

# Ag & Vet Weekly



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*All the news on ASX-listed agriculture and veterinary companies*

## Sea Forest: Federal \$1.5m For Anti-Methane Seaweed Trials

**By Noah Nicholas**

Sea Forest says it is the co-recipient of \$1.5 million from the Federal Government to trial seaweed supplements for the reduction of livestock methane output.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, methane is about 28 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon-dioxide, with livestock accounting for 14.5 percent of total global carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalent emissions every year.

In 2016, the Commonwealth Science and Industry Research Organisation (CSIRO) designed a laboratory ruminant stomach model to rank seven species of seaweed on their anti-methanogenic potential, with the trial identifying *Asparagopsis taxiformis*, a red seaweed native to Australia, as a potent methane-reducing product.

In 2020, CSIRO said that a 28-cow, farm-based trial showed that a 0.2 percent *Asparagopsis* supplement added to daily feed reduced a cow's methane output by 98 percent.

The CSIRO said that the same trial showed early evidence that the seaweed could help livestock digest more efficiently, increasing their average daily weight gain.

Today, the Federal Government said that \$1 million would fund gathering further data on feed productivity in a trial partnership between the Triabunna, Tasmania-based Sea Forest, the Kenmore, Queensland-based Bovine Dynamics and the Jondaryan, Queensland-based Stockyard Kerwee Feedlot.

The Federal Government said a further \$500,000 would fund a University of New England, Australian Wool Innovation and Sea Forest trial of the seaweed's effect on sheep.

Sea Forest chief executive officer Sam Elsom said the company was working with Australian Agricultural Company (AA Co) for a whole-of-life trial on 80 of AA Co's Wagyu cows, as well as a pilot program within Fonterra's dairy herd.

Mr Elsom said Sea Forest was working with Australian men's fashion brand MJ Bale to introduce carbon-neutral wool and the food chain Grill'd for carbon neutral meat.

A spokesperson for Sea Forest told Ag & Vet Weekly today that the company had signed a licencing agreement with Futurefeed, the CSIRO's Asparagopsis spin-out, to sell the seaweed to primary producers as an anti-methane supplement.

Mr Elsom said that with most of the company's industry trials finishing this year, the next stage would be "all about scaling up" to begin selling the product to primary producers.

Mr Elsom says that in September last year, Sea Forest took possession of a 1,600-hectare 30-year marine lease located within the Mercury Passage off Eastern Tasmania.

He said it was the biggest marine lease in the Southern Hemisphere and was in a location where Asparagopsis grew endemically.

The company said it had acquired a 30-hectare, 660-pond Abalone farm 40 minutes north of Triabunna near Swansea on the East Coast of Tasmania for further capacity, and to develop technology that could be licenced in countries where Asparagopsis was not part of the natural ecosystem.

Sea Forest said that once both sites were fully operational, it would be able to cultivate 7,500 tonnes of Asparagopsis each year.

Mr Elsom said that the economies of scale at full capacity would be key to the success of the business.

"We've got a way to go," Mr Elsom said.

He said that Sea Forest aimed to have "a minimum of 35,000 head of cattle" receiving an Asparagopsis feed supplement by the end of the year.

Sea Forest is a private company.