

Underwater nutrition: 'An important source of protein for the future'

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As populations grow, and limited natural resources diminish, could the oceans provide a key source of protein and nutrients to the food sector? FoodNavigator speaks to researchers at UIT, The Arctic University of Norway, to learn more.

Seafood could be an important source of protein for the future, according to associate professor in seafood science, Karl-Erik Eilertsen, who works out of UIT The Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø.

Fish are a source of omega-3 fatty acids, which is important for human development – especially during embryogenesis, he told FoodNavigator during a visit to the Faculty of Biosciences, Fisheries and Economics last month. *"They are also important later in life to protect against cardiovascular disease."*

With regards to minerals, seafood contains selenium and phosphorus, among others, and as a protein source is regarded 'easily digestible. *"And you could get all the essential amino acids from eating seafood,"* we were told.

Lesser-known seafood species, such as phytoplankton, could also be recognised as an important nutrient source – if grown artificially in tanks. *"Phytoplankton is the only species on earth, in practice, which is able to synthesise [long chain omega-3] fatty acids,"* explained Ragnar Ludvig Olsen, deputy head of the Norwegian School of Fisheries.

In the short-term, phytoplankton could be harvested for use in animal feed. In the long-term, Olsen sees potential for its use in the food industry – for example in infant formula – or in the nutraceutical market.

Watch the video to find out more.

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