



**Investment  
Agriculture  
Foundation**  
*of British Columbia*

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## **Sea Kelp Harvesting Test Project to Benefit B.C. First Nations**

*Results may also help improve organic farmers' crop yields*

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**Victoria, B.C., June 20, 2007** – To mark National Aboriginal Day, the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia (IAF) is celebrating the success of a recent kelp harvesting test project. The project examined the potential for a First Nations-led agri-business dedicated to producing organic fertilizers from local kelp. The Kwakiutl Nation Development Corporation initiated the project in 2006 with funding from IAF's Aboriginal Agriculture Initiative (AAI).

A test harvest of *Macrocystis* - a type of giant sea kelp - was conducted in traditional Kwakiutl territory near Fort Rupert, B.C. in the summer of 2006. To determine the operational costs associated with manufacturing, kelp samples were processed by a Port Hardy-based company that manufactures and exports liquid kelp fertilizers. A chemical analysis of the liquid kelp concentrate confirmed that the product is well within the standards of a kelp soil amendment product.

"We are very pleased with the results of this project," said Bert Miles, chair of IAF. "The goal was to examine the potential for commercial applications for marine kelp and to increase awareness of its value among B.C. First Nations people. The project demonstrates that kelp harvesting and liquid kelp fertilizer production can bring jobs and other positive economic outcomes to First Nations communities on the coast."

Information generated from the test harvest and processing was used to produce a business plan for a First Nations marine kelp organic fertilizer business and was presented through a workshop held for First Nations members in Fort Rupert in November 2006.

"First Nations people have long utilized marine plants for cultural traditions, medicines, and foods, but this project allowed us to explore the commercial use of kelp," said Dale Peeler, Kwakiutl Nation Development Corporation (KNDC). "So far the fertilizer samples have been getting positive feedback from organic farmers. The next step for us is to find a business partner with marketing expertise that can complement our harvesting skills."

For many years, kelp has been mechanically harvested for a variety of applications, however the most established and widespread use of giant kelp is as a fertilizer. Liquefied kelp extract has been demonstrated to increase plant growth and yield, strengthen stems, improve germination, and increase resistance to disease and environmental stress.

In British Columbia, giant sea kelp grows abundantly in the waters off the northern tip of Vancouver Island. Yet despite the significant economic potential of this resource, the B.C. seaweed industry lags far behind that of other countries largely due to the absence of a nearby market for seaweed products.

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The Investment Agriculture Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that manages and distributes federal and provincial funds in support of innovative projects to benefit the agriculture and food industries in British Columbia. IAF holds in trust and administers funds for the Aboriginal Agriculture Initiative (AAI), which provides funding assistance to fulfill the vision of Aboriginal people achieving self-sufficiency through participation in viable, diverse agri-food opportunities. Funding for the AAI is provided through the Agri-Food Futures Fund, a joint program of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

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*Funding provided by:*

