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Office 2.3
North Tyneside Business Centre
54a Saville Street
North Shields
NE30 1NT

www.seaweedandco.com

 [DoctorSeaweed](#)

 [seaweedandco](#)

£25,000 investment to grow Seaweed & Co

“Thanks to investment from Virgin StartUp and the guidance of TEDCO Business Support, we are on track for a successful first year and have three UK distributors on board to sell our product to the food and nutrition industry. Food containing Seaweed & Co sourced seaweed is now stocked in all of the major UK supermarkets” Dr Craig Rose, Managing Director of Seaweed & Co

An enterprising North East marine biologist is on track to make seaweed a food of the future thanks to a £25,000 investment from Virgin StartUp, and assistance from TEDCO Business Support through the Start & Grow programme.

Seaweed & Co has launched offering seaweed ingredients for the food and nutrition industries, using high quality seaweed sustainably wild harvested in the Scottish Outer Hebrides. The business has been launched by seaweed expert, Dr Craig Rose, who has lived and worked in the North East since moving from his native Leeds to attend Newcastle University over 15 years ago.

Based in North Shields, Seaweed & Co is now looking to capitalise on the growing popularity of seaweed as a ‘superfood’ ingredient, and boost sales within the UK and international food and nutrition industries.

Dr Rose, Managing Director of Seaweed & Co. said: “Although a central ingredient in the diet of Asian countries for millennia, seaweed is a forgotten food in the West, and has only recently been re-discovered for its extraordinary nutritional benefits. I was always aware of the positive impact seaweed can have on health, and as a sustainable natural resource through my training as a marine biologist.”

“Initially, my interest developed for seaweed whilst managing a £3.7million commercial R&D project to commercialise seaweed as a biofuel. At this time, the seaweed for food industry was very small, and the nutritional benefits were still very much in the research phase, but I recognised there was huge opportunity for seaweed in the food and nutrition industries. Now, seaweed is being used far more widely to benefit many products including breads, biscuits, sauces, food supplements and many more. As our seaweed is dried and milled, it is extremely easy to incorporate.”

Seaweed contains all the vitamin groups and minerals, and can be used as a natural flavour enhancer to replace salt in the food manufacturing process. Just even a tiny amount of seaweed packs a strong nutritional punch and research has suggested it can help with weight management, and due to its natural iodine levels, can contribute to normal cognitive function and metabolism.

Dr Rose continues: “The market for seaweed in the UK is still relatively new but thanks to support from high profile figures such as Jamie Oliver, who champions the benefits of adding more seaweed to your diet extensively in his new Superfood TV show, seaweed has huge potential for growth. It is not only the nutritional benefits of seaweed which make it desirable as part of a healthy diet, but it is also presents a valuable alternative to food manufacturers as a natural salt replacement in everyday foods.

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Confidence in the business and the future of seaweed in the UK is strong and Dr Rose received one of the highest investment sums from Virgin StartUp – £25,000. Virgin Startup is a not-for-profit organisation and part of the Virgin Group, offering low-cost business loans to new enterprises in the UK. The investment has been used to fund a highly innovative system for processing the seaweed in Scotland to produce larger volumes of high quality seaweed through a more gentle and scalable approach. The system, and the factory in which it operates, is one of the most sophisticated seaweed production facilities in the UK.

Dr Rose continues: "Receiving the investment from Virgin StartUp was absolutely essential in getting the production side of the business equipped to maintain the quality of the seaweed in our final product. Virgin StartUp is partnered with TEDCO Business Support in the North East so with the help of business advisor, Bill Hartshorne, from TEDCO helping every step of the way, Virgin StartUp saw the full potential of Seaweed & Co. right from the start."

Seaweed & Co. is also working in partnership with Durham University on a research project to develop sources of seaweed production near Lynemouth. The scheme is researching ways to cultivate quality seaweed in tanks on land in a highly sustainable way. Although still in its early stages, the highly innovative project could see seaweed grown and harvested on land in a new industry opportunity for the North East in the not to distant future.

Dr Rose continues: "Our order book is looking strong for the next 12 months and we are currently working with Newcastle University to develop more seaweed based products for the health and nutrition industry. However, for now, our focus is on growing our B2B market share as Seaweed & Co.'s accredited quality seaweed gains momentum with food manufacturers and the health supplement industry."

Bill Hartshorne, Business Advisor at TEDCO Business Support said: "Seaweed & Co is a very exciting business and one with a successful future ahead of it. The focus by Dr Rose into creating sustainable ways of harvesting and creating a very high quality product was just one of the reasons why we believe Virgin StartUp were so keen to offer Seaweed & Co a low cost business loan to get the business up and running. I worked with Dr Rose extensively to fine tune his business plan and help get the business investment ready via the Start & Grow programme and his entrepreneurial focus and attitude mean Seaweed & Co is most definitely a business to watch. I wish him every success."

Through the Start & Grow programme Dr Craig Rose received 67 hours of support and two days training. The total investment into the business was £47,000 and one job has been created.

For [Start & Grow business support in the North East](#) contact TEDCO.



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CONTACT:

E: enquiries@cavendishenterprise.co.uk