

Press Release

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New algae-based cosmetics developed

Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance Consortium led by GEOMAR achieves the first marine bioproduct success

23 January 2018/Kiel, Tallinn. Applications for medicine, food or cosmetics, that is what marine biotechnology is aiming for. Now, through the Interreg Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance Consortium led by GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, the first bioproduct has reached the market. An Estonian company has developed Baltic alga-based cosmetics for day- and night use, including a specialised cream for men.

Medicines, cosmetics, food, feed, biofuels and many more... Blue biotechnology sector has great economic potential towards the development of various types of innovative and marine-based products and services. Led by GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and managed by SUBMARINER Network for Blue Growth European Economic Interest Grouping, the aim of the Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance (ALLIANCE) Consortium is to provide relevant expertise and resources to complete the journey "from idea to finished *blue* product". This 3-year (2016-2019) project funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR) brings together about 30 prominent research institutes and biotechnology hubs, business parks. The ALLIANCE works with real client cases in a one-to-one mentoring programme and connects them to the right services, facilities and experts throughout the region. The project is coordinated by GEOMAR research unit Marine Natural Products Chemistry/GEOMAR-Biotech.

Selected through an idea pitching to an international panel and enrolled in the ALLIANCE mentoring programme since October 2016, Estonian entrepreneurs Janno and Berit Joosep (Furcella OÜ, Tallinn) recently launched the "Berrichi" cosmetic product line, which is fully made in Baltic. Formulated with key antioxidant ingredient Furcellaran, a polysaccharide obtained from the Baltic red alga *Furcellaria lumbricalis*, the "Berrichi" facial creams include products for day- and night use and a specialised cream for men. They are available via the company's online store (<https://www.berrichi.ee/>) and selected local cosmetic stores.

The inventor of the Berrichi products Janno Joosep says "I'm very grateful to the ALLIANCE Consortium for their enormous help and mentoring. Before joining the ALLIANCE, we just had a recipe and optimistic idea to start natural cosmetics production but all moved slowly. After we were selected to become an ALLIANCE member, we were more motivated to continue with our project, so within one year our products were completed and moved into Estonian market." About the story behind the product, Janno Joosep recounts: "We had a holiday trip to Bali and we noticed that old fishermen whose faces were covered with deep wrinkles had very soft palms. Almost like babies. The reason is that they are cleaning fishing nets from algae every day and their hands have close contact with algae."

Benefitting from the mentoring system and the network provided by the ALLIANCE Consortium, Furcella OÜ liaised with suppliers of the raw algal material from the BSR and received further support on cosmetics marketing and regulations. This initial success story demonstrates the dynamic, transnational and transdisciplinary cooperation between different blue biotechnology actors taking place in the BSR within the ALLIANCE project and shows how effective joining forces can be. Furcella OÜ will continue working with ALLIANCE partners: They aim to find a "blue"

solution such as algae-based bioplastics for packaging their cosmetic products, and wish to enter additional European markets, particularly Germany and Sweden.

The ALLIANCE's portfolio of case studies comprises 22 organizations, from research institutes to start-ups and small and medium enterprises, all united by the aim of developing marine bio-based products or services "made in the BSR". The ALLIANCE is expecting more success stories like Furcella OÜ as the ALLIANCE service offer and network is expanding. Other promising case studies are searching for solutions in medical devices, food and feed, dietary supplements, colourants, biofuels or environmental monitoring technology.

"Furcella is a great achievement based on our ALLIANCE mentoring programme. The Berrichi products are the result of a fruitful cross-sectorial cooperation between partners from the Baltic Sea region and an Estonian start-up willing to develop its traditional knowledge into natural cosmetics", says Prof. Dr. Deniz Tasdemir from GEOMAR, Head of Research Unit Marine Natural Products Chemistry/GEOMAR-Biotech and the coordinator of the ALLIANCE project. "We are very proud of the success of our ALLIANCE project, which is helping the Baltic blue biotech actors and contributing to the region's blue growth and bioeconomy."

Currently a new ALLIANCE call for ideas is open, which invites all start-ups, spin-offs, SMEs and business with a marine biobased product idea to apply for the ALLIANCE mentoring programme. The deadline for submission is 5. March 2018 (www.balticbluebioalliance.eu).

Links:

www.geomar.de GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel

www.geomarbiotech.de GOMAR-Biotech

www.balticbluebioalliance.eu Baltic Blue Biotechnology Alliance

Images:

At www.geomar.de/n5696-e images are available for download.

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