

A harvesting strategy for *Iridaea laminarioides* in central Chile

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Abstract

About 5000 t of dry *Iridaea* are exported annually from Chile for carrageenan extraction (Lopehandía, 1986), but inadequate biological knowledge prevents rational management of these species. As in the case of other economically important algal species in Chile, studies have been oriented either to understand the morphology and taxonomy of the species (Etcheverry et al., 1981) or to characterize chemically the nature of the gels produced (Matsuhira & Zanlungo, 1976a, b). Some of these species, such as *Iridaea laminarioides* Bory, are ecologically important in rocky intertidal communities (Santelices et al., 1981) and careless harvesting might result in ecological damage and decreased production. Because of specific differences, ecological studies with species of *Iridaea* at other latitudes (Hansen & Doyle, 1976; Hansen, 1977, 1981; Adams & Austin, 1979) have limited application to the Chilean beds. Methods for field propagation or tank cultivation of species of *Iridaea* elsewhere (Waaland, 1973, 1976, 1982; Mumford, 1979; Mumford & Waaland, 1980) cannot be used in Chile, mainly owing to limited knowledge on the production ecology of the local species.

Keywords Seaweed, *Iridaea*, Harvesting, *Iridaea* production, Carrageenan production