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URCHINOMICS PARTNERS WITH A PHILANTHROPIST TO FUND SCALABLE URCHIN REMOVAL AND KELP RESTORATION

Tromsø, Norway – April 21, 2021 – Urchinomics and an anonymous philanthropist is providing 2.6 MNOK in funding to support scalable urchin removal and kelp restoration. Funds will be directed towards improving and validating innovative technologies being developed in Norway. The project is lead by the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA) and contributes together with the Norwegian Institute of Food, Fisheries and Aquaculture Research (Nofima) and Akvaplan-niva with scientific advice. Øyvind Jørgensen from KUPA will help administer and secure matching funding from other mission aligned stakeholders. Research outcomes will be applied by industry and commercial fishers, as well as non-profit kelp restoration partners like Tarevoktere to establish scalable urchin removal and kelp restoration initiatives in Northern Norway.

Human activities such as overfishing have contributed to the explosion of sea urchin populations, which have overgrazed around 40% of Norway’s native kelp forests. Kelp forests are an important, biodiverse ecosystem in temperate waters, where they provide both food and shelter to many marine species, in addition to carbon sequestration. Sea urchin removal has been proven to be an effective method to restore kelp forests in Northern Norway.

Brian Takeda says, ‘As a pioneering venture, Urchinomics is very excited to encourage new technological advances in fisheries innovation and habitat restoration. We believe Norway’s expertise in subsea oil and gas technologies, advanced fisheries technologies and in kelp and urchin dynamics will result in some very exciting, scalable solutions’.

Beyond testing and improving innovative urchin removal solutions, the funding will also allow for environmental impact studies, an important step prior to commercializing technologies. Dr Pernilla Carlsson and Dr. Helena Michelsen from NIVA say, ‘We must ensure that the scalable technologies intended to help restore kelp ecosystems do not cause negative, unintended consequences’. Dr. Philip James from Nofima adds that, ‘scalable fishing and kelp restoration solutions will dovetail well into our other blue economy research initiatives, such as H2020 project AquaVitae, we have at Nofima. We all come out stronger by integrating the efforts’.

Urchinomics is a pioneering aquaculture venture that aims to turn ecologically destructive sea urchins into high valued seafood products that can be consistently supplied nearly year-round. The Urchinomics Methodology helps restore kelp forests, which in turn supports greater marine biomass, biodiversity, and capacity to sequester atmospheric CO₂, all while creating meaningful, full time employment in rural, coastal communities around the world.