

AQUA Cultured Foods partners with Ginkgo Bioworks to optimise alt-seafood

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AQUA Cultured Foods, a food tech company producing alternative seafood options through the use of microbial fermentation, and Ginkgo Bioworks, which is building the leading platform for cell programming and biosecurity, announced a new partnership. AQUA has chosen Ginkgo to help optimise its innovative fermentation technology to elevate the quality of its fish-free seafood products that authentically replicate the look, feel, and taste of fresh-caught seafood. Leveraging Ginkgo's microbial characterisation and analytics, along with AQUA's proprietary strains and processes, the partners aim to transform the future of alt-seafood production.

AQUA is a leader in the alternative seafood industry, delivering products with the texture, taste, and appearance of fresh-caught seafood filets, without using any fish or animal inputs. Their debut offerings, tuna, and scallops, maintain freshness and tenderness for six weeks. Powered by a patent-pending fermentation process, which can be scaled on a global level, AQUA's fish-free seafood is made from microbes and fibres combined with plant-derived flavours that replicate the buttery texture and umami notes found in fresh-caught seafood. Unlike traditional seafood, AQUA's products contain no contaminants, antibiotics, allergens, cholesterol or saturated fats, and can be consumed and enjoyed by those with diverse dietary needs, including pregnant people and those with shellfish allergies.

The AQUA team uses a consortium of microbes that work synergistically to make its appetizing and affordable products. Ginkgo will leverage its high throughput next-generation sequencing and advanced analytics services to help optimise and tune AQUA's strains to aid in the scale-up of their novel manufacturing process. With Ginkgo, AQUA hopes to amplify its R&D capabilities and further optimise its consortium to establish consistent, high-quality products. Through this, AQUA envisions a future where its proprietary microbe consortium can be used to produce not just whole-cut and ground alt-seafood products, but also introduce unique flavours and textures to the broader food industry. This inaugural partnership paves the way for

future projects leveraging Ginkgo's strain engineering capabilities as well.