THE TERMINOLOGY OF SEAWEED COLLOIDS

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SCRIPPS INSTITUTION OF OCEANOGRAPHY

Since the outbreak of the war, there has been a considerable interest among some of the United Nations in investigating and developing their seaweed resources. The principal stimulus, in most instances, has been an agar shortage. In 1940, America had a single agar factory, which made 24,000 pounds of agar. There are now four factories actively engaged in this industry with a combined production capacity of about 200,000 pounds per annum. The principal agarophytes are Gelidium cartilagineum from California and Baja California, Mexico, and Gracilaria confervoides from Beaufort, N. C.

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2 There are three more factories, still in the pilot plant stage, but expected to produce agar soon.

The interest shown in agar does not stop there; it extends to related seaweed colloids capable of serving as substitutes for agar. One of these is carrageenin, generally known in commerce as Irish moss extract. Its principal source is carrageen, better known as Irish moss (Chondrus crispus), which is now obtained in large quantities from Massachusetts and Maine in the United States and from the Maritime Provinces in Canada. The name carrageen is also applied to Gigartina stellata (G. mamillata), commonly harvested together with the Chondrus and used similarly. Previously the production of Irish moss extract was rather small, since most consumers preferred to buy the seaweed and make their own extract. In recent years, there has been a great demand by various industries for a highly purified, standardized product...
Editor's Summary

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