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Marine algal flora of the Azores: biogeography and ecology

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Studies on the marine algae of the Azores go back just over a century and a half. Although in comparison to mainland Europe the Azores marine flora is less well known, its isolated position has encouraged a recent resurgence of algal interest resulting in many new algal records. Several hypotheses have been proposed as to the floristic relationships of the Azores marine flora, some point to Atlantic Europe, to West Africa and Macaronesia, others to the Mediterranean and America; results from numerical analysis of North Atlantic distributional data are inconclusive. Endemism is low on the Azores, and species not recorded elsewhere are of taxonomically difficult groups.

In many parts of the archipelago intertidal and subtidal algal communities are characterised by dense turf formations externally uniform in appearance and comprising mainly articulated Corallinaceae together with other filamentous and filiform species. Communities dominated by large macroalgae occur only infrequently. Numerical methods provided the best means of comparing site samples in order to assess similarities and differences. Man's impact on the flora is suggested by changes in local ecology and by introduced species.