

Edinburgh seaweed company rewarded for innovation



Edinburgh business using superfood of the sea wins award

MARA Seaweed of Edinburgh has won the Sustained Partnership of the Year award in the Interface Excellence Awards 2014, which mark successful collaborations between businesses and Scottish universities and research institutions. The Award was presented by John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, at a ceremony in the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh on Thursday evening 20 November 2014.

Working in partnership with the Scottish Association for Marine Science, University of the Highlands and Islands, MARA Seaweed has developed commercially viable tank-based seaweed cultivation. Seaweed is referred to as 'the superfood of the sea', and is the most highly mineralised vegetable on earth. Seasoning derived from seaweed is being used increasingly by chefs as an alternative to salt, for both its nutritional value and flavour.

The judges commended MARA Seaweed on their relationship with their partners, and on their combined efforts to secure increasing amounts of funding, underlining their mutual commitment to the partnership. It was also noted that it is sound business strategy to be investing in the cultivation of seaweed in controlled conditions and that this was the key innovation of this project.

Finance Secretary John Swinney said:

"Innovation plays a vital role in driving productivity and sustainable economic growth. Interface is a key partner in

supporting businesses accessing knowledge from our fantastic research base.

“The Interface Excellence Awards highlight the outstanding contributions and successes of business and academic collaborations throughout Scotland. Congratulations to all the winners and nominees for their ingenuity, industry and creativity.”

MARA Seaweed overcame strong opposition from the other finalists in this category, React2 of Peebles which, in collaboration with Queen Margaret University, created interactive products to help people experiencing problems with speech and language as the result of a stroke, brain injury, learning difficulties or dementia, and Xanthella of Oban is working with the University of Strathclyde to produce photobioreactors for growing algae for use in biofuel production.

Dr Siobhán Jordan, director of Interface, adds:

“The Interface Excellence Awards celebrate the success of collaborations between SMEs and Scottish academia and recognise the efforts to grow their organisations and drive innovation across the marketplace. Through individual projects and their continued contribution towards Knowledge Exchange the companies and their academic partners are making a real difference to the Scottish economy.”

PHOTO shows Fiona Houston Director of MARA with Deputy First Minister John Swinney.

Winners of the other Interface excellence Awards were:

The Innovation of the Year Award – Loadfast Systems of Amulree, Perthshire, which has worked with Glasgow Caledonian University to develop a cascade chute system for the vertical transportation of materials.

The Outstanding Contribution to Knowledge Exchange – Awarded to Dr Nigel Kerby, Managing Director of Mylnefield Research Services (MRS) Ltd of Invergowrie, who specialises in crop science, analytical chemistry, environmental science and soil science and is a regular speaker on these topics at conferences, trade shows and symposia in Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally.

The Multi-Party Collaboration Award – Awarded to the Industry Advisory Group on Resource Efficiency which comprises Zero Waste Scotland, The Scottish Food and Drink Federation and Interface Food and Drink, and which is working with food and drink companies on the challenges around resource efficiency and minimising waste.