

Seaweed and climate impacts

A systems perspective and comparison with other foods

SIG Seaweed 7, Trondheim

Jean-Baptiste Thomas, Ph.D Researcher at the Department of Sustainable Dev. Env. Science and Eng.







Carbon Assimilation

- Base assumption: DIC in water is replaced by CO₂ in atmosphere
- Measured and calculated from carbon content in biomass, with total carbon at a farm also being affected by yield
- Subject to very wide ranges...
- Expressed in different units, e.g. kg of C or CO₂eq per ton fresh weight, dry weight, or per unit area

Table 1

Mean values and min-max ranges of reported carbon and water content of seaweeds.

	Mean	Min	Max				
Carbon content (% of dry matter)							
Saccharina latissima ^{1,2,4,5,7-10} Laminaria digitata ⁷⁻⁹	31.6% 34.7%	21.1% 24.5%	41.4% 39.0%	[3] P			
Brown algae ^{1,2,4,5,7-10}	31.5%	-	-				
Red algae ⁸	33.6%	-	-				
Green algae ⁸	32.7%	-	-	[7] Nielsen			
Water content (% of wet weight)				[8] Olsson e			
Saccharina latissima ¹⁻⁹	82.5%	62.5%	93.2%	[9] Schiene [10] Sharma			
Laminaria digitata ⁷⁻⁹	77.0%	68.0%	84.5%				
Brown algae ²⁻⁹	83.6%	-	-				
Red algae ⁸	79.1%	-	-				
Green algae8	82.4%	-	-				

Boderskov et al. (2016).
 Bruhn et al. (2016).
 Forbord et al. (2020).
 Fosberg et al. (2018).
 Handå et al. (2013).
 Marinho et al. (2015).
 Nielsen et al. (2016).
 Olsson et al. (2020).
 Schiener et al. (2015).
 Olsson et al. (2015).
 Olsson et al. (2015).



Burying in sediment

- Not all carbon fixed by photosynthesis is assimilated into the biomass: DOC and particulate organic carbon
- Critical knowledge gaps:
 - Amounts, types and triggers of DOC release
 - How much is bioavailable DOC to be consumed back into DIC by microorganisms?
 - How much is remineralization-resistant DOC that can reach the refractory DOC (rDOC) pool, leading to long-term carbon storage (and climate benefits)?

Recommended reading

Paine, E.R., Schmid, M., Boyd, P.W., Diaz-Pulido, G., Hurd, C.L., 2021. Rate and fate of dissolved organic carbon release by seaweeds: a missing link in the coastal ocean carbon cycle. J. Phycol. 57, 1375–1391. doi: 10.1111/jpy.13198

Hurd, C. L., Law, C. S., Bach, L. T., Britton, D., Hovenden, M., Paine, E., et al. (2022). Forensic Carbon Accounting: Assessing the Role of Seaweeds for Carbon Sequestration. J. Phycol. doi: 10.1111/jpy.13249.

Angles d'Auriac, M., Hancke, K., Gundersen, H., Frigstad, H., Borgersen, G., 2021. Blue Carbon eDNA -A novel eDNA method to trace macroalgae carbon in marine sediments. In: NIVA Report SNO 7648-2021. Norwegian Institute for Water Research. Oslo, ISBN 978-82-577-7384-7.

Ortega, A., Geraldi, N.R., Díaz-Rúa, R., Ørberg, S.B., Wesselmann, M., Krause-Jensen, D., Duarte, C.M., 2020. A DNA mini-barcode for marine macrophytes. Molecular Ecology Resources 20 (4), 920–935. https://doi.org/10.1111/1755-0998.13164.



Halocarbon (and other) emissions

- Biogenic halocarbons are produced as a response to biotic and abiotic stress
- Halocarbons are among the most potent greenhouse gases¹
- Lack of consensus in the literature
 - Some² argue this is a non-issue
 - Others highlight the challenge to measure and trace these emissions, and the need for more research ^{3,4}
- VOC emissions (e.g. from seagrass meadows) have been hypothesized to include cloud forming particles

Recommended reading

1. IPCC AR5. Anthropogenic and Natural Radiative Forcing. In: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Tech. Rep. (2013).

2. Duarte, C.M., Bruhn, A. & Krause-Jensen, D. A seaweed aquaculture imperative to meet global sustainability targets. Nat Sustain 5, 185–193 (2022). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-021-00773-9

3. Keng F.S.-L., S.-M. Phang, N. Abd Rahman, E.C. Leedham Elvidge, G. Malin, W.T. Sturges. The emission of volatile halocarbons by seaweeds and their response towards environmental changes J. Appl. Phycol., 32 (2) (2020), pp. 1377-1394, 10.1007/s10811-019-02026-x

4. Phang, S. M., Keng, F. S. L., Singh, P. K. M., Lim, Y. K., Abd Rahman, N., Leedham, E. C., ... & Sturges, W. T. (2015). Can seaweed farming in the tropics contribute to climate change through emission of short-lived halocarbons?. Malaysian Journal of Science, 34(1), 8-19.



Sea use change

- Land use change has been a hot topic in climate impact research for over a decade, particularly in the forest bioenergy sector
- What about sea use change?
 - Natural or anthropogenic nutrients, and is a reduction of the biological carbon pump an in situ consequence of seaweed farming?



Gulf of Mexico "dead zone" forecast for 2019, NOAA



Figure 4 from Bach et al. (highly recommended!)

Recommended reading

Langlois, J., Fréon, P., Steyer, JP. et al. Sea-use impact category in life cycle assessment: state of the art and perspectives. Int J Life Cycle Assess 19, 994–1006 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1007/611367-014-0700-4

Bach, L.T., Tamsitt, V., Gower, J. et al. Testing the climate intervention potential of ocean afforestation using the Great Atlantic Sargassum Belt. Nat Commun 12, 2556 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41457-021-22837-2

Cowie, A.L., Berndes, G., Bentsen, N.S., Brandão, M., ... and Ximenes, F.A. (2021), Applying a science-based systems perspective to dispel misconceptions about climate effects of forest bioenergy. GCB Bioenergy, 13: 1210-1231. https://doi.org/10.1111/gcbb.12844

Frieder C.A., C. Yan, M. Chamecki, D. Dauhajre, J.C. McWilliams, J. Infante, M.L. McPherson, R.M. Kudela, F. Kessouri, M. Sutula, I.B. Arzeno-Soitero, K. Davis. A macroalgal cultivation modeling system (MACMODS): evaluating the role of physical-biological coupling on nutrients and farm yield. Front. Mar. Sci., 9 (2022), Article 752951, 10.3389/fmars.2022.752951



Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

Impacts assessment method for products, services or systems, focusing on function



Quantifies impacts across a range of impact categories

Broad scope of analysis: across its entire (or part of) its life cycle, e.g. from raw material extraction to waste (cradle to grave) or from raw material extraction to supermarket shelf (cradle to gate).

+ Provides a holistic perspective of impacts and trade-offs for more informed decision making

+ More scientifically accountable and detailed than carbon credit/trading methods or the GHG accounting protocol (see QR code: Arendt et al 2021)

- - More time and resource consuming than other methods



Arendt, Bach and Finkbeiner (2021); European Commission (2010) ILCD Handbook; ISO 14040-14044. Images: PRé-sustainability



Seaweed LCAs: an overview



LCAs are increasing in complexity, analytically and in terms of inventory/input data, mirroring the increase in knowledge, interest in seaweed and sheer number of hatcheries, farms, product types and sustainability aspects

Depending on how you count them (search terms), there are up to 40-50 seaweed-related LCAs published today

Data from a core of around **10 LCAs are the original source** of inventory data, of which only 6 were published by 2020 when we started this review

(2) SUPPLY CHAIN CO_2 Supply chain emissions

SUPPLY CHAIN EMISSIONS

- Reviewing LCA results is tricky— it is only a modelling tool so subject to wide uncertainty ranges¹, and methods choices are critical²
- Harmonization reviews can help to overcome some of these review challenges³, but general take homes⁴ can be extracted
 - Plastic ropes and buoys, and boat transport are key GHG emission hotspots
 - Recycling ropes and buoys at end of life, and/or chosing ropes made (partly) from recycled plastics can reduce emissions
 - Downstream processing (e.g. drying or freezing) can be other emissions hotspot
- Need for more studies to explore scaled downstream processing and use to grave



Recommended reading

1. Brandao, M., Kirschbaum, M.U.F., Cowie, A.L., Hjuler, S.V., 2019. Quantifying the climate change effects of bioenergy systems: Comparison of 15 impact assessment methods. GCB Bioenergy 11 (5), 727–743. https://doi.org/10.1111/gcbb.12593.

2. Brandao, M., Heijungs, R., Cowie, A., 2022. On quantifying sources of uncertainty in the carbon footprint of biofuels: crop/feedstock, LCA modelling approach, land-use change, and GHG metrics. Biofuel Research Journal 34, 1608–1616. https://doi.org/10.11833/BR/10202-9.2.

3. Ziegler, F., Tyedmers, P.H., and Parker, R.W.R. (2022). Methods matter: Improved practices for environmental evaluation of dietary patterns. Global Environmental Change 73, 102482. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2022.102482.

4. Thomas, J.-B.E., Sod'e Ribeiro, M., Potting, J., Cervin, G., Nylund, G.M., Olsson, J., Albers, E., Undeland, I., Pavia, H., G'ondahl, F., 2021. A comparative environmental life cycle assessment of hatchery, cultivation, and preservation of the kelp Saccharina IstiSticane. ECS (Int. Cours. Explor. Seque). J Amar Sci. 7611, 051-467. https://doi.org/10.1039/cj.esgnirty.Maa12.2





By switching to a plant-based diet and by using <u>seaweed</u>, as the main source of protein, we can <u>relieve the pressure on our ecosystems</u>: by minimizing the impact of the meat and dairy industry, reducing greenhouse gases, saving thousands liters of fresh water and restoring thousands of acres of land – currently being used for animal farming.

INGREDIENTS WEED BURGER: WATER, RICE FLOUR, 16.2% SOY PROTEIN, 10.1% SEAWEED, SUNFLOWER OIL, THICKENER (METHYLCELLULOSE, CARRA-GEENAN), MODIFIED CORN STARCH, FLAVORING, WHEAT FLOUR, POTATO FIBER, DRIED ONION, YEAST EXTRACT, WHEAT PROTEIN, SPICES, LEMON GRANULATE, CARAMELIZED SUGAR





CONSEQUENCES OF USING SEAWEED

• Substitution may be accounted for in LCA: 1,2

Net emissions (including substitution) = emissions - avoided emissions

- New guidance in latest ISO 14044 (2020) though these need clarification³
- Quantifying avoided emissions: which product or function is being substituted? Is performance equal? If not, how do you account for differences:
 - Is 1 PET plastic bottle = to 1 alginate-based water pouch?
 - Is 1 seaweed infused bean burger = to 1 beef burger?



Image: Guillaume Couche/PR



Image: Ari Jonsson



Flickr: Nadezhda Garanina



Recommended reading

1. Tanzer S.E., A. Ramírez, 2019. When are negative emissions negative emissions? Energy Environ. Sci., 12 (4), pp. 1210-1218, 10.1039/C8EE03338B

2. Guinée, J.B. 2002. Handbook on life cycle assessment operational guide to the ISO standards. Int. J. Life Cycle Assess., 7 (5), pp. 311-313

3. Heljungs R, K. Allacker, E. Benetto, M. Brandão, J. Guinée, S. Schaubroeck, T. Schaubroeck, A. Zamagni. 2021. System expansion and substitution in LCA: a lost opportunity of ISO 14044 amendment 2 [opinion] Frontiers in Sustainability, 2 (40), 10 3389/frsus. 2021.692055





CONSEQUENCES OF USING SEAWEED







- Are low-impact products additions to rather than transitions from high-impact products? 4-6
 - Does the production of a seaweed product mean the production of something else is being stopped?



Recommended reading

York, R. 2021. Poultry and fish and aquatic invertebrates have not displaced other meat sources. Nat. Sustain, 4 (9), pp. 766-768, 10.1038/s41893-021-00714-6
 York and Bell, 2019. Energy transitions or additions? why a transition from fossil fuels requires more than the growth of renewable energy. Energy Res. Social Sci., 51, pp. 40-43, 10.1016/j.erss.2019.01.008
 Longo S.B., Gurk, R. York, A.K. Jongenson. 2019. Aquaculture and the displacement of their captures. Conserv. Biol., 33 (4) (2019), pp. 832-841, 10.111 (2015) 1325





TEMPORARILY STORED BIOGENIC CARBON

 Also challenging to account, with no single approach or standard. EC 2010 (ILCD Handbook) suggests:

Credit for temporary carbon storage = $\frac{\Sigma \text{ stored carbon (tons)}}{100 \text{ years (or other time horizon)}}$

Example:

1000 tons wet weight of S. latissima (assuming 17% dry matter of which ≈32% is carbon) contains ≈ 200 tons CO₂ eq (54.5 tons C)

Assuming biogenic carbon is stored 0.5 years on average across whole value chain:

Credit for temporary carbon storage = $\frac{200 \text{ tons } CO_2 \text{ eq. } 0.5 \text{ years}}{100 \text{ years}}$ = **1 ton CO₂ eq**

• Short-term GHG reductions in the atmosphere may help to "buy us some time" to avoid critical tipping points



Recommended reading

Brandia M., A. Levasseur, M.U.F. Kirichbaum, B.P. Weidema, A.L. Cowie, S.V. Jørgensen, M.Z. Hauschild, D.W. Pennington, K. Chomkhamsri. Key issues and options in accounting for carbon sequestration and temporary storage in life cycle assessment and carbon obstynting. Int. J. Life (vice Assess, 18 (1) (2013), pp. 230-430) (1010)7113767120-4051-6

Jørgensen S.V., M.Z. Hauschild, P.H. Nielsen. The potential contribution to climate change mitigation from temporary carbon storage in biomaterials. Int. J. Life Cycle Assess., 20 (4) (2015), pp. 451-462, 10.1007/s11367-015-0845-3

EC. International Reference Life Cycle Data System (ILCD) Handbook - General Guide for Life Cycle Assessment - Detailed Guidance. First edition (2010) March 2010. EUR 24708 EN





OTHER USE-RELATED BENEFITS

- · Specific benefits for increases in efficiency or other rebound effects
- Adding asparagopsis to cattle feed can lower methane emissions ^{1,2}
- Other in situ climate adaptation benefits:
 - Coastal protection³
 - Mitigation of ocean acidification⁴



https://teen.wng.org/comment/42948



Recommended reading



3. Mork M. Wave attenuation due to bottom vegetation J. Grue, B. Gjevik, J.E. Weber (Eds.), Waves and Nonlinear Processes in Hydrodynamics, Springer Netherlands (1996), pp. 371-382, 10.1007/978-94-009-0253-4 30

4. Krause-Jensen D., C.M. Duarte, I.E. Hendriks, L. Meire, M.E. Blicher, N. Marbà, M.K. Sejr. Macroalgae contribute to nested mosaics of pH variability in a subarctic fjord. Biogeosciences, 12 (16) (2015), pp. 4895-4911, 10.5194/bg-12-4895-2015



TO CARBON STOCK OR BACK TO THE ADMOSPHERE

- The emissions from this final stage are referred to in LCA as end-of-life emissions
- Where do the material inputs of the system (e.g. longline ropes) and the biogenic carbon end-up?
 - Waste management choices (e.g. landfill, recycling, composting, incineration)
 - ... affect the destinies of residual materials (sewage sludge, ashes, etc.)
 - ... and eventual sinks (e.g. water, air) and gas composition (CO2, CH4, etc.)
- Products with a longer life (e.g. construction materials), including carbon capture (e.g. BECCS) or that contribute to soil organic carbon (e.g. biochar) can lead to long term (> 100 years) carbon storage, can claim climate benefits

Credit for temporary carbon storage = $\frac{\text{$\Sigma$ stored carbon (tons)}. Storage duration (in years)}{100 years (or other time horizon)}$



Recommended reading

Laurent A., J. Bakas, J. Clavreul, A. Bernstad, M. Niero, E. Gentil, M.Z. Hauschild, T.H. Christensen. Review of LCA studies of solid waste management systems – Part I: lessons learned and perspectives. Waste Manag., 34 (3) (2014), pp. 573-588, 10.1016/j.wasman.2013.10.045

Hou P., Y. Xu, M. Taiebat, C. Lastoskie, S.A. Miller, M. Xu. Life cycle assessment of end-of-life treatments for plastic film waste. J. Clean. Prod., 201 (2018), pp. 1052-1060, 10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.07.278





(1) AT SEA (2) SUPPLY CHAIN (3) USE PHASE (4) END OF LIFE

	Process	Variable name	Definition	
	1a Assimilation	A Carbon assimilated in harvested biomass and following through supply chain		a
	1b Burying	C_B	Credit for carbon buried at sea	
	1c Halocarbons	E_H	Halocarbons emitted from growing seaweed biomass	
	1d Sea use change	X	The positive or negative climate effect of harvesting and/or cultivation activitie through effects on surrounding biogeochemical cycles at sea	
	2a Supply chain emissions	Esc	Emissions from supply chain operations	
	3a Product substitution	CSub	Credit for substituting higher-impact product alternatives Credit for carbon stored in products, before end of the product life	
	3b Temporary storage	CTemp		
Ĥ	3c Use-related climate benefits	CUse	Credit for use-related climate benefits Use-related	oon
e	4a End of life emissions	EEOL	Emissions at end of life, e.g. from incineration, compost or landfill	g-term
	4b Long-term storage	CLT	Credit for post end of life storage	orage 🔎

Net climate benefits = $A - E_{EOL} + C_{Temp} + C_B - E_H \pm X - E_{SC} + C_{Sub} + C_{Use}$

Carbon stock

The role of algae in a sustainable food system - environment and nutrition

The future supply and consumption of algae is expected to increase both in Sweden and globally, with great commercial potential. The project will meet the need for increased knowledge about algae's environmental impact, nutritional quality and health effects. The results will be useful as a guide to sustainable production and consumption of algae.





CHALMERS



FORMAS



Environmental & nutritional performance

Previous research

- Show large variation in climate impact and nutritional quality between seafood species
- Results for algae are lacking

Remaining questions

- Performance of algae in relation to other foods?
- Variation between algae species?

Recommended reading



Relative nutrient density 100 kcal-1



Bianchi, M., Hallström, E., Parker, R.W.R. et al. Assessing seafood nutritional diversity together with climate impacts informs more comprehensive dietary advice. Commun Earth Environ 3, 188 (2022). https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-022-00515-4

Hallström E, Bergman K, Mifflin K, Parker R, Tyedmers P, Troell M, Ziegler F. 2019. Combined climate and nutritional performance of seafoods. J Clean Prod. 230:402–411. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.04.229



- Around 20+ LCAs in 2020 that met search criteria and of which 6 matched our inclusion criteria
- Because of methodological differences, numerical results cannot be compared meaningfully
- Review of inventory data: collect inventories and recalculate impacts using one harmonized approach

Report	Year	Location	Seaweed species	Functional unit
Langlois et al.	2012	Europe	Saccharina latissima	1 km trip with a gas-powered car
Aitken et al.	2014	Chile	Macrocystis pyrifera	1 MJ of energy
Taelman et al.	2015	Ireland & France	Saccharina latissima	1 MJ exergy seaweed
Seghetta et al.	2017	Denmark	Saccharina latissima	1 ha of sea under cultivation
Thomas et al.	2020	Sweden	Saccharina latissima	1 ton fresh weight biomass

Algren et al. (in prep)

Environmental impacts of kelp aquaculture through harmonized recalculation of life cycle inventory data

■ Electricity ■ Plastics ■ Concrete ■ Metals ■ Transport LANGLOIS ET AL. AITKEN ET AL. TAELMAN ET AL. (IR) TAELMAN ET AL. (FR) SEGHETTA ET AL. THOMAS ET AL. 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 KG CO2

GLOBAL WARMING

Figure 8. The global warming impact assessment by the contributors in kg CO₂ per production system.

Mean \approx 47.5 kg CO₂ eq per ton FW (longline + raft production of *Saccharina* & *Macrocystis*)

90

Still under development and not yet peer-reviewed. Please do not re-use.



Method Literature review

- Three aspects:
 - Nutrition
 - Toxicity
 - Bioavailability
- Dried, non-processed algae, from areas without known contamination
- 114 original articles (2011 2021)
- 1 research institute (CEVA database)



Method Nutritional assessments

- Nutritional contribution
 - % of recommended intake of nutrients, per portion (5 gram dry weight)
- Nutrition claims (according to EU Regulation 1924/2006)
- Nutrient density score; Nutrient Rich Food (NRF)
 - NRF11.3 and NRF21.3



Combined climate & nutritional performance of *S. latissima* and *Ulva* spp.



- Low climate impact per nutritional value in relation to selected reference foods
- BUT results depend largely on assumptions and methods used

Still under development and not yet peer-reviewed. Please do not re-use.

Combined climate & nutritional performance of *S. latissima* and *Ulva* spp.



Method aspects to consider

Differences in portion size!
100 kcal=

0.4 portions of raw salmon 14 portions of fresh

spinach 7-8 portions of dried algae

Representative comparisons?

Research Institutes of Sweden

CHALMERS





Knowledge gaps

Need for more **randomized controlled interventional trials (RCTs)** on effects of seaweed consumption on human health

Need for better understanding of vitamin content and bioavailability (notably B12)

Need for studies focusing on other species and effects of real-life processing & cooking

Need for LCAs of scaled-up production of more species, cultivated and wild-harvested, from a cradle-to-plate perspective



KTH ROYAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Questions about nutritional aspects

Elinor Hallström, RISE elinor.hallstrom@ri.se



Seaweed and climate impacts

Jean-Baptiste Thomas, KTH (SEED)

jbthomas@kth.se

A systems perspective and comparison with other foods

Questions about health effects

João Trigo, Chalmers trigo@chalmers.se



