

Kelp Forest Foundation
Samantha Deane, Managing Director
Samantha.deane@kelpforestfoundation.org

Safe Seaweed Coalition
Azzedine Badis, Communications Manager
azzedine.badis@safeseaweedcoalition.org

Kelp Forest Foundation awarded a grant by the Safe Seaweed Coalition to assess the biodiversity impact of giant kelp cultivation.

For Immediate Release

Amsterdam, The Netherlands: The **Kelp Forest Foundation** was awarded €50,000 from the Safe Seaweed Coalition to help assess the impact on biodiversity of giant kelp farming in offshore Namibia.

Human activities are causing environmental degradation and reducing biodiversity. Finding ways of restoring it has never been more urgent. Cultivated kelp forests could be part of the solution to maintain and even recover lost marine biodiversity.

Kelp forests across the globe provide many biodiversity enhancing services. They are vital spawning and nursery grounds for many fish, shellfish and other invertebrates. Kelp forests also have a positive impact on local wildlife by providing shelter and food for many species, including whales, dolphins, penguins, seabirds, and many types of fish.

Cultivated kelp forests will likely provide similar benefits resulting in an increase in biodiversity, enhanced production of local fisheries and an improvement in ecosystem resilience but this needs to be measured and quantified. This study will help assess to what extent cultivated kelp forests, grown off floating structures, will impact the surrounding flora and fauna.

"We have a unique opportunity of participating in the Kelp Blue's pilot trials of their *Macrocystis pyrifera* (giant kelp) cultivation in the Benguela Current. The pilot, which will be starting next year, will provide a "before and after" comparison test site. This will help fill some of the deep knowledge gaps around the true impacts of kelp cultivation at scale", said Samantha Deane, Managing Director of the **Kelp Forest Foundation**.

The funds provided to **Kelp Forest Foundation** through the Coalition will help undertake a comprehensive biodiversity impact study by utilising Nature Metrics' cutting environmental DNA technology. Water samples will be taken before the kelp farm is installed. DNA will then be extracted and analysed giving rapid monitoring and measurement of what organisms are currently present and to then be able to compare once the kelp forest develops.

Creating a comprehensive biodiversity baseline study is key not only to be able to monitor and quantify the impacts that cultivated kelp forests have on the existing ecosystem where they are grown, but also to give comprehensive and rigorous data to validate or refute claims that seaweed cultivation is a nature-based solution that restores ecosystems. This project will provide independent and transparent evidence of the ecological impact Kelp Blue's giant kelp farm on the surrounding biodiversity using a real example which can help underpin the safe expansion of giant kelp cultivation in other areas of the globe.

The objective of the project is to quantify the impact on surrounding local wild seaweed beds and assess whether kelp farms have a role in increasing biodiversity in the areas where they are grown.

The results from the research in the Namibian pilot trials will be publicly available for the benefit of the growing global seaweed industry. **Kelp Forest Foundation** was one of 15 grant recipients awarded funding the Coalition's first call for proposals.

The proposals awarded funding address the Coalition's three safety focus areas: consumer, environmental, and operational. This call for proposals was intended to fund sector-building projects to accelerate growth in the seaweed industry, from cultivation through processing to new product development.

The [Safe Seaweed Coalition](#) is a global partnership established in March 2021 to support the safety and sustainability of the seaweed industry as it scales up, along the entire seaweed value chain. The Coalition is coordinated by the [French National Center for Scientific Research \(CNRS\)](#) with the support of [Lloyd's Register Foundation](#) and the [United Nations Global Compact](#).

The **Kelp Forest Foundation** (KFF) is a Dutch non-profit entity set up with the purpose of unlocking the power of kelp afforestation to mitigate the effects of climate change. It is doing so by funding research that will help fill the gaps in the science and knowledge of the many ecosystem benefits of giant kelp cultivation and making these findings publicly available. KFF is sponsoring two MSc students from the University of Namibia to undertake fauna and flora baseline studies beginning in January 2022.

To learn more, visit: [Kelp Forest Foundation](#)

Kelp Blue is a large-scale giant kelp cultivator . Kelp Blue will install a 1.5ha demonstration site in Q1 2022, expanded to 800ha by 2028 in and ~6,000ha beyond 2028.

To learn more, visit: [Kelp Blue](#)

Nature Metrics is a world-leading provider of biodiversity monitoring data, using eDNA surveys, metabarcoding and more. Nature Metrics uses eDNA-based technology to not only assess biodiversity but aims to create novel assays to determine the origins and fate of marine plants and macroalgae. This information holds the key to funding marine conservation and restoration at an unprecedented scale to help to tackle the global warming and biodiversity emergencies.

To learn more, visit: [Nature Metrics](#)

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