

# Export Profile: Acadian Seaplants blooms in foreign markets



Photo: Submitted

President Jean-Paul Deveau relies on the Port to reach global markets.

The people at Acadian Seaplants know how to spot a great opportunity. They've taken something most people on the East Coast rarely consume—seaweed—and carefully transformed it into a diverse array of specialty products and supplies that they ship through the Port of Halifax to markets around the world.

The Burnside-based company has become one of the largest producers of cultivated marine plants and seaweed-derived specialty products in the world. President Jean-Paul Deveau and his father bought the company in 1981, back when the mainstay of the business was supplying the raw material for “carrageenan,” a seaweed-based product found in everything from toothpaste to ice cream. “We came into being with one product and one client,” Deveau recalls. “We focused on making sure our client was happy and realizing the need to expand, we decided to diversify and grow the business by making the necessary investments in research and market development.”

Expansion came easily once the company diversified its range of products. “We decided to continue working in marine plants, which is our specialty, and we branched into other product lines and took them to new

markets,” says Deveau.

Today, scientists at Acadian Seaplants’ Cornwallis research facility study seaweed growth and utilize a science-based resource management that ensures the natural resource remains environmentally sustainable. That dedication has paid off and the company is now the world’s largest independent manufacturer of seaweed-based specialty products, including food, natural fertilizers and animal feeds.

With five manufacturing facilities spread across the Maritimes, the company exports 250 products to over 70 countries in North America, Central and South America, India, the Middle East, Africa and the Far East. About 95 per cent of Acadian Seaplants production is exported to international markets through the Port of Halifax. “Virtually everything we export goes through the Port,” says Deveau. “We can always rely on them to send our products wherever we want them to go. If we didn’t have access to the Port, it would be much more difficult to provide timely and cost-effective transportation rates to our markets.”

Such access to distant markets has other benefits too. The company now tailors many of its products to fill niche markets



abroad. Its Hana-nori line of edible seaweeds is produced specifically with Japanese consumers in mind. They consume at least 15 per cent of their daily calories from seaweed, so there’s plenty of demand for such products.

Ultimately, Deveau plans to keep investing in R&D while scouting for new markets. “We’re very optimistic about the future,” he says. “We may expand our exports to new areas like the former communist countries in Eastern Europe.” ■

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