Charming city of Aveiro selected as the place to be for the 5th International Seaweed Conference

The charming and historical coastal city of Aveiro (the "Portuguese Venice" as it is called) is located 50 kilometers south of busy Porto and will be the territory for the 5th edition of the internationally recognized platform Seagriculture. The two-day conference program combines plenary sessions with interactive poster presentations, networking lunches, a superb algae-inspired dinner, a mini trade show, debate sessions, and an excursion to explore local seaweed cultivation initiatives.

The Portuguese Seaweed Share

With 782 tons of red seaweed harvested and 4 tons of *Ulva* cultivated in 2014[1], Portugal represents only a tiny percentage of the European seaweed production. In Europe, Norway is by far the number one producer of seaweed, followed by France and Ireland (total production in Europe was ca. 773 000 tons in 2014[1]). Portugal was once the world's biggest agar producer, extracted from *Gelidium sesquipedale* and *Pterocladia capillacea* that was harvested in the southwest of Portugal and in the Azores. Beach cast seaweed was used for soil conditioning and in some locations, several species were part of the normal diet.

Nowadays, wild harvest in Portugal is confined to *Gelidium* and some carrageenophyte species. As biomass demand increases in a variety of sectors, several species are now gaining new interest. A few commercial seaweed species with an important exploitation in northern Europe have their southern limit distribution in Portugal (e.g. *Ascophyllum nodosum, Palmaria palmata, Himanthalia elongata, Saccharina latissima*) thus limiting their exploitation in the region. Others, however, find in the Atlantic Portuguese coast year-round optimal growth conditions (e.g. *Ulva* spp., *Gracilaria* spp. and *Porphyra* spp., among others). There is then an opportunity for the country to differentiate itself from seaweed activities carried out in Northern EU countries. This complementarity between EU regions can be a key point to strengthen the EU seaweed sector.

Globally, Portugal is a key player in all sea-related activities. Integrating the strong Portuguese fishing and aquaculture communities with an efficient and sustainable exploitation of the country's seaweed species diversity, together with its existing excellent research and training platforms can place Portugal, once again, on the list of the key countries for the seaweed sector.

A perfect momentum to bring the international stakeholders to Portugal for the fifth edition of Seagriculture!

Take home messages of the 2015 conference:

With the take home messages of the Cherbourg conference collected by Yannick Lerat, the international committee will create a well-balanced on-topic conference.

[1] FAO, FishStat2016

- How to make the seaweed resource available in higher quantities while maintaining appropriate quality and traceability
- Promotion of seaweed culture is mandatory for the development of Seagriculture and seaweed consumption
- Regulation is an issue from seaweed harvesting, to cultivation to applications in food and feed... How can small companies manage such hurdles in economic development? There is a need for coordination and an increase of the lobbying power of the seaweed community

6 On-topic plenary sessions

Expect an in-depth update on the current state of affairs regarding seaweed biology, norms and regulation, seaweed economics, engineering, and high value/high volume seaweed production during one of Seagriculture's six plenary sessions. The conference aims to balance academic speakers with corporate speakers, to take steps in organizing the seaweed value chain.

Conference organization

The conference organization lies with DLG Benelux, who leans on a sound advisory committee consisting of:

Helena Abreu – ALGAplus
Willem Brandenburg – Wageningen UR
Bela Buck – Alfred Wegener Institute
Bernadette Castro – IHC
Floris Groenendijk – Imares - Wageningen UR
Paulien Hoftijzer – DLG Benelux
Jaques Mazoyer – Cargill
Birgit Schmidt-Puckhaber – DLG e.V.
Pi Nyvall Collen – Amadeite/Olmix
Isabel Sousa Pinto – CIIMAR/Porto University
Klaas Timmermans – NIOZ

All stakeholders are invited to contribute and to join the platform and conference held on the 27th and 28th of September.

For more information on the conference, the organizers, pictures, contact details of speakers for interviews, applications for press passes and barter deals, contact Suzanne Kroeze of DLG Benelux on s.kroeze@dlg.org

