

Analysing the benefits of seaweed for SMEs

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

The health benefits of sea vegetables such as seaweed have been well documented by nutrition experts. Traditionally, those eating seaweed-based diets have shown fewer instances of obesity, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and other nervous disorders.

While Asian cultures have included [seaweed](#) in their diet for centuries, Western societies have been slower to appreciate the benefits. The

SWAFAX ('Seaweed derived anti-[inflammatory agents](#) and antioxidants') project aims to change this.

The main focus of the EUR 1 million EU-funded project has been to study seaweed sources, which have been little studied or exploited for their health benefits. Scientists are particularly interested in a group of chemicals present in seaweed, called polyphenols. These consist of more than 4,000 so-called phenolic compounds typically found in vegetables and fruit. Polyphenols are high in antioxidants, which have a number of known health benefits.

Led by Professor Ian Rowland from the Department of Food and [Nutritional Sciences](#) at the University of Reading (UK), SWAFAX is keen to study novel bioactive compounds from seaweeds which provide an opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to develop and market commercial applications in food, health and wellness products.

A number of technological and scientific problems have already been solved, such as evaluating the [biological activity](#) of the seaweed polyphenol extract and forming a greater understanding of the [bioavailability](#) of its components.

The project has also characterised seaweed extracts in terms of their polyphenol profiles, and prepared a food grade polyphenol extract and other extracts of different seaweed varieties. However, the final results from several clinical trials will not be available until later in the year.

More information: SWAFAX
www.seaweedforhealth.org/swafax/

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