

Aussie seaweed stops cows farting, cancels carbon footprint



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Reporter

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The theory that eating seaweed makes cattle healthier has been around for hundreds of years, but it took a scientist working a dairy farm on Canada's Prince Edward Island to make the connection with [lower greenhouse gas emissions](#).

Rob Kinley now works for the CSIRO out of Townsville where his research has uncovered that asparagopsis, the common Australian red seaweed, can make cattle grow faster and cut their methane emissions to zero.



CSIRO researchers Melissa Matthews and Rob Kinley at the Landsdown Research Station where they are monitoring methane emissions from cattle fed with red seaweed. Michael Chambers

His groundbreaking research with CSIRO and its partners is about to be commercialised in a move that paves the way for carbon neutral steaks and dairy products with [no greenhouse gas on the side](#).

The significance of the CSIRO, Meat & Livestock Australia and James Cook University breakthrough with asparagopsis are far reaching – more than 20 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from livestock.

The latest CSIRO trials showed adding even a sprinkle, less than one per cent, of freeze-dried asparagopsis stopped cattle burping and farting methane, a greenhouse gas 28 times worse than carbon dioxide.

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The cattle also grew on average 20 per cent faster than those not on the natural seaweed supplement over the 100-day trial, with the emissions and other findings supported by previous work on sheep, and independent research in the United States.



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Dr Kinley now has everyone from giant corporations to school kids wanting a piece of his time to talk about a discovery that could help fight climate change and feed a growing global population using less resources.

The 57-year-old is convinced asparagopsis will become commonly used in livestock production around the world.

"I say that because this is an unprecedented outcome," he said.

After much work to optimise the relevant bioactive ingredient in asparagopsis, CSIRO and its partners are in line for huge royalties flows.

"It is going to improve the image of red meat and dairy products. It is going to change that tune. It is writing a new song. It is amazing."

The light bulb moment for Dr Kinley came in 2007 when he was commissioned to do some research for dairy farmer Joe Dorgan, who wanted approval from Canadian authorities to sell seaweed as a feed additive after noticing cows that ate it seemed healthier.

Based on his curiosity and interest in climate change, Dr Kinley tested methane emissions and found a 20 per cent reduction in cows that ate the seaweed that washed up on Prince Edward Island.

Joe Dorgan eventually founded North Atlantic Organics and quit dairy farming while Dr Kinley went on looking for seaweeds even more effective in reducing methane emissions.

He found his way to Australia and CSIRO by 2013 and teamed up with Meat & Livestock Australia and James Cook University to test a string of seaweeds in the lab.

When he came to asparagopsis, he got a flat line and was so shocked he thought his equipment had malfunctioned so he tried it again and again for the same result.

That was almost seven years ago and after many trials and much work to optimise the relevant bioactive ingredient in asparagopsis, CSIRO and its partners are in line for huge royalties flows as they open the doors to investors with the release of a prospectus this month.



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