

Laws and regulations in Iceland regarding macroalgae

The Food Act applies when seaweed and algae are used as food, and all food regulations. The collection or cultivation of seaweed is considered to be the primary production of vegetables within the meaning of the [Food Act no. 93/1995](#). This activity is therefore subject to notification to the relevant health committee. If the activity involves processing and packaging in consumer packaging, that activity is subject to an operating license from the Health Committee. Food control of these activities is therefore entirely with the health committees.

In addition is needed:

- a permit from the Directorate of Fisheries to obtain seaweed,
- a permit from the Directorate of Fisheries for an area for utilization
- a permit from the Directorate of Fisheries for the operation of a seaweed reception center.

Further information is available from the Directorate of Fisheries and in the regulations below:

- [Regulation no. 90/2018 on the acquisition of seaweed for commercial purposes](#)
- [Regulation no. 745/2016 on weighing and registration of marine catch, cf. Regulation no. 91/2018](#)
- [Regulation no. 298/2020 on registration and electronic submission of catch information](#)

Fishing fee: A fishing fee shall also be paid for the collection of seaweed the Directorate of Fisheries collects, see the [Act on Fishing Fees no. 145/2018](#).

General food laws and regulations

[Lög um matvæli nr 93/1995](#): Food Act no. 93/1995

The law covers the production and distribution of food at all levels. The purpose of the law is to ensure, as far as possible, the quality, safety and hygiene of food and that the labeling and other information about it is correct and satisfactory. This shall be achieved through internal control, risk analysis, product and product traceability, precautionary measures, education, information dissemination, research, consumer protection and official controls.

[Reglugerð um miðlun upplýsinga um matvæli til neytenda](#): Regulation on the dissemination of food information to consumers no 1294/2014.

The regulation covers the labeling of food.

[Reglugerð um gildistöku reglugerðar Evrópuþingsins og ráðsins um hollustuhætti sem varða matvæli](#): Regulation on the entry into force of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on food hygiene no 103/2010

The regulation sets general requirements for food hygiene.

[Reglugerð um gildistöku tiltekinnar gerðar Evrópusambandsins um efni og hluti sem ætlað er að komast í snertingu við matvæli no 298/2008](#). Regulation on the entry into force of certain acts of the European Union on substances and articles intended to come into contact with food.

[Reglugerð um nýfæði no 735/2017](#): Regulation on novel foods

[Reglugerð um miðlun upplýsinga um matvæli til neytenda](#): Regulation on the dissemination of food information to consumers no 1294/2014. (The labelling regulation)

[Reglugerð um gildistöku reglugerðar Evrópusambandsins nr. 1924/2006 um næringar- og heilsufullyrðingar er varða matvæli.](#): Regulation on the entry into force of EU Regulation no. 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims concerning foodstuffs.

Articles in laws and regulations that specifically mention seaweed:

[Lög um stjórn fiskveiða](#) : Fisheries management act. Chapter on wild harvested macroalgae.

Article 15 a. Permit to obtain macroalgae.

- No one may engage in the harvesting of macroalgae for commercial purposes from a ship unless they have obtained a special permit from the Directorate of Fisheries for a vessel. This license shall lapse if the vessel has not been used for the collection of macroalgae for twelve months and if a vessel has been removed from the register maintained by the Directorate of Fisheries for vessels licensed in accordance with this Article.
- The Minister may stipulate that those who harvest macroalgae on the shores for commercial purposes, without using vessels, shall submit a report on the harvest to the Directorate of Fisheries.
- All the same instructions that apply to fishing vessels and fishing according to Art. III., V. and VI. chapters of this Act and other laws in the field of fisheries, e.g. on the entry of a catch logbook, landing, weighing and registration of catches, control of fishing and payment of fishing fees, shall apply, as appropriate, to vessels licensed in accordance with Art. Paragraph 1 and the harvesting of macroalgae from them.
- Conditions may be set in a license according to Art. Paragraph 1 relating to ship equipment, catch markings, effects on marine vegetation and methods of obtaining it.
- Vessels engaged in the harvesting of macroalgae for commercial purposes shall store the harvest in a reception center for the area in question in accordance with Art. Article 15 c.
- The provisions of this Article shall not apply to the cultivation of macroalgae, dulse harvesting or other minor harvesting of macroalgae amounting to less than 10 tonnes per year, as may be further prescribed in a regulation.

Article 15 b. Area for use.

- Before the person who has a license according to Article 15 starts harvesting of macroalgae within the net layers of marine soil, an agreement must have been reached with the landowner on the authorization for the harvesting.
- The Minister may divide the harvesting areas of macroalgae, outside the net layers of marine lands, into specific demarcated areas and limit the harvesting of macroalgae outside them. Temporary procurement within these utilization areas may also be prohibited in order to allow time for regrowth of macroalgae after harvesting. Before decisions are made in accordance with this paragraph, the opinions of the Marine Research Institute, the Icelandic Institute of Natural History and other parties shall, as a rule, be sought as appropriate, such as the Breiðafjörður Committee on the utilization of marine vegetation in Breiðafjörður.

Article 15 c. License to operate a macroalgae reception center.

- The Minister may, by means of a regulation, after obtaining the advice of the Marine Research Institute, prescribe that no one may operate a macroalgae reception center for drying and further processing, for commercial purposes, from certain demarcated areas without the permission of the Directorate of Fisheries. The Directorate of Fisheries advertises for applications for permits. The application must include a plan for the financing and development of structures and other equipment, information on the representatives' knowledge of the planned activities, a reasoned plan for the amount of harvest and how the macroalgae will be harvested, including methods of

mowing, and plans for ownership or cooperation with ship owners according to Art. Article 15 a, in addition to other information that may be relevant according to Art. Paragraph 2

- Applications for licenses to receive more harvest than the advice of the Marine Research Institute are received, taking into account all circumstances, including the proposed methods of catching the macroalgae, licenses may be allocated to a limited number of applicants so that each is authorized to receive a specific harvest per year or for a longer period. When allocating, an effort shall be made that no less than two parties are authorized to receive from the relevant area. In assessing applicants' qualifications, consideration may be given to work and technical knowledge, financial status, contributions to research on macroalgae and coastal ecosystems and the impact of planned activities on settlements where there is a long-term population decline and a monotonous economy.
- It is permitted to bind a license according to Art. Paragraph 1 the conditions that are deemed necessary with regard to the supervision of the utilization and the organizational utilization. Licensees are obliged to notify the harvest received, e.g. about where it is taken, as further specified in the regulation. Licenses shall be valid for 15 years at a time and shall be reviewed, taking into account the allowable harvest, etc., at least every five years. A permit may be amended or revoked at any time if it is deemed necessary to protect the environment or to reorganize the management of utilization, in the case of gross or repeated violations of this Act, other laws in the field of fisheries management or the conditions of the permit, if the permit is not used or if it is only used to a limited extent.

[Reglugerð um öflun sjávargróðurs í atvinnuskyni nr. 90/2018](#) : Regulation on harvesting of macroalgae for commercial purposes.

- Article 1 deals with scope and licensing. Article 2 is about macroalgae mowing. Article 3 is on macroalgae harvesting. Article 4 is on monitoring, registrations and more and Article 5 on penalties and more.
- The most important part is that no one may harvest macroalgae for commercial purposes from a ship (including a mowing barge) unless they have obtained a general permit issued by the Directorate of Fisheries on a ship (Article 1), cf. law on fisheries management. Regarding macroalgae mowing, it is stated (Article 2) that care must be taken to ensure that the holdfast of macroalgae are not damaged by macroalgae mowing and that vessels (including mowing barges) that mow rockweed (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) must be of a type that prevents tearing the holdfast from the seabed. The proportion of macroalgae with holdfast attached shall not exceed an estimated 8%. The stems of the remaining plant should generally not be lower than 25 cm measured from the holdfast. Furthermore, it is stated that it is not permitted to mow in an area when less than four years have passed since the area was last mowed. (The Directorate of Fisheries can grant exemptions). Regarding macroalgae harvesting (Article 3), it is stated that the Minister shall, as the case may be, have an ongoing survey of whether there is a reason to divide the utilization areas of macroalgae outside the net layers of marine lands into demarcated areas or lanes to limit and monitor utilization.

[Reglugerð um vigtun og skráningu sjávaraflla nr. 745/3016](#) : Regulation on weighing and registration of marine catch.

- Article 39a deals specifically with the weighing of macroalgae: When weighing macroalgae for commercial purposes, the weight (wet weight) shall be weighed on a port scale, unless a home weighing permit is granted. Either of the following methods shall be used:

- Bag- weighing. Weighing of bags on landing. Registration shall be entered on individual vessels, incl. mowing barge.
 - Collective weighing. Weighing in bulk from a ship on landing. In these cases, the catch volume of each vessel, incl. barge at weighing.
- In addition, the origin of the macroalgae should be recorded by the name of the property (or country code). It is not permitted to carry out reweighing of macroalgae. Harvest may be transferred between vessels for collection at sea.

[Reglugerð um skráningu og rafræn skil aflaupplýsinga nr. 298/2020](#) : Regulation on registration and electronic submission of catch information.

- The 6th paragraph of Article 3 states that when mowing macroalgae, each vessel (including barges) shall record information on the amount of macroalgae (wet weight) taken within the net layer of each property (seabed). The landowner concerned has the right to access information from the harvest register on macroalgae mowing for his land.

[Leiðbeiningar og reglur um vottun lífrænnar framleiðslu og náttúrunytja](#) : Guidelines and rules on certification of organic production and natural uses.

- The organic certification office Tún publishes, in collaboration with Icelandic Food Safety Authority, an indicative handbook on requirements for organic methods in the production of agricultural products, in accordance with Icelandic and European legal rules in force in the area organic production at any given time.
- Chapter 7 is on macroalgae and includes sections on management and supervision, selection of collection areas, sustainable utilization and monitoring, harvesting of crops, drying and storage, processing methods and packing.