

Can 'grow-anywhere' micro-algae provide the nutrients and calories needed to sustainably feed our expanding species?

Most people are familiar with the largest form of algae, kelp or seaweed. It can grow up to three metres long and, in some forms, is a well-known delicacy. The related species microalgae, which can be found in both seawater and freshwater, have gained attention in research due to their extraordinary properties.

These microscopic organisms can be used for animal feed, particularly in aquaculture, and various foods including pasta, vegan sausages, energy bars, bakery products and vegetable creams.

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'Microalgae can be cultivated in many different locations, under very different conditions,' said Massimo Castellari, who is involved in the [Horizon-funded ProFuture project](#) aimed at scaling up microalgae production. 'We can grow it in Iceland and in a desert climate.'

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The substance is by no means just a trendy food supplement. For example, in Chad, a landlocked, low-income country, the [consumption of spirulina](#) harvested from Lake Chad has significantly improved people's nutritional status because spirulina is an excellent source of proteins and micronutrients.

'In Europe it's still in a preliminary stage of development,' said [Castellari](#). 'There are thousands of species of microalgae, but for food consumption or feed there are only seven species authorised.'

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