

## Climate change threatens to undercut boom in seaweed farming

While scientists are still pinning down if and how kelp farming might be a climate change champion, the case is further complicated by the fact that climate change itself could throw a wrench into the growing industry. Kelp is relatively sensitive to temperature: in Australia, a marine heat wave in 2010–11 devastated kelp forests. In 2012, giant kelp forests in that country's southeast became the first endangered marine community listed under the Australian government's biodiversity conservation act. In British Columbia, encrusting animals called bryozoans have been whitening kelps in warm-water years — an effect researchers started noticing in 2015.

Can the industry survive if warming waters bring ever-more and ever-longer disease outbreaks?

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Past rapid expansions in aquaculture have not been rosy: fish farms have spread disease; shrimp aquaculture has plowed down mangroves to make room for farms.

Will industrial-scale seaweed farms, some wonder, also bring hazards like imported diseases or unwanted ecosystem changes, or see big business grabbing leases to large swaths of the ocean? [One study](#) of seaweed farming's expansion in Europe, for example, concluded that while small-scale projects seem low risk, more work is needed to be sure that the risks of large-scale cultivation are balanced against the benefits.

[\*\*This is an excerpt. Read the original post here\*\*](#)