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risk are also found in more temperate zones

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MICROBIOLOGY

Black Sea bacteria split sulphate

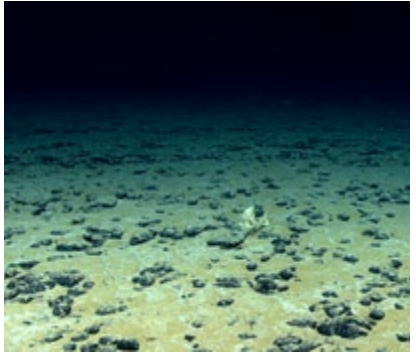

PHOTO MONGABAY

Daan van Vliet of the Laboratory of Microbiology found bacteria in the bed of the Black Sea that can break down sulphur compounds anaerobically. The researcher took samples from the sea bed during an expedition with the *Pelagia*, a Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) ship. Then he cultivated them anaerobically using the polysaccharide fucoidan, among other things, as a culture medium. It is extracted from seaweed and contains sulphate groups.

The culture yielded strains of bacteria for a new genus that Van Vliet called *Pontiella*. Genetic analysis showed that the bacteria contained about 500 genes for making sulphate-splitting enzymes. 'This set of enzymes could be useful for the biorefining of seaweed, which has potential as a raw material for nutritional components, medicines and fuels.' Van Vliet obtained a PhD for this research in September. He now works at Wageningen Food & Biobased Research.
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