



Brown seaweed for a blue economy



Snapshot

Industry partner:
Waikaitu Ltd

Project length: 18 months

Start date: June 2019

Estimated completion date:
December 2020

Industry funding: \$488,400

MPI funding: \$325,600

Waikaitu Ltd aims to transform New Zealand *Undaria pinnatifida* seaweed from a costly mussel-industry pest into a sustainable, high-value agricultural product for the global market.

The opportunity

Undaria is an invasive seaweed. Waikaitu Ltd has already developed a line of seaweed-based bio-stimulants, fertilisers and crop protection products as an alternative to conventional agrichemicals. It is now investigating whether New Zealand has enough Undaria to scale agricultural production, how it could be more efficiently grown, and how it can be sustainably harvested.

The solution

Waikaitu Ltd is conducting field trials to validate preliminary results and address global interest in healthy food growing practices. It seeks to lead commercialisation research, training and development of a secure supply of Undaria that is managed responsibly and sustainably. In time, all three major uses of seaweed (fertiliser, food, pharmaceutical) could have very high value for New Zealand. The Marlborough, Nelson and Tasman regions have the potential to be at

the forefront of New Zealand's seaweed industry. Waikaitu will construct a pilot processing and finishing facility that is environmentally sensitive and economically viable.

The benefits

If successful, this project will benefit New Zealand by:

- developing best practices around growing, harvesting and manufacturing a world-class product from invasive seaweed;
- reducing environmental damage by changing conventional agricultural practices to more environmentally sustainable ways of growing food;
- helping to control an invasive seaweed species;
- developing best-in-class harvesting techniques;
- converting a waste stream and environmental pest into high-value products.