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Robert van Gorcom graduated in Molecular Sciences at Wageningen University (1981) and received his PhD in Molecular Genetics at the University of Amsterdam (1997) on the analysis of gene expression in filamentous fungi.

In the following 20 years, he worked at TNO (the Dutch Organization of Applied Scientific Research) as a project leader and department manager on microbial and plant biotechnology. In 2000, he became managing director of the glasshouse horticulture research stations of Wageningen University & Research.

In 2002, he joined RIKILT (the food safety research institute of Wageningen University & Research) where he was appointed General Director from January 2010 onwards.