

‘Call it a business plan’: North Atlantic supply chain group launches ‘policy FIP’ to drive political will for long-term pelagics management

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The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) - a collective of 50 retailers and supply chain businesses working together to secure sustainable management of key pelagic stocks - starts the clock on three-year countdown to certification-ready pelagic fisheries.

In [correspondence to NEAFC Heads of Delegation](#) in the past days, NAPA has announced the launch of an innovative ‘policy FIP’ - designed to drive political will for cooperative decision-making and secure sustainable management for key pelagic stocks. The novel ‘policy FIP’ covers Northeast Atlantic mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring - two stocks which recently lost MSC certification due to ongoing disagreements between Coastal States actors, leading to unilateral quota-setting. This, says NAPA, is an unacceptable threat to the sustainability of these key stocks, and one which has major implications for the purchasing decisions of the market.

“It is vital a collaborative, long-term approach to managing key pelagic stocks is in place, which in turn will help us to meet the commitments to our consumers to provide ethical, sustainable products. The policy FIP is an excellent vehicle for us to drive this and we would urge Coastal States to think of the FIP as a ‘business plan’. Ultimately, the market needs to be comfortable with the management of these stocks to ensure a future supply base and promote healthy oceans.” - Aisla Jones, Fisheries and Aquaculture Manager, The Co-op.

Following the news that [Norway has unilaterally increased its own quota](#) by over 100,000 tonnes – shortly followed by a quota increase from the Faroes – NAPA has announced the launch of the policy FIP for the first time. Representing wholesalers, food service businesses, aquaculture producers, feed companies, suppliers and processors, NAPA’s position is that the market won’t continue to tolerate ‘horse-trading’ and actions that they consider to threaten the overall sustainability of pelagic stocks.

Whilst traditional ‘FIPs’ (Fishery Improvement Programmes) focus on the need to enact data collection or develop management strategies, the NAPA policy FIP acknowledges that the pelagic stocks covered - NEA mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring - are in the unusual position of being data-rich, well-understood and with proposed management strategies published. The barriers to enacting sustainable management centre around decision-making and political will: hence the ‘policy’ focus of the FIP.

Project Lead, Dr Tom Pickerell, commented:

“Horse-trading and unilateral quota-setting is not responsible management. NAPA as a group are calling for political barriers to be put to one side, and for Coastal States to make a simple, responsible decision: to follow the established science. With long-term, sustainable management in place these key commercial stocks can continue to thrive, and NAPA members can serve the global marketplace with confidence and security. Our goal? That Coastal States come together and enact science-based, responsible management.”

NAPA, which has been working on NEA pelagics sustainability since 2019 as a collective, has developed a similar tool for a third key stock: blue whiting. Not-yet-launched, but in the immediate pipeline, is a NAPA MarinTrust ‘improver programme’ for this important aquaculture feed-stock. Tom Pickerell further commented: *“this shows the organisation and ambition of the marketplace in signaling the need for sustainable management: NAPA is focused on three stocks, and we have improvement programmes outlined for all of them - they will be independently audited, and we will hold ourselves to account as we strive to hold Coastal States governments to account. Should an agreement between Coastal States prove impossible, then individual supply chain members will be forced to re-evaluate their purchasing of these pelagic stocks.”*

Find out more about the policy FIP for NEA mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring on FisheryProgress.org here: <https://fisheryprogress.org/fip-profile/northeast-atlantic-ocean-mackerel-and-herring-hook-line-trawl-and-purse-seine>

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Notes to Editors

The below is additional quotable content, to be attributed to NAPA as a collective if used.

- **So, how will the policy FIP work?**

The policy FIP is a concept designed, scoped and executed by NAPA to drive sustainability in NEA mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring fisheries. Using the framework of a traditional, science-based FIP as a guide for driving policy / political action towards the desired, sustainable outcome.

Responding to the removal of MSC certification for both of these fisheries in 2019 (mackerel) and 2020 (herring), the policy FIP uses the framework of MSC assessment to

identify specific areas for action, leading to a programme of work and engagement to be undertaken between 2021-2024. The FIP was published on FisheryProgress.org in April 2021.

- **How will NAPA members drive this forward?**

Chaired by Aoife Martin of Seafish and run by Project Lead, Dr Tom Pickerell of Tomolamola Consulting, NAPA members meeting regularly to review priorities, assess progress against goals and determine approaches to advocating for sustainable pelagics management in the NEA. Individual members will support the policy FIP through their own correspondence with Coastal States ahead of the CS meeting in October 2021, as well as collectively - through NAPA. Members share their perspectives on the market and their expertise to make NAPA a powerful collective voice. NAPA members represent the majority of NEA pelagics purchasing.

- **Does the FIP expect certain catch levels?**

The FIP calls for Coastal States to follow ICES advice for total catches for the two stocks covered. Total quota taken collectively by each of the Coastal States should not exceed the ICES advice.

- **What implications does Norway and the Faroes' unilateral increased quota have for the NAPA FIP?**

The FIP is a three-year programme, so there are no immediate implications - although NAPA views this as a poor start, and a sign of how entrenched the habit of unilateral quota-setting has become. NAPA sincerely hopes that other Coastal States will take an approach that is more respectful of the ambition for long-term, science-based management of the stock, and that total catches won't exceed the advised ICES TAC.