



RESEARCH NEWS

Adding Red Seaweed To Cow Feed Could Cut Bovine Flatulence

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Heard on Morning Edition

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Seaweed can potentially help fight climate change. Research shows that a specific type of seaweed can cut cows' methane production by up to 98%.

STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

This planet is home to about 1.5 billion cows, which collectively produce a lot of gas. In fact, they create more greenhouse gas emissions than planes, trains and automobiles combined. And one part of that is the methane that they release.

LULU GARCIA-NAVARRO, HOST:

But adding something that seems, well, very simple to their diets could really beef up - get it? - the fight against climate change, and that is seaweed.

TIM FLANNERY: It started with some accidental experimental work, really, in Queensland, Australia. It's starting to take off.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: That's Professor Tim Flannery. He's a scientist and researcher at the University of Melbourne in Australia. The specific type is called *Asparagopsis taxiformis*. It's a red seaweed that grows in the tropics.

INSKEEP: This past summer, scientists found that adding less than 1% of Asparagopsis to the cows' feed could cut their flatulence by 98%.

FLANNERY: The interesting thing is that, you know, the methane generation really represents energy that the cow doesn't get to use. So if you can stop that methane being generated and let the cow absorb that energy, the cow grows faster and is healthier.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Now the race is on to begin commercial production. In Tasmania, the first full crop will be ready next year. And there are seaweed farms popping up across the world, including in Hawaii and California.

FLANNERY: Look - I just had one funny thing, you know. I asked the scientist involved whether he thought that the meat would end up tasting like fish. And he just looked at me and said, very, very funny, ha ha.

INSKEEP: We will see. But the practice could potentially curb climate change.

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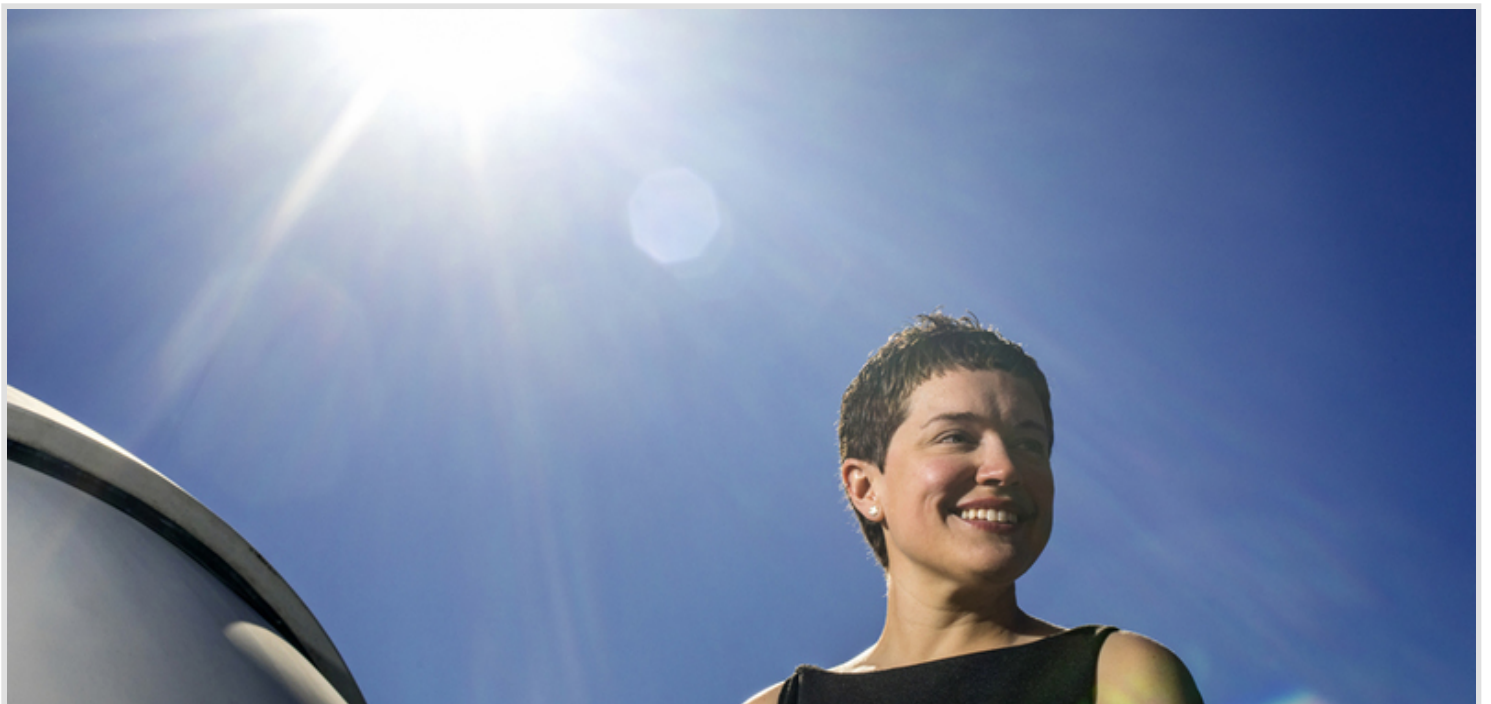


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