

Commercial Seaweed - Market Share Analysis, Industry Trends & Statistics, Growth Forecasts (2026 - 2031)

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Report description:

Commercial Seaweed Market Analysis

The global commercial seaweed market size in 2026 is estimated at USD 22.32 billion, growing from 2025 value of USD 20.65 billion with 2031 projections showing USD 32.88 billion, growing at 8.09% CAGR over 2026-2031. The market has expanded beyond traditional food applications into pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and sustainable packaging solutions. This growth is driven by increasing demand for natural food additives, government initiatives supporting coastal aquaculture, and seaweed's contribution to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration. The cosmetic industry's increasing incorporation of seaweed in skincare products drives market demand. Seaweed provides hydrating, anti-aging, and anti-inflammatory properties in cosmeceutical applications. Companies formulate creams, masks, and serums with seaweed extracts to meet consumer demand for natural and marine-based skincare products, expanding the commercial seaweed market's applications. Moreover, government initiatives have significantly influenced seaweed market development through public funding, regulatory frameworks, and policy incentives. Countries including China, South Korea, and Norway have implemented programs to enhance cultivation techniques, processing efficiency, and supply chain operations. These measures have strengthened research capabilities, improved production methods, and increased export potential.

Global Commercial Seaweed Market Trends and Insights

Growing Popularity of Vegan and Plant-Based Diets

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Plant-based dietary shifts accelerate seaweed adoption as consumers seek nutrient-dense alternatives to animal proteins, with seaweed providing essential amino acids, omega-3 fatty acids, and minerals often lacking in terrestrial plant foods. The sector benefits from seaweed's unique umami flavor profile, which enhances plant-based meat alternatives and dairy substitutes without requiring synthetic flavor enhancers. Recent innovations include seaweed-based protein isolates achieving 85% protein content, comparable to traditional animal sources, while maintaining superior digestibility coefficients. European markets lead this trend, with Netherlands-based companies developing seaweed protein concentrates for meat alternative applications, supported by EUR 9 million in EU funding for seaweed processing innovations. The convergence of health consciousness and environmental awareness positions seaweed as a cornerstone ingredient in the expanding plant-based food ecosystem, particularly as production costs decline through automation and scale economies.

Seaweed Farming Supports Coastal Employment and Sustainability

Seaweed cultivation creates resilient coastal economies while delivering measurable environmental benefits, with farms providing employment for 90,000 to 120,000 families in Indonesia alone and generating significant carbon sequestration capabilities. The industry's environmental credentials extend beyond carbon capture, with seaweed farms demonstrating pH buffering effects that create refugia from ocean acidification, elevating local pH levels, and supporting marine biodiversity. Seaweed farming offers coastal communities an accessible alternative to traditional aquaculture, with lower initial costs and multiple annual harvests providing consistent income. The industry's high participation of women farmers in many regions has led to increased policy support, as cultivation activities enable economic independence and community leadership roles. These environmental and socioeconomic benefits have resulted in growing support from governments and international development organizations.

Risk of Heavy Metal Contamination in Seaweed Products

The accumulation of heavy metals in seaweed products poses regulatory compliance challenges and consumer safety concerns. Studies have found that arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury levels in samples from industrial coastal areas exceed safety standards, which impedes market growth. The contamination issue disproportionately affects wild-harvested seaweed from areas with industrial activity, creating competitive advantages for controlled aquaculture operations in pristine waters. Regulatory responses vary significantly across markets, with the EU implementing strict maximum residue limits while other regions lack harmonized standards, creating trade barriers and compliance costs for international suppliers. Processing innovations, including high-pressure treatment and selective extraction methods, can reduce heavy metal content by 50-70%, though these technologies add production costs and complexity.

Other drivers and restraints analyzed in the detailed report include:

Rising Demand for Natural Food Additives and Binders
Expanding Use in Pharmaceuticals and Nutraceutical Products
Climate Change Affects Seaweed Farming and Yields

For complete list of drivers and restraints, kindly check the Table Of Contents.

Segment Analysis

Brown seaweed grows at a 9.92% CAGR through 2031, while red seaweed holds 47.78% market share in 2025. The growth in brown seaweed stems from advances in alginate extraction and biostimulant applications. Red seaweed maintains market leadership through carrageenan and agar applications in food processing, while green seaweed serves niche fresh food markets and sustainable packaging applications. The segmentation by product type shows distinct value chains, with brown seaweed achieving higher prices in pharmaceutical and agricultural applications due to its bioactive compounds, including fucoidan and laminarin.

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Brown seaweed processing technologies now enable multiple value streams from single biomass inputs, with biorefineries achieving 90% biomass utilization compared to 60% in traditional single-product extraction. Green seaweed's rapid growth and high protein content make it suitable for alternative protein markets and biodegradable film production. The market favors integrated producers who optimize cultivation and processing for multiple product streams, reducing costs while maximizing revenue per tonne of harvested biomass.

Plain seaweed products maintain a dominant 61.35% market share in 2025, while flavored alternatives grow at a 9.55% CAGR through 2031. This growth stems from Western consumer preferences and product formulations that reduce seaweed's natural oceanic taste. Flavor preferences vary by region, with Asian markets favoring plain seaweed and Western markets favoring seasoned and processed products. Manufacturers focus on umami enhancement and fusion flavors to integrate seaweed into familiar taste profiles, expanding beyond traditional consumer bases.

Manufacturers utilize seaweed's natural glutamate content to develop savory snacks and seasonings as alternatives to conventional flavor enhancers, providing clean-label options to monosodium glutamate. Processing technologies enable flavor incorporation during cultivation through nutrient supplementation, producing naturally flavored seaweed without post-harvest additives. Flavored products command a 40-60% price premium over plain variants, attracting manufacturer investment while increasing consumer acceptance in emerging markets.

The Commercial Seaweed Market Segments the Industry Into Product Type (Brown Seaweed, Green Seaweed, Red Seaweed), Flavor (Plain, Flavored), Form (Fresh/Chilled, Frozen/Dried), Cultivation Method (Aquaculture, Wild Harvest), Application (Food and Beverages, Dietary Supplements, Pharmaceuticals and More), and Geography (North America, Europe, and More). The Market Forecasts are Provided in Terms of Value (USD).

Geography Analysis

Asia-Pacific dominates with 37.22% market share in 2025, leveraging established aquaculture infrastructure and traditional consumption patterns, while facing challenges from climate change impacts and increasing production costs in key growing regions. China leads regional production with advanced cultivation technologies and integrated processing capabilities, though environmental regulations and labor cost inflation pressure margins. Japan and South Korea focus on premium product segments and technological innovation, developing automated harvesting systems and value-added processing techniques that maintain competitive advantages despite higher production costs. Indonesia and the Philippines benefit from favorable growing conditions and government support programs, though disease outbreaks and quality control challenges limit export market access.

Europe emerges as the fastest-growing region at 9.42% CAGR through 2031, driven by regulatory support for sustainable packaging applications and pharmaceutical innovations that leverage the region's advanced bioprocessing capabilities. Nordic countries lead European cultivation efforts, with Iceland and Norway developing offshore farming systems optimized for harsh marine conditions, while the Netherlands and Germany focus on land-based cultivation technologies that enable year-round production. The European market commands premium pricing through strict quality standards and traceability requirements, creating barriers to entry while rewarding compliant suppliers with sustainable margins. Policy support includes recognition of seaweed's carbon sequestration benefits and integration into blue economy strategies, positioning the region for continued growth leadership.

North America shows strong momentum in specialty applications and technological innovation, with the United States investing USD 25 million in offshore seaweed biomass production and developing advanced processing facilities in Maine and Alaska. Canada focuses on sustainable harvesting practices and indigenous community partnerships, while Mexico benefits from Ocean Rainforest's recent acquisition of Alamarsa, bringing advanced cultivation technologies to Latin American markets. . The region's

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growth potential stems from large coastal areas suitable for cultivation and strong demand for natural food ingredients.

List of Companies Covered in this Report:

Cargill Incorporated E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company (IFF) Acadian Seaplants CP Kelco US Inc. Brandt Consolidated Inc. Seasol International Gelymar Rhodomaxx Algaia SA Qingdao Bright Moon Seaweed Group Ocean Harvest Technology Irish Seaweeds Ltd. The Seaweed Company KIMICA Corporation Hi Field Ag. Chem India Pvt. Ltd Beijing Leili Marine Bioindustry Inc. Bhagwati Chemicals Aquagri Processing Private Limited HVG Industries Qingdao Gather Great Ocean Seaweed Industry

Additional Benefits:

 The market estimate (ME) sheet in Excel format
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Table of Contents:

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Study Assumptions and Market Definition
- 1.2 Scope of the Study

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4 MARKET LANDSCAPE

- 4.1 Market Overview
- 4.2 Market Drivers
 - 4.2.1 Growing Popularity of Vegan And Plant-Based Diets
 - 4.2.2 Seaweed Farming Supports Coastal Employment And Sustainability
 - 4.2.3 Rising Demand For Natural Food Additives And Binders
 - 4.2.4 Expanding Use In Pharmaceuticals And Nutraceutical Products
 - 4.2.5 Government Support For Seaweed Cultivation And Research
 - 4.2.6 Cosmetic Industry Uses Seaweed For Skin Care Products
- 4.3 Market Restraints
 - 4.3.1 Risk of Heavy Metal Contamination In Seaweed Products
 - 4.3.2 Climate Change Affects Seaweed Farming And Yields
 - 4.3.3 High Labor Cost In Traditional Harvesting Methods
 - 4.3.4 Competition From Synthetic Additives And Marine Substitutes
- 4.4 Supply Chain Analysis
- 4.5 Regulatory Landscape
- 4.6 Technological Outlook
- 4.7 Porter's Five Forces
 - 4.7.1 Threat of New Entrants
 - 4.7.2 Bargaining Power of Buyers
 - 4.7.3 Bargaining Power of Suppliers
 - 4.7.4 Threat of Substitute Products
 - 4.7.5 Intensity of Competitive Rivalry

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5 MARKET SIZE AND GROWTH FORECASTS (VALUE)

5.1 By Product Type

5.1.1 Brown Seaweed

5.1.2 Green Seaweed

5.1.3 Red Seaweed

5.2 By Flavor

5.2.1 Plain

5.2.2 Flavored

5.3 By Form

5.3.1 Fresh/Chilled

5.3.2 Frozen/Dried

5.4 By Cultivation Method

5.4.1 Aquaculture (Farmed)

5.4.2 Wild Harvest

5.5 By Application

5.5.1 Food & Beverages

5.5.2 Dietary Supplements

5.5.3 Pharmaceuticals

5.5.4 Animal Feed & Pet Food

5.5.5 Cosmetics & Personal Care

5.5.6 Others

5.6 By Geography

5.6.1 North America

5.6.1.1 United States

5.6.1.2 Canada

5.6.1.3 Mexico

5.6.1.4 Rest of North America

5.6.2 Europe

5.6.2.1 Germany

5.6.2.2 United Kingdom

5.6.2.3 Italy

5.6.2.4 France

5.6.2.5 Spain

5.6.2.6 Netherlands

5.6.2.7 Poland

5.6.2.8 Belgium

5.6.2.9 Sweden

5.6.2.10 Rest of Europe

5.6.3 Asia-Pacific

5.6.3.1 China

5.6.3.2 India

5.6.3.3 Japan

5.6.3.4 Australia

5.6.3.5 Indonesia

5.6.3.6 South Korea

5.6.3.7 Thailand

5.6.3.8 Singapore

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- 5.6.3.9 Rest of Asia-Pacific
- 5.6.4 South America
 - 5.6.4.1 Brazil
 - 5.6.4.2 Argentina
 - 5.6.4.3 Colombia
 - 5.6.4.4 Chile
 - 5.6.4.5 Peru
 - 5.6.4.6 Rest of South America
- 5.6.5 Middle East and Africa
 - 5.6.5.1 South Africa
 - 5.6.5.2 Saudi Arabia
 - 5.6.5.3 United Arab Emirates
 - 5.6.5.4 Nigeria
 - 5.6.5.5 Egypt
 - 5.6.5.6 Morocco
 - 5.6.5.7 Turkey
 - 5.6.5.8 Rest of Middle East and Africa

6 COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

- 6.1 Market Concentration
- 6.2 Strategic Moves
- 6.3 Market Share Analysis
- 6.4 Company Profiles (includes Global level Overview, Market level overview, Core Segments, Financials as available, Strategic Information, Market Rank/Share for key companies, Products and Services, and Recent Developments)
 - 6.4.1 Cargill Incorporated
 - 6.4.2 E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company (IFF)
 - 6.4.3 Acadian Seaplants
 - 6.4.4 CP Kelco US Inc.
 - 6.4.5 Brandt Consolidated Inc.
 - 6.4.6 Seasol International
 - 6.4.7 Gelymar
 - 6.4.8 Rhodomaxx
 - 6.4.9 Algaia SA
 - 6.4.10 Qingdao Bright Moon Seaweed Group
 - 6.4.11 Ocean Harvest Technology
 - 6.4.12 Irish Seaweeds Ltd.
 - 6.4.13 The Seaweed Company
 - 6.4.14 KIMICA Corporation
 - 6.4.15 Hi Field Ag. Chem India Pvt. Ltd
 - 6.4.16 Beijing Leili Marine Bioindustry Inc.
 - 6.4.17 Bhagwati Chemicals
 - 6.4.18 Aquagri Processing Private Limited
 - 6.4.19 HVG Industries
 - 6.4.20 Qingdao Gather Great Ocean Seaweed Industry

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