Edinburgh company looking for sustainable skincare

Scots and Nordic scientists set to explore sustainable skincare

Scottish company Aquapharm has joined forces with Norwegian firm Aqua Bio Technology (ABT) to create a new generation of sustainable ingredients for the skincare market.

Together the companies hope to identify natural marine ingredients that could replace the petroleum-based components used extensively within the skincare market.

Scientists at Aquapharm believe marine microbes are the key to finding the bio-active ingredients of the future, and have developed specialist fermentation processes to source and produce such extracts.

Now they will undertake a development programme in conjunction with ABT, sharing their expertise in a bid to prove these extracts can be produced with minimal environmental impact – and successfully commercialised for the personal care market.

Jon Williams, VP Commercial, Aquapharm, said: "We have an ageing population, and one that is more environmentally aware, and both factors have led to increasing demand for personal care products with proven scientific benefits. As such brand owners and retailers in this sector are seeking out new sources of innovative, naturally-derived, anti-ageing ingredients – and we believe we have an answer.

"Our approach could lead to significant economic and environmental benefits over existing petroleum-based ingredients, as well as being cost-competitive.

“By working with ABT we plan to develop one or two possible ingredients from sustainable sources, show our ability to up-scale production, and will work together to commercialise them.”

Arvid Lindberg, CEO of Aqua Bio Technology ASA, said: “The collaboration with Aquapharm will enable ABT to tap into the knowledge and lucrative pipeline that Aquapharm holds. Together with ABT’s technical know-how on product development and ability to commercialise marine ingredients through its vast distributor network around the world, this paves the way for a true win-win collaboration. We are very excited about this opportunity, and also of the fact that our two respective governments have encouraged this cooperation by providing initial funding to get the products in question quickly onto the market. Innovation Norway has as such provided a grant on their end of approximately 0,5 MNOK.

“By focusing on marine ingredients to the skincare industry that combine both sustainability and efficacy, both macrotrends amongst consumers, we are convinced that we will be able to commercialize on this newly established collaboration. Consumers demand more and more highly effective skincare products, yet they expect and demand innovation not to come at the expense of the environment and sustainability. With Aquapharm we will innovate new marine based ingredients to cover both, and these will fit nicely into the product portfolio of our company”.

Aquapharm’s cutting-edge techniques have paved the way for the culturing of microbes previously thought ‘unculturable’, allowing its scientists to create an impressive bank of unique marine bacteria and fungi which can be harnessed as a source of novel functional ingredients.

According to the firm these could be used to create a diverse range of ‘next-generation’ products including: anti-ageing ingredients with anti-oxidant andanti-inflammatory properties

as well as natural preservatives.

The diversity of this untapped resource has attracted interest from academic and industrial partners across a range of sectors, and paved the way for a range of other Aquapharm-led collaborative projects.

These include publicised partnerships with Leatherhead Food Research to discover and develop novel preservatives for use in food and beverages; a link-up with Albany Molecular (AMRI) to identify new anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory candidates; and collaboration with Croda International plc to source marine-derived ingredients for skin and hair-care products.

Aquapharm’s most recent project – its development programme in conjunction with ABT – has been partly supported by government funding from the Technology Strategy Board.