

COWS ON SEAWEED DIET BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

Cows at Wageningen Livestock Research's Dairy Campus in Leeuwarden are going to be given feed containing seaweed. Researchers will find out whether they then burp up less methane.



The aim of the study is to find livestock feed ingredients that reduce greenhouse gas emissions so that livestock farming contributes less to climate change. From mid-July, 48 cows will get feed for 10 weeks that contains three kinds of seaweed. Another 16 cows form the control group.

The research picks up where Australian lab research left off in 2016. The Australian results that showed that seaweed reduces methane emissions by more than 90 per cent drew the attention of agricultural organization LTO Noord, and of BlueO2, a business working on 'ocean-based climate solutions'. Together with Wageningen Livestock Research, they are setting up a broad consortium of companies to initiate this research, which is financed by the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Dairy Livestock Fund.

The researchers started with a literature study to find out which of the roughly 250 different species of seaweed in Europe were suitable candidates for a trial. 'The Australians got good

results with red seaweed, in which bromoform is probably the active substance that reduces methane production in the cow's stomach,' says researcher Wouter Muizelaar of Wageningen Livestock Research. 'In our study we work on seaweed without bromoform, because it might be toxic and could get into the milk.'

'We work with seaweed that is found in the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean'

We work with seaweed that occurs naturally in the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, because if it is successful we want to be able to grow it here.' Muizelaar lets us in on the fact that the three species of seaweed being tested in Leeuwarden don't achieve the same level of reduction the Australians got. But they are interesting enough to be worth testing *in vivo*. **AS**