

Galicia and Andalusia seek to manage and enhance macroalgae in aquaculture areas

The canning industry organization Anfac-Cecopesca and the Andalusian Aquaculture Technology Centre (Ctaqua) will work on a project focused on the management and valorization of macroalgae that grow without control in areas where aquaculture is developed.

Macroalgae growth in areas where aquaculture is developed can affect the daily activities of this sector, since the management of their removal as waste can entail additional economic costs. This is the case of the estuaries of Andalusia, where the algae mainly affect fish farming, and that of the Rías Baixas de Galicia, where they damage mollusk farming.

To face this challenge, Andalusia and Galicia have launched an initiative that will seek to quantify, identify and characterize the algae that grow in aquaculture areas and that should be removed from the environment. In addition, they will evaluate how this waste is currently managed, and then propose and demonstrate alternative management processes that allow it to take advantage of its potential in the most efficient way.

Although it is an uncontrollable phenomenon, the application of best practices in the management of this type of waste, as well as the use of technology in a point close to the place of extraction of the algae, which also facilitates this process, could even become an economic benefit. This benefit would be originated not only by the saving of the cost itself, but by a value added to the biomass extracted.

"It is important to note that the project does not intend to assess the causes that cause the massive algae growth, but assumes it and wants to offer management alternatives and use for companies that suffer," said Diego Méndez, head of the Valorization Division of By-products and Circular Economy of Anfac-Cecopesca.

In addition to being responsible for the specific activities to be carried out in the Galician region, this entity will focus on the use of the protein fraction of algae biomass that proliferates in seafood areas of Rías Baixas by obtaining protein hydrolysates, chemicals or enzymatic, for animal or fish feed.

For its part, Ctaqua will value this content in proteins (from the algae generated in the estuaries of the south-Atlantic region of Andalusia) through a pilot trial of production of quality organic composting for use as agricultural fertilizer. The Technology Center will also carry out specific actions in the area of Andalusia.

"Currently, the project is in the initial implementation phase focused on the quantification of algae waste and the study of its current management, for which it is planned to conduct interviews with aquaculture producers, both in the Galician and Andalusian regions," explains María del Mar Agraso, technical director of Ctaqua.

The initiative has the collaboration of the Biodiversity Foundation, of the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs , through the Pleamar Program, co-financed by the EMFF.

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