

## North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA)

### Herring collapse on the horizon without urgent action

***New research by the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) has revealed that Atlanto-Scandian herring in the Northeast Atlantic could face a potential repeat of the 1960s herring collapse if governments do not take steps to stop overfishing.***

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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

One of Europe's most iconic and lucrative fish stocks, Atlanto-Scandian herring, could take a significant hit to its rate of reproduction as soon as 2026 if current levels of overfishing are allowed to continue, according to the [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) (NAPA).

NAPA – comprising some of the world's biggest retailers, processors, and supply-chain businesses all advocating for sustainable fisheries management in the Northeast Atlantic – has commissioned its [own research](#) in order to strengthen its case. In collaboration with **Ray Hilborn, Professor of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences at the University of Washington**, NAPA has determined the timeframe for Atlanto-Scandian herring to reach a critically low threshold under current levels of overfishing. Named the 'Biomass limit reference point' – or Blim – this threshold defines the danger zone for a stock, the point beyond which its reproduction is at risk, a state that should be avoided at all costs.

Not only is NAPA the voice of the global marketplace for responsibly-sourced seafood, using commercial leverage to drive sustainability into fisheries management, NAPA is now backed by new science – sounding the alarm for the future of this highly commercial stock.

*“Atlanto-Scandian herring could reach Blim as early as 2026, assuming the continuation of current levels of overfishing without any significant changes to recruitment. That would present politicians, the market and fishing communities with serious problems”* commented **Neil Auchterlonie, NAPA Project Lead**.

The outlook for Atlanto-Scandian herring is alarming. Fishing pressure exceeded scientific advice by 30%-37% between 2020-2022. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea describes the stock as “slowly decreasing”, and last year set the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for 2024 at 390,010 tonnes – a sharp decrease of 24% compared to 2023. But despite a global coalition of market actors and the international fisheries science community being aligned in their warnings about the severity of the situation for herring, Coastal States governments are floundering.

**Auchterlonie** added: *“The buck stops with Coastal State governments. Their inability to agree on sustainable quota sharing arrangements in line with scientific advice is pushing more than one renowned fish stock into dangerous waters. Atlanto-Scandian herring, along with Northeast Atlantic mackerel and blue whiting, are being fished according to unilateral quotas*

*that are set by individual nations. The result? Overfishing. The herring stock is heading for Blim in two years, and mackerel and blue whiting are likely not far behind.”*

In 2021, NAPA’s pre-competitive coalition of 70 world-leading retailers, food service companies, and suppliers launched the three-year, policy-based [Mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian Herring Fishery Improvement Project](#) (FIP) and the [Blue Whiting MarinTrust FIP](#), in direct response to the inadequate management and governance of these stocks. With a self-imposed deadline on the horizon, and many retailers saying they will no longer purchase these stocks from the region unless a sustainable sharing agreement can be reached, NAPA has contributed directly to the body of scientific evidence, adding additional urgency to its call for action.

**Linda Wood, Marks & Spencer Aquaculture & Fisheries Manager**, said: *“Coastal State governments have failed to act. With the FIPs due to end in a matter of months, we are becoming restless in the absence of a resolution. We are urging Coastal States to act in accordance with their commitment to ‘follow the science’ and reach a sharing agreement as early as possible in 2024.”*

Pivotal quota sharing negotiations for Atlanto-Scandian herring, mackerel, and blue whiting are now underway, with herring discussion taking place this week. NAPA’s position is clear: Three years wasted, one last chance to make a difference. The market will act if governments do not.

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*Notes to Editors:*

## **More on NAPA**

The [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) (NAPA) is a collective of over 70 global retailers, food service companies, and suppliers with the shared aim of sourcing sustainable and certified seafood in order to supply a growing demand for sustainable, ecolabelled fish products. NAPA’s reach extends across the world, attracting members from Japan, Asia, USA, Australia, and Africa, as well as the EU and UK. It represents an unprecedented coalition of business leverage, pushing hard to prevent overfishing of three iconic pelagic stocks – Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring, and Northeast Atlantic blue whiting. As a collective, NAPA is using its voice to advocate for long-term, science-based management of these stocks: for prospering oceans and fisheries, and business security. To achieve this, NAPA is seeking an agreement on total allowable catches for Northeast Atlantic pelagic fisheries in line with scientific advice, and for a long-term science-based management agreement.



Further information can be found at:

- NAPA website: [napafisheries.org](https://napafisheries.org)
- X: [@NAPAfisheries](https://twitter.com/NAPAfisheries)
- LinkedIn: [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](https://www.linkedin.com/company/north-atlantic-pelagic-advocacy-group/)