and prominent business figures committed to biodiversity conservation. It led to several agreements and policy changes with business networks and still exist in India. Between 1995 and 2000, he led IUCN NL's Tropical Rainforest Grants Program, which supported hundreds of local conservation and restoration projects in more than 40 countries in the tropics.

In 2012, Ferwerda left IUCN NL for a sabbatical during which he developed the 4 Returns Framework. Ferwerda studied biology, tropical agriculture and environmental sciences at the Vrije Universiteit and the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá, Colombia. He specializes in the interaction between tropical ecosystems and agriculture, and systems change management. Before joining IUCN, he worked in ecotourism and led expeditions in Latin America and Europe. The 4 Returns Framework for Landscape Restoration was published in 2012 and updated in 2015 by the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management and the Rotterdam School of Management (Erasmus University) and further developed with other landscape experts and colleagues, leading to an updated publication under the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration in 2021.

Ferwerda is involved in various international organizations in the fields of nature, biodiversity, agriculture and sustainability as an advisor or board member. Since 2012 he is executive fellow at the Rotterdam School of Management (Erasmus University), was theme lead at the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, and advisor and / or board member of several organisations such as the 1T.org (World Economic Forum), Charles Darwin Foundation (Ecuador), 1000 Landscapes for a Billion People initiative, Regen10, Future for Nature Foundation, Dutch Scientific Council for Integral Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition (RIDLV) and the Princess Irene Van Lippe-Biesterfeld NatureCollege Foundation.

In 2016, he was awarded first place in the Sustainable 100, the list of Dutch people with the most influence on the environment and sustainability. In 2019 he received the Dutch Sustainable Landscape Award. In 2023 he was awarded the Wubbo Ockels Brandaris Oeuvre Prize, for individuals who exhibit courage, perseverance, and imagination in their tireless dedication to building a sustainable society.

Willem is happily married with Petra van Veelen. They have two children, Tara (1997) and Lucas (2001-2022) and live in Bussum, The Netherlands.

#### **Summary of Curriculum Vitae**

- **May 2024 - present: Commonland:** Founder
- **2013 – April 2023: Commonland:** Founder and CEO
- **2012 – present:** Executive Fellow Business & Ecosystems at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University
- **2012 – present: IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management** special advisor business & ecosystems
- **2000 – 2012: IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands:** Executive Director
- **1995 – 1999: IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands:** Programme manager IUCN Tropical Rainforest grants Program financing 1500 projects in 40 countries
- **1992-1996: ECEAT Eco Agro Tourism foundation** (now GreenHoliday.info): co-founder and president.
- **1986- 1995: Eco-expeditions** several management positions in eco-tourism industry in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America at two medium sized companies (100-150 staff).

#### **Education**

- **2005-2006** senior management course – Management professionals Centre De Baak, Netherlands
- **1978-1987** Msc Biology, Tropical Ecology, Environmental Science, Tropical Agricultural Sciences at Free University Amsterdam (BsC), University of Amsterdam and Universidad Nacional (MsC), Bogotá, Colombia
- **1984:** Spanish (senior general secondary education diplom)

Find here a [list of publications](#)

#### **Languages:**

- Dutch: native language
- English: excellent
- Spanish: excellent
- German: good
- Italian: reasonable
- French: reasonable