

NAPA Opening Statement to the NEAFC Annual Meeting

November 2024



Madame President, distinguished delegates and observers, thank you for the opportunity to present a brief opening statement on behalf of the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA).

NAPA is a collective of retailers, food service companies, supply chain businesses and salmon farmers. Together, NAPA members comprise considerable purchasing power and have committed to sourcing sustainable seafood and achieving long-term sustainability through robustly managed pelagic fisheries.

NAPA's focus is the globally significant North East Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring and North East Atlantic blue whiting stocks. These stocks support fisheries that are amongst the world's largest and most important, and in turn they support communities and businesses around the North Atlantic and further. Of course, these stocks are also key components of the ecosystem that supports us all.

NAPA members regard the ongoing management of mackerel, herring and blue whiting with nothing less than disappointment and frustration; it is clear from the presentations already this morning that we are not alone in this. NAPA is therefore calling for:

- 1) Comprehensive sharing arrangements that allocate catches equitably.
- 2) TACs that are set in line with scientific advice to prevent overfishing, and
- 3) Binding disputes resolution processes that ensure we can't get to this situation again.

Until recently, it might be argued that the lack of comprehensive agreements has not been critical. But relying on exceptional productivity or the incoming year class to compensate for a lack of management is not sustainable, nor sensible. The management of these stocks has not met accepted global standards of sustainability for at least 5 years, and is a stain on the credibility of the management process.

And we are now at a critical juncture. Mackerel suffered a steep drop in biomass this year such that it is now estimated to be just above Btrigger, and herring is now estimated to be below Btrigger. Blue whiting is on the way down after years of fishing above Fmsy.

NAPA recognises that the focus of the NEAFC Annual Meeting is not all on mackerel, herring and blue whiting, and that there are other important issues under consideration. Nevertheless, in your discussions this week NAPA urges Parties to be ever mindful of these stocks, and your vital role in ensuring they are managed sustainably into the future.

The sustainable management of mackerel, herring and blue whiting is simply too important to leave for later. If the time for action, collaboration and concession wasn't already before, then NAPA believes, and the statuses of the stocks stress, that it is most definitely now.

Thank you.