

# Farming the ocean for carbon market profit:

## Seafields' faulty promises in the Caribbean

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Seafields, a UK based start-up company, plans to scale up seaweed production in the Caribbean Sea, primarily to generate carbon credits in the carbon market. It is growing the invasive *Sargassum* seaweed species, and has plans to expand beyond the Caribbean, establishing a 'giga-farm' in the south Atlantic gyre covering ~0.7 million km<sup>2</sup> – an area roughly the size of Zambia.

Seafields aims to use two controversial 'carbon removal' technologies – sinking seaweed in the deep ocean and 'artificial upwelling' (AU) which pumps cool deep ocean water to the surface. Both are examples of controversial and risky marine geoengineering technologies, which aim to alter the Earth's oceans in the name of climate mitigation. Both are false solutions, remaining theoretical and unproven as carbon sequestration methods.

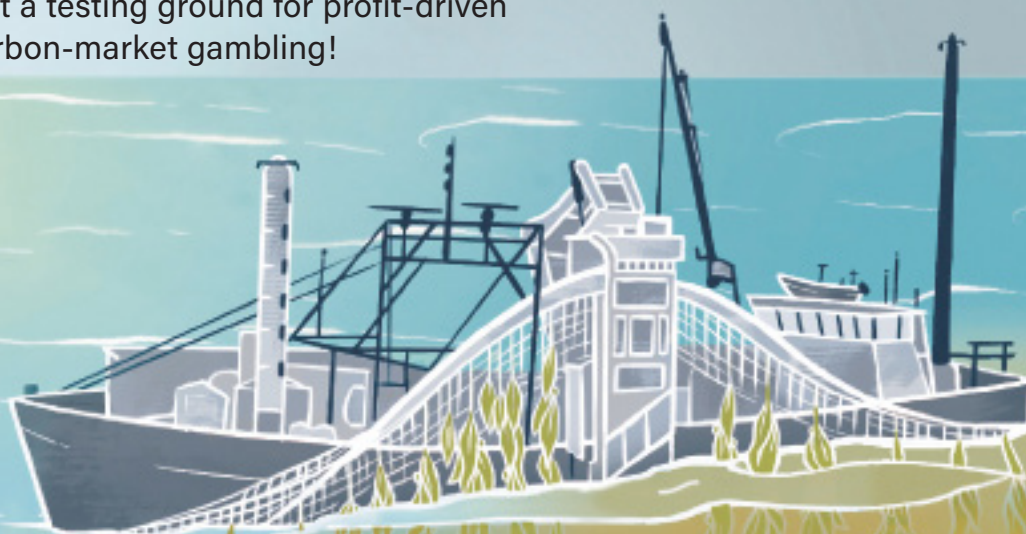
Because of the deleterious effects these two technologies can have on the ocean, they are currently monitored under The London Convention and London Protocol (LC/LP), which oversee activities that could

pollute the marine environment. Nevertheless, Seafields continues to advance its project in the Caribbean, with the false promise that it will address Latin America's *Sargassum* inundation crisis – by growing even more *Sargassum*! In order for their business model to be profitable, the initial problem must persist.

We have seen this pattern before with false climate solutions like REDD and REDD+, where corporations used the language of sustainability to avoid real emissions cuts. Now, the same tactics are being turned towards our oceans—pushing untested, high-risk technological 'fixes' instead of genuine climate action.

Natural and traditionally managed seaweed ecosystems are among the most biodiverse and productive areas in nature. They are a key element of sustainable food security and a crucial basis for many peasant and Indigenous livelihoods. Indigenous Peoples' and local communities have rejected the monoculture cultivation of seaweed because of the threat it poses to their culture and local economy.

Our oceans are not a testing ground for profit-driven experiments or carbon-market gambling!



## What Seafields isn't telling you?

Who is Seafields? Seafields' initiative is backed by a small group of Global North scientists, including individuals linked to the controversial LOHAFEX ocean fertilization experiment.

How will the Seafields project impact the Caribbean? It will have adverse effects on the environment and can have consequences for livelihoods, including:

### Impacts on the oceanic ecosystem and integrity of the ocean

- Massive-scale seaweed monoculture farming can alter ocean biogeochemistry and disrupt marine ecosystems.
- It can harm other marine communities in the ocean such as corals and phytoplankton by competing for nutrients. It can invade natural seaweed ecosystems and induce algae blooms, which has already been observed in the case of industrial seaweed farms in Asia.
- Both sinking of seaweed and artificial upwelling as marine geoengineering techniques remain theoretical and unproven as carbon sequestration methods. Its large-scale deployment and establishment will potentially impact ocean integrity.

### Impacts in the life and future of coastal communities

- Large-scale industrial seaweed farms threaten seaweed commons managed by seaweed gatherers and Indigenous Peoples'.
- Small scale fisheries have a critical role to play in meeting the food security and nutritional needs of billions of people. Disruptions in the marine ecosystem will impact fisheries and endanger planetary food security.

## We need real solutions for a healthy ocean

We recommend:

- The UN and governments should uphold the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) moratorium on geoengineering and apply the precautionary principle on geoengineering under the London Convention and London Protocol.
- Exclude discussions on seaweed-based carbon credit schemes under the carbon market mechanisms mentioned in Article 6 of the Paris Agreement within the UNFCCC framework. and other relevant fora.
- Protect seaweed commons which are cared for by seaweed gatherers, Indigenous Peoples' and coastal communities.
- Prioritize community-led, small-scale seaweed farms that support ocean health and local livelihoods.

## References

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