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Intelligence

First seaweed nursery course launched to boost UK seaweed farming industry

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

New training program aims to strengthen early-stage cultivation, supporting growth and sustainability of seaweed farming in Europe

The Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) has introduced the United Kingdom's first seaweed nursery training course, reflecting growing interest in seaweed farming across the UK and Europe. Held at SAMS in Oban through its Seaweed Academy program, the course focused on the early stages of cultivation, including nursery construction, biosecurity and selective breeding.

"There has been a lot of interest in this course, which we devised based on industry demand," said Jenny Black, Seaweed Academy project manager. "We have run our Seaweed Academy courses for the past three years, but there was no training available that got into the detail required to allow people to establish their own nursery – a crucial stage of seaweed cultivation."

Participants came from a diverse range of backgrounds and industries, including prospective farmers, researchers and those who already run nurseries. Some were able to attend thanks to scholarships funded by WWF-UK and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). All eight available places were filled, with participants traveling from across the UK and one from Portugal.

The Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) has introduced the United Kingdom's first seaweed nursery training course to help grow seaweed farming across the UK and Europe. Photo credit: The Scottish Association for Marine Science

"The course was really interesting and I have learned a lot to take back to Wales with me," said Beth Marshall of Cârr y Môr, Wales' first regenerative seaweed and shellfish farm. "For example, it's clear that biosecurity and taking time to do things are key to the success of a seaweed nursery. I ran a nursery before, but without much experience, so it's great to see how the experts do it and learn where I was going wrong before! We will be setting up a new nursery and at Cârr-y-Môr, which we hope will support new seaweed farms in Wales."

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The Michael Uren Foundation and WWF-UK funded the development of the course, while several participant places were supported by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). SAMS Enterprise said it intends to offer the training annually, with course content updated to reflect ongoing research at the institute.

"Using expertise from our research at SAMS, as well as our own nursery staff, we've been able to offer a comprehensive course that will hopefully boost this part of the seaweed farming value chain," said Black.

Read more here (https://seaweedacademy.co.uk/).

Author

RESPONSIBLE SEAFOOD ADVOCATE

editor@globalseafood.org (mailto:editor@globalseafood.org)

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