

headlines

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Research and innovation news
from Sheffield Hallam University

Seaweed
it's good for your health!



**Sheffield
Hallam University**

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

Seaweed

it's good for your health!

One of our most familiar natural resources – seaweed – could soon become a more common ingredient than salt in the food we eat, thanks to an in-depth study of its nutritional and microbiological capacities carried out as part of the Food Innovation programme based at Sheffield Hallam University.

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The adverse effects on our health of too much salt (sodium chloride) have been well documented, but its capacity as a flavour enhancer and preservative have meant it is hard to give up – both for individuals and for the UK's multi-billion pound food manufacturing industry. However, intensive testing has shown that Seagreens® wild wrack seaweed can be used instead of traditional salt to reduce the salt content of food, whilst still maintaining flavour and taste.

Nutritionally, Seagreens® contains an ideal balance of all the mineral salts including sodium at around 3.5 per cent, instead of 40 per cent typically found in salt.

Although Seagreens® is an established brand, based in West Sussex, which is already working in partnership with a number of small specialist food companies who use it in their recipes, managing director Simon Ranger believes the findings of the Food Innovation team will support a major step change in his business – and in the acceptance of seaweed as an ingredient to be reckoned with.

'Seaweed has already been shown to offer significant benefits in connection with cardiovascular health, where common salt in the form of sodium chloride is contra-indicated. It has now been clearly demonstrated that it not only matches salt in terms of food flavouring and its comprehensive nutrient profile, but that it can also effectively extend the shelf life of food, makes it a real winner for improving the taste and quality of our food on a much wider basis in future.

'The research also showed that the Seagreens® seaweed includes no toxic, carcinogenic or teratogenic chemical substances in the form of ocean pollutants which would contaminate foods. Indeed, Seagreens® first obtained organic certification in 1998 and today is uniquely approved for use in Biodynamic® and organic foods in line with Demeter, EU organic and National Organic Program (USA) organic standards.

'Seaweed's reputed contribution, among other things, to improving nutrient absorption and metabolism, supporting gut and bowel health and the lymphatic and endocrine systems including the thyroid, as well as dissolving fats in the blood and lowering cholesterol, has a sound basis in its very long food use and scientific research.

'We were delighted to have the chance to be involved with the Food Innovation programme and to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of the University's research teams. Also as a small business, there is no way we could have conducted this research alone and yet, without it, we would not have been able to develop the potential of Seagreens® in the global marketplace so decisively.

'We know that seaweed can play a beneficial role in a number of common health problems, such as obesity, diabetes, thyroid problems, breast cancer and cardiovascular disease, for example, and to have the opportunity to make it a standard ingredient in our daily diet offers incredibly exciting potential for our improved health and wellbeing. This was our founding business idea.'

The findings of the Food Innovation programme have also stimulated the establishment of the Seagreens® Health Foundation – a limited liability partnership which will aim to support research into those areas, which Seagreens® manufacturing partners need to use the branded ingredient effectively in their new product development and marketing. The foundation's innovative structure will give

both suppliers and purchasers of Seagreens® an equal stake in decision making and brand development.

The Food Innovation programme was initially funded through a £1.3 million Higher Education Funding Council for England initiative and continues to run as part of the University's work with companies and organisations. Its aim is to help companies respond to the business growth opportunities created by the healthy eating agenda and commercial director David Johnson believes that Seagreens® is an excellent example of how the project can make a real difference.

'All over the UK, there are small and medium sized businesses coming up with innovative and challenging approaches to ingredients and food production methods to improve the nation's health – but they can often only operate at a small, local scale because of the high investment costs of making a step change towards major expansion.

'The Food Innovation programme has supported a whole range of new and exciting developments by putting them through intensive research and testing – and we're looking forward to seeing many of them change the face of UK food in the future.'

To find out more about Seagreens® visit www.seagreens.com or call 01444 400 403. To find out more about the Food Innovation programme, call David Johnson on 0114 225 3865, e-mail d.johnson@shu.ac.uk or visit www.shu.ac.uk/foodinnovation

Seagreens® – the key test results

- enriched taste with only 3.5 per cent of sodium present and a good balance of other minerals
- prolonged shelf life as effectively as salt
- free from all the common contaminants tested for
- appears to be allergy-free after more than ten years' use as a food supplement and additive
- 100 per cent vegetable in origin, so suitable for vegetarians and vegans

Welcome

It never ceases to amaze me how many exciting and innovative things are happening right here at Sheffield Hallam and recent months have been no exception, as you'll see in this issue.

Take, for example, the new spin-out company SI Biologics, set up by researcher David Parkinson to ensure that the innovative work scientists are doing to develop new antibodies could have an impact on medical research worldwide. This is our first spin-out for some time, and we're confident that David's track record and knowledge, combined with our support and funding from South Yorkshire Investment Fund, will ensure the company's success.

We also have news of an exciting new ingredient – Seagreens® – which has excellent potential as a healthy replacement for traditional salt. The ingredient has been around for some time and is already used by a number of small, specialist food producers but, thanks to the Food Innovation programme, it has now been extensively tested and its qualities proved – creating a great opportunity for its development as a mainstream ingredient in a wide range of foods.

The entrepreneurs of the future also have a high profile in this issue, with coverage on both the regional Shell Step awards and our own Enterprise Challenge, which aims to identify and support start-up businesses with the potential to develop and grow.

Things are certainly tough out there at the moment, with huge uncertainty around the world economy, but I hope that this issue of *headlines* will demonstrate that there is plenty of room for optimism and that, in spite of the challenges we all face, we can still make a difference.

For further information call our dedicated team on 0114 225 5000 or e-mail us at business@shu.ac.uk

Peter Hayes – director, Enterprise Centre

