Phycologia – It seems unthinkable that in today's high-tech, scientifically advanced world, diet-related health problems can be out of control. Yet, people appear to be unwilling or unable to choose healthy foods. Obesity is a major problem worldwide, and one of its key consequences—cardiovascular disease—is the number one cause of premature death. Among all of the ways society is attempting to overcome these problems, seaweeds may provide a universal solution.

The authors of an article published in the current issue of the journal *Phycologia* review some of the reasons people have poor diets and, as a result, poor heart health. They then look at how certain seaweeds could be added to manufactured foods to make the foods, and the people who eat them, healthier.

Obesity and poor heart health are global problems. Mandates to improve school lunches and reduce salt and trans fats in processed foods are among the many steps being taken, but the authors of the current article think a broader, more universal approach is necessary. "There is so much evidence, both direct and circumstantial, regarding the multifaceted benefits associated with dietary macroalgae that my coauthors and I felt it our social responsibility to write a detailed review of the current scientific research," said author Lynn Cornish.

In their review, the authors look at a range of information and studies from various branches of science. The tremendous health and wellness opportunities found in seaweeds have been shown not just by researchers of algae but also by those studying nutrition, food science, and health. In just a short review, the current authors examine 35 species of edible macroalgae that can reduce the risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Researchers have found that many people are unable to tell the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods, often because of clever marketing strategies rather than a lack of education. In general, the number of calories people consume is far more than they use, often because they are eating too many foods that are high in fats, sugars, and salt and doing too little physical activity. This has increased the risk for many widespread yet highly preventable diseases, such as obesity, hypertension, and diabetes.

The authors of the current review found that if specific seaweeds were added to manufactured foods, those foods could be made healthier and could even help reduce the risk of heart disease. For example, compared with land-based plants, macroalgae are generally higher in soluble fiber, which ultimately helps people feel fuller and avoid overeating. Seaweeds are also

loaded with protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, macrominerals, beneficial fatty acids, and antioxidants.

The authors concluded that, although education is important, more direct approaches must be taken to fight the global obesity epidemic. Adding certain seaweeds to fast-food burgers and pizzas, baked goods, pastas, and snacks could reduce the "junk" in junk foods and boost the nutrients in them. As Cornish noted, "Algae, both micro and macro, is a fundamental, natural component of our planet, and . . . it should become fundamental to our global food diet."

Full text of the article, " A Role for Dietary Macroalgae in the Amelioration of Certain Risk Factors Associated with Cardiovascular Disease ," *Phycologia*, Vol. 54, No. 6, 2015, is now available.

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About *Phycologia*

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