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Intelligence

SAMS opens the first-ever Seaweed Academy and an algae-focused lab in Scotland

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

The Scottish Association for Marine Science sees huge potential for new products and climate-change mitigation

The Scottish Association for Marine Science (<https://www.sams.ac.uk/>) (SAMS) in Oban announced on Tuesday that it had opened the Seaweed Academy in Oban to advise start-ups, train workers and share research for business development.

The academy, built with £407,000 (U.S.\$512,000) in funding from the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund, is the United Kingdom's first dedicated seaweed industry and research facility.

SAMS has a seaweed farm and nursery where seed stock is grown. Prior to the launch, 200 primary school children and other invited guests visited SAMS on Monday to learn about seaweed, its uses and its potential as a means to sequester carbon and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

"Education is absolutely critical here as we collectively need to learn from this past experience in the ocean to build a sustainable future on land," said Vincent Doumeizel of Lloyd's Register Foundation and United Nations Global Compact. "A Seaweed Academy to train future seaweed pioneers is the best



The Scottish Association for Marine Science says the Seaweed Academy will advise start-ups, train workers and aid business development. Photo courtesy of SAMS.

to reconnect altogether with sea vegetables. It may well be a new revolution for our civilization, a Seaweed Revolution!"

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Globally, the seaweed farming industry has been growing exponentially and is estimated to be worth around \$15 billion per year with the vast majority produced in Asia. Already used extensively in food ingredients, agriculture, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, seaweed farming has a low carbon footprint, using no fresh water and with minimal land-based infrastructure.

“Seaweed farming is an industry that can support coastal communities, like the ones we have across the Highlands and Islands, while showing others an example of the best of the blue economy,” said SAMS Director Prof. Nick Owens.



Beefing up seaweed production to green up beef

Josh Goldman is on a mission to reproduce asparagopsis, a tropical seaweed that could have a significant impact on global greenhouse gas emissions.



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Also, SAMS opened the Culture Collection for Algae and Protozoa (CCAP), which holds around 3,000 strains of microscopic organisms like marine and freshwater algae, cyanobacteria and protozoa, as well as seaweeds and seaweed pathogens. The collection is nearly a century old. The state-of-the-art facility will help researchers discover new products and medicines.

“We have thousands of strains of algae that we maintain and supply to the research community and commercial companies, but there remains a wealth of untapped potential to be exploited in these organisms,” said Dr. Michael Ross, head of CCAP. “Scientists around the world are looking for products useful to pharmaceuticals, cosmetics or to the food and beverage industries, and algae are high on the agenda given their natural diversity and ability to grow in a sustainable way. Researchers are also investigating the use of algae as a fuel, in cleaning up environmental pollutants and even their ability to absorb carbon.”

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