Seaweed as feed supplement

**Problem**
The growth and health of piglets is reduced directly after weaning because of high incidence of diarrhoea.

**Solution**
Feeding low doses of seaweed to piglets may positively affect gut health and reduce diarrhoea. It will also supply several minerals.

**Benefits**
Polysaccharides in seaweeds can have antimicrobial, prebiotic or immunomodulatory effects, alleviating negative effects linked to weaning.

**Practical recommendation**
- Effectivity might differ depending on the seaweed type, harvest season and processing method. Brown and red seaweed species may be better than green (Figure 1).
- Several commercial seaweed products can be used, and it is important to ask for documentation of effect before relying on e.g. effect on diarrhoea.
- High levels of macro and micro minerals have to be taken into account when composing diets with seaweed.
- Many seaweed extracts are available, which may not be suitable for organic production.

**Applicability box**
- **Theme:** Pigs, cattle
- **Context:** Coastal regions
- **Application time:** All year
- **Required time:** Time of feeding
- **Period of impact:** Immediate
- **Equipment:** No extra equipment needed for feeding
- **Best in:** Brown seaweeds

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*Figure 1: Brown seaweed, sugar kelp. Photo: Annette Bruhn*

*Figure 2: Organic piglets may benefit from seaweed. Photo: Jan Værum Nørgaard*
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Further information

Further reading


Weblinks

- Check the Organic Farm Knowledge platform for more practical recommendations.

About this practice abstract and OK-Net EcoFeed

OK-Net EcoFeed: This practice abstract was elaborated in the Organic Knowledge Network on Monogastric Animal Feed project. The project is running from January 2018 to December 2020. The overall aim of OK-Net EcoFeed is to help farmers, breeders and the organic feed processing industry in achieving the goal of 100% use of organic and regional feed for monogastrics.

Project website: ok-net-ecofeed.eu

Project partners: IFOAM EU Group (project coordinator), BE; Aarhus University (ICROFS), DK; Organic Research Centre (ORC), UK; Institut Technique de l’Agriculture Biologique (ITAB), FR; Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), CH; Bioland, DE; Associazione Italiana per l’Agricoltura Biologica (AIAB), IT; Donau Soja DS, AT; Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SE; ECOVALIA, ES; Soil Association, UK.

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