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PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

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are amongst the oldest marine macrophytes in the N. Atlantic and make deposits that take hundreds of years to accumulate, since growth rates are extremely slow. Their high biodiversity makes them important habitats for conservation. Functionally they are also important as nursery grounds for commercial fish and shellfish species, and as carbon sinks in coastal waters. The EU-funded BIOMAERL project (Maerl biodiversity and anthropogenic impacts) (under MAST III contract: MAS3-CT95-0020), has linked laboratories in Scotland, Brittany, Galicia, Alicante and Malta. The objectives of this project are: (1) the examination of maerl-bed biodiversity; (2) the establishment of functional roles played by a number of key species; (3) the assessment of impacts of a variety of anthropogenic impacts on representative grounds; (4) the compilation of an inventory of maerl-bed biota. In the Galician maerl beds, our research has shown just how individual are the environmental characteristics and the degrees of stability of this habitat when examined under the four points mentioned above. This contribution presents the results three years of study of the Galician maerl beds.

ON THE OCCURENCE OF THE GENUS *SEBDENIA* (HALYMENIALES, RHODOPHYTA) IN THE AZORES

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The occurrence of the genus *Sebdenia* (Halymeniales, Rhodophyta) in the Azores is reported for the first time, based on collections made in the island of São Miguel. The ecology, anatomy and morphology of the plants are described and meristic comparisons with species from elsewhere are presented. With few exceptions the results indicate stronger similarities with plants from the Atlantic African coasts than with plants from other places of Macaronesia, namely Cape Verde and the Canarian Archipelagos. This is the second contribution to the study of the genus *Sebdenia* in the Macaronesian Region. Further taxonomic and biological studies are now in progress to evaluate if the specimens collected in the Azores will constitute a new species for the genus, or simply a variety of one of the species recently described for the Macaronesia.