SEAWEED: THE SUSTAINABLE OPTION THAT CAN IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY

by:

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They are not just for salads and appetizers anymore. Seaweeds are marine algae that have been found to play an essential role in global food security. Usually, green, red, or brown, these are not only a viable food source for both humans and ocean dwellers but also vital in sustaining ecosystems. Seaweed provides a habitat for fisheries and removes undesired nutrients in the water. Seaweed is also gaining traction for its sustainable production.

Seaweed can be framed in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable way. They are much more sustainable because they do not need feeds and they don’t create waste in aquaculture. They also play a crucial role in cleaning water by removing unnecessary nutrients where seaweed is cultivated, therefore become a nursing ground for fish and crustaceans.

Seaweeds also do not need any feeds as they grow out naturally. The low-impact plant only requires seawater, light, and an attachment point-like the shore to grow. It doesn’t require fertilizers. At the same time, it has been considered a superfood, promising many health benefits.

In the Philippines, two varieties, lato and guso, are commonly available in the market. A study revealed that there are 893 species of algae identified in the country. Edible seaweeds have multiple health benefits. They contain iodine and tyrosine, essential in the production of two key hormones that help in the function of the thyroid gland. They are also a good source of iron, calcium, and omega-3 fats as well as Vitamins
A, C and E, carotenoids, and flavonoids. They are low in calories, containing filling fiber and increase metabolism, proving their overall appeal.

The Philippines has been noted as one of the countries that pioneered seaweed farming in substantial quantities. It has been reported that 50% of aquaculture production in the Philippines comes from seaweeds. These days, the government, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), continues to promote seaweeds and their substantial role in the environment and the economy. They want to see more people appreciating seaweeds for their role in food security and sustainability.

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