

# this working life

Simon Ranger, founder and Managing Director of Seagreens, opens up about his journey to discovering seaweed.



Simon Ranger

**Name:** Simon Ranger  
**Company:** Seagreens  
**Position:** Managing Director

It's often said that one road leads to another, and this is certainly the case with Simon Ranger, the man behind the UK's leading seaweed supplier, Seagreens.

With a psychology background from university, Ranger went on to launch a successful advertising agency in the '80s specialising in developing brands.

And it was through this that, without any prior experience in the health food industry or with any knowledge of seaweed, Ranger's new career path was formed.

"Even before university, I was always interested in health and the relationship between nutrition and human behaviour and then by accident, I was involved with a company that had invested in a business in Norway harvesting seaweed and they came to us to help them develop the brand," he explained.

While working on the business development, Ranger discovered more about seaweed and was fascinated.

"I became absolutely convinced that we should all be taking seaweed every day because of its incredible nutritional profile. At the time, people were not really aware of seaweed and there was not much availability of human-quality seaweed here, so I really saw an opportunity."

## Sea the future

After conducting his own research, Ranger became even more convinced at the potential impact of seaweed on human health.

Entering into a joint venture with the company that had originally sparked his interest, Seagreens was born in 1998.

"There was no one at the time in the UK who was selling quality seaweed so we started the harvesting and production of human food-quality seaweed at a facility in Norway, which was the company's factory."

A further facility was later opened in the

Outer Hebrides, where the seaweed – of the bladderwrack type – is harvested, putting Seagreens in the unique position of being a UK company harvesting UK-sourced seaweed.

"Nutritionally they are known in the seaweed world as the best in the world, as the bladderwrack seaweed are very broad and very balanced, and they contain a significant amount of micronutrients such as B vitamins and trace minerals."

Seagreens has carried organic status on its products since 1998, and later secured Demeter accreditation in recognition of its biodynamic standards.

Organic and health food stores have always been crucial to the Seagreens business, although Ranger admits that it took time to get the message across to the trade.

"When Seagreens began, I spent a lot of time visiting stores, trying to get people to understand seaweed and how important it is. My role these days involves everything from working out how we can improve the quality of harvesting and processing, through to new product development. My real joy is designing our products and thinking up new products and ideas," he said.

One of the "guiding principles" of Seagreens has been the relationship with those involved in the supply, production and distribution, and Ranger explains that everyone involved is a partner in the business.

"We don't have employees, everyone from our distributors to those who do the harvesting are partners in the business and this is really fundamental to how I have built Seagreens."

## Understanding seaweed

Research is considered crucial at Seagreens, and over the years the company has benefited from Government funding to enable better education about the wide scope of seaweed.

This year, Seagreens will be starting the Seaweed Health Foundation, which is a not-for-profit research forum working with other interested partners.

"There is so much research that has to be

done and that's what the foundation is for," Ranger explained.

He pointed out that the company takes its responsibility to the sea very seriously, and is proud that its seaweed is free from toxic contaminants.

"We are responsible for a marine resource, and we have a responsibility to keep the oceans clean and make sure the seaweed is good quality," he added.

Having sold consumer products since the company launched, more recently Seagreens has launched a food ingredients range, which is being used by the likes of Pukka in its own products.

Seagreens' latest launch is going to be a 50/50 salt and seaweed product, which Ranger hopes will help raise awareness and address issues of over-consumption of salt.

"One of my big crusades is to get people to reduce their intake of salt as we consume too much of it, and this product can help people to do that," Ranger said.

In fact, the issue of over-consumption of salt has become important enough for Seagreens to be selected for a Government-sponsored project at Sheffield Hallam University.

Away from his passion for seaweed, Ranger occupies his time at his 30-acre estate in West Sussex, which also doubles as the Seagreens HQ. Here, he is working on achieving biodynamic status, with a view to selling the produce that is grown on the land.

