



## Seaweed as ethical food

### Idealg project

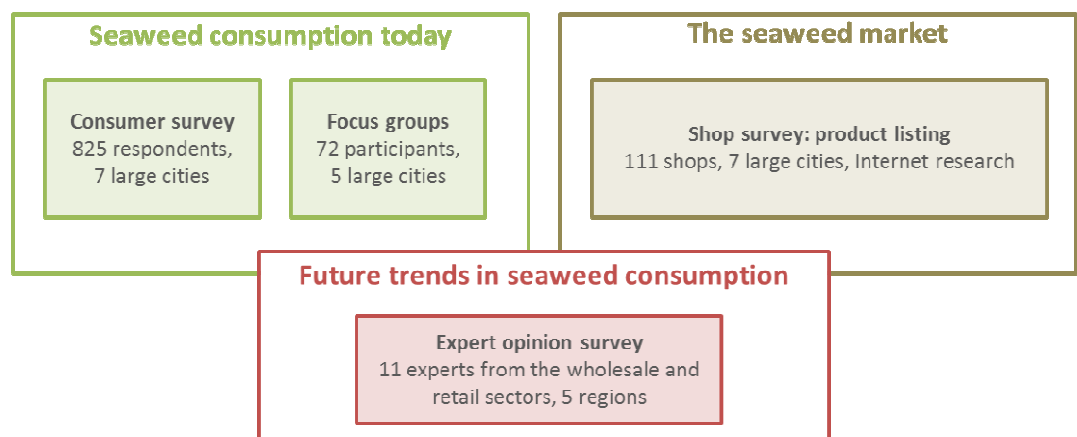
#### Context

The **environment and sustainable development** are issues of interest to the French that may have repercussions on their eating habits. Applied to food products, **ethics** are the values associated with the social and environmental impact of food production. “Ethical consumption” - also called “responsible consumption” - is the consumption of goods that meet sustainable development criteria.

“**Responsible consumption**” is clearly gaining ground as French people are increasingly looking to consume natural, organic, local and readily traceable food. Seaweed is a viable option for consumers with such expectations since it can be sustainably and ethically produced and processed in France in an environmentally-friendly way.

#### Methodology and work focus

The surveys conducted by AGROCAMPUS OUEST as part of the Idealg project identified consumers for whom the environmental value of food is essential, work that resulted in the authors asking the following question: “**Can edible seaweed meets the expectations of French consumers in ethical terms?**”».

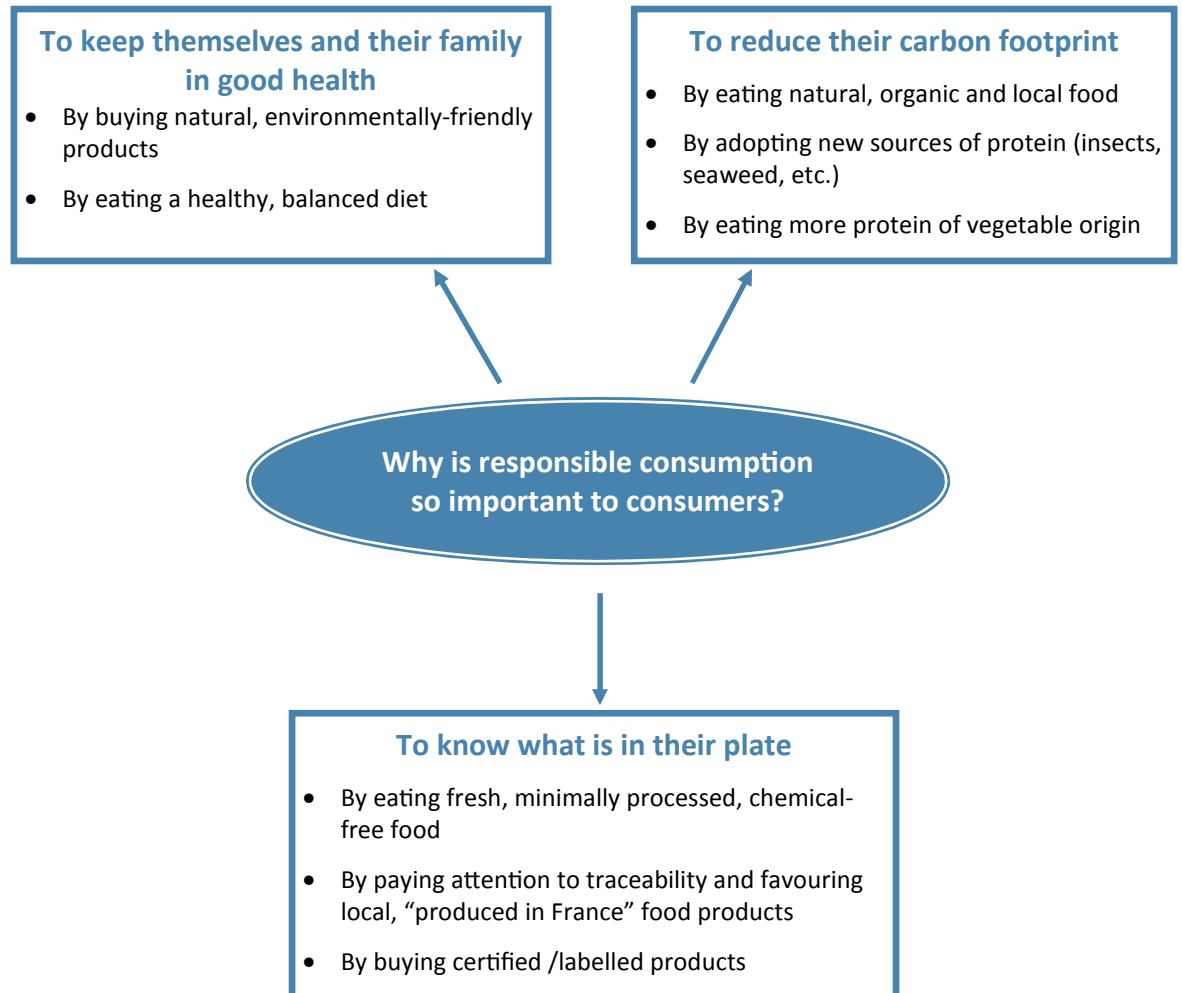


#### Diagram summing up the methods used

The authors looked into the **motivations** for adopting this type of consumption, which is gaining ground amongst French consumers, as well as the **characteristics of edible seaweed** as ethical food. French people, however, lack information about edible seaweed and how it is produced. Their knowledge of seaweed production, origin and seasonality is scarce or inexistent and they have misgivings about the quality of the water in which seaweed grows. **Communication campaigns** to help both retailers and consumers make informed choices when purchasing seaweed-based food products **are infrequent**. What measures therefore could be taken to inform them about the ethical value of seaweed?

## What are the motivations behind responsible consumption?

Almost all French people are sensitive to **environmental issues**, with a resulting effect on their eating **habits** according to recent surveys. An increasing number of French consumers are developing a keen interest in responsible consumption, not only for health and environmental reasons, but also because they want to feel confident about what they eat.



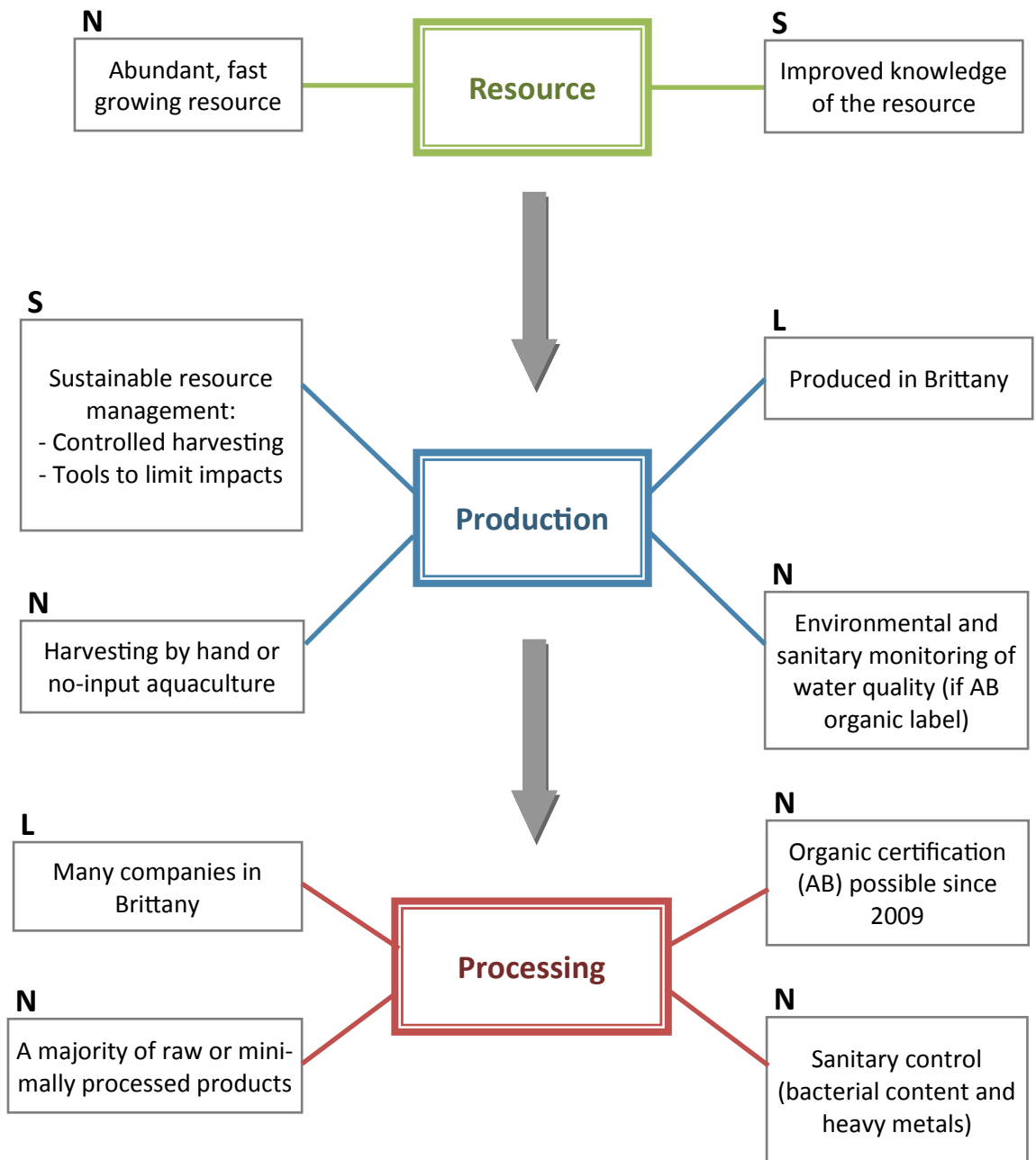
Many French consumers consider that their **environment** can have repercussions on their **health** and therefore pay attention to the **naturalness of the food they eat** by buying fresh, unprocessed and chemical-free products. Many **trust “AB” certified organic food** to be better for their health and for the environment and more than half give priority to food **“produced in France”**. Eating local products reassures consumers about what they eat and underscores their ethical consumer approach.

The world population increase means that more food will have to be produced to meet growing demand whilst integrating **global sustainability issues**. **New sources of protein** will therefore have to be found to feed the planet, and insects and seaweed appear to be good potential sources.

In terms of ethics, the consumer survey shows that French consumers appreciate the ecological and sustainable values of edible seaweed. They believe that eating seaweed instead of beef will help reduce **their ecological footprint** because no external input is required to obtain edible seaweed, whether in the natural environment or in farms.

## What characteristics make seaweed an “ethical” food?

Edible seaweed and its production systems present many of the characteristics required to meet **the needs of responsible consumers**. It provides a genuine sustainable food source and its production offers a wide range of local, raw or minimally processed products, increasingly with organic certification.



### Assets

L: Local

N: Natural

S: Sustainable

## What communication?

Communicating about seaweed food products seems to be important given the keen interest taken by French consumers in the ecological value of seaweed and the fact that seaweed products meet French people's expectations in terms of responsible consumption. The results of the surveys show that a number of measures could be taken to **attract** consumers and **enhance** product value as well as **reassure** consumers and **build loyalty**. Better **informing** consumers about the ethical and sustainable values of French-style seaweed products is also necessary.

Target	Objectives	Possible measures
<b>Product communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract consumers</li> <li>• Enhance product value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>“Produced in France”</b>: label affixed to seaweed food products - the “Produced in Brittany” label should be preferred.</li> <li>• <b>Collective brand</b>: create a “Seaweed from Brittany” brand to increase the visibility of seaweed food products by establishing a link with the region and local producers/processors.</li> <li>• <b>Geographical indications</b>: specify the origin and place of processing on the packaging.</li> <li>• <b>AB certification</b>: on the front of the packaging with, on the back, a brief explanation about how this label is awarded.</li> </ul>
<b>In-store communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassure</li> <li>• Increase product visibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promotions and tasting events</b>: reassure consumers about the taste of seaweed, explain how seaweed is produced (insisting on its naturalness and sustainability) and how products can be used.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform and raise consumers' awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Videos about the seaweed sector</b>: present the various trades involved and how seaweed is produced and processed on stakeholders' websites or on in-store TVs or tablets.</li> <li>• <b>Leaflets</b>: explain how edible seaweed is produced and processed (harvesting, cultivation, AB certification, etc.); available in stores or supplied to retailers.</li> </ul>

### For further information

COMPARINI Charline, LESUEUR Marie, LE BRAS Quentin, LUCAS Sterenn, GOUIN Stéphane. 2016. *Quelles pistes d'actions pour impulser la consommation des algues en France ?* Programme IDEALG Phase 3. Les publications du Pôle halieutique AGRO CAMPUS OUEST n°40 à 43, 136 p.

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All the results are available on the Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences Centre website: [halieutique.agrocampus-ouest.fr](http://halieutique.agrocampus-ouest.fr) • “Etudes et Transfert” section • IDEALG