# ROADMAP FOR SUSTAINABLE SEAWEED FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA

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The great potential of Seaweed Farming as a low-carbon method to produce highly nutritious foods while supporting rural livelihoods is well known worldwide. Historically, 98% of seaweed is grown in Asian countries but, over the last decade, seaweed production has more than doubled. Today, the seaweed farming sector is expanding around the world and seaweed farmers hail from a diverse array of nationalities and professional backgrounds, representing a great potential for the development of all coastal territories.

In July 2025, the FAO website published an article reporting on the results of the Latin America regional seaweed farming workshop that was attended by 27 experts from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The workshop - whose findings are available in a new FAO report and policy brief - aims to promote seaweed farming as a key driver of the sustainable development of coastal communities and blue economies in Latin America, in keeping with the new FAO Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA).

The experts emphasized the nutritional value of seaweed, especially its high iodine and micronutrient content. They also underscored the urgent need for clearer, more efficient, and coordinated regulatory frameworks to ensure that this activity develops harmoniously across the region. Risks such as biosecurity threats, climate change impacts, and pollution were also discussed. Addressing these challenges will require monitoring, research, and adaptive management plans that are specific to each region and ecosystem.

Although there are successful experiences in countries such as Brazil, Chile, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, most seaweed farming initiatives in Latin America are still small-scale or in their embryonic stages. Between 2013 and 2023, seaweed farming in Latin America and the Caribbean grew by 66 percent, reaching 22,125 tonnes in 2023, according to FAO. Brazil, Chile and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela dominate production, with over 90 percent of regional output.

Most countries in the region have underutilized or untapped seaweed farming potential. Diversifying species and supporting emerging producers could unlock significant economic and environmental benefits. Strategic investments and regional collaboration are essential

to boost resilience, expand markets, and harness the full potential of seaweed farming in the region. To foster the development of the industry, workshop participants agreed on the need to strengthen research and technological development throughout the value chain, from species selection to post-harvest processing.

Likewise, workshop participants identified community-based approaches as a fundamental pillar of the sector's social sustainability. Seaweed farming offers significant opportunities to improve quality of life, especially for women and youth who have historically been underrepresented in other forms of aquaculture. For coastal communities to fully take part in and benefit from this activity, they must be empowered through technical capacity building, training in inclusive business models and in technology transfer.

The experts called on FAO to support the creation of an international platform on seaweed, provide technical assistance, facilitate the exchange of experiences among countries, and generate practical information tailored for producer communities.

- They urged governments to strengthen regulatory frameworks, increase funding for research and innovation, and implement comprehensive training programmes for farmers.
- The industry — both artisanal and corporate — was called on to integrate local knowledge, diversify product offerings, and actively promote equity and inclusion throughout the sector's development.
- Participants also highlighted the importance of ensuring that benefits reach coastal communities directly, diversifying species and products, gaining access to strategic markets, and creating decent employment opportunities.

Together, these recommendations form a strategic roadmap to transform seaweed farming into a powerful driver of sustainable development for Latin America.

The meeting was organized by the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in collaboration with the Institute of Aquaculture and Environment of the Universidad Austral de Chile.

The FAO Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) were drafted by consensus by FAO and its Members. They contain a set of shared and agreed principles, practices and recommendations that all countries and stakeholders can use to ensure their aquaculture sectors contribute to food security and nutrition, equitable livelihoods, restored ecosystems, and climate resilience.

**To know more**

Article in FAO website

Article on Seaweed Farming regional workshop

FAO Estado y perspectivas del cultivo de macroalgas en América Latina

FAO Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA)

Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture PDF

Seaweed Farming in worldfishcenter.org

News on Seaweed Farming in worldfishcenter.org

Farmed Seaweed in worldwildlife.org

Seaweed and climate change in worldwildlife.org

Seaweed Farming carbon credits in happyeconews.com

Article in nature.org

Seaweed Farming in unep.org website

Seaweed cultivation in the Caribbean in aquaculturescience.org

Seaweed Farming in zentide.co

Seaweed Farming in worldbank.org

Seaweed Farming in sciencedirect.com

Seaweed Sustainable innovation in revolve media

Seaweed producing countries in news.cannabali.id