

## About Cottonii Group



Cottonii Group stands as Timor-Leste's first seaweed cooperative, established in 2008 with a membership of 600 farmers. Located on Atauro island, just 25 km from Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, Cottonii plays an important role in finding local and international buyers to purchase dried seaweed. The cooperative has achieved remarkable success by exporting dried seaweed and establishing strong buyer relationships in Indonesia and Vietnam. Looking ahead, Cottonii envisions expanding trade to other countries while enhancing the capabilities of local farmers in seaweed farming.



## Market Constraints

Despite the global significance of seaweed as a commodity, the sector remains in its early stages in Timor-Leste. Seaweed farmers face limitations in their knowledge of farming practices and drying techniques, relying on trial-and-error methods to determine the best approaches. Moreover, limited government support is provided to help develop the seaweed sector. Additionally, due to the absence of a seaweed processing facility in Timor-Leste, Cottonii members depend on irregular visits from international buyers to the island.

## Intervention



### INCREASING SEAWEED PRODUCTIVITY

### IMPROVING MARKET ACCESS TO INCREASE EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS



Training seaweed farmers

Transferring knowledge and best practices to farmers



MDF Timor-Leste works with Cottonii Group to increase seaweed productivity and facilitate improved market access. With MDF's support, 53 seaweed farmers, including 30 women and 23 men from the Cottonii group, received training in appropriate seaweed planting, drying, and processing from a seaweed value chain expert in 2022. To expand international market opportunities, cooperative members visited Indonesia in 2023, introducing dried seaweed to potential buyers. In the same year, Timorese seaweed farmers learned about seaweed planting practices from Indonesian farmers bringing back the knowledge to the island.

*Implementing the new planting method allowed me to maximise the lines for seedlings. With a 50x50m area, I can now use more than 6 rolls of rope, compared to less than 3 rolls previously.*

*Mateus Morais, a seaweed farmer.*