



**STATEMENT TO THE PRESS**  
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**NAPA TELLS COASTAL STATES: “CERTIFICATION OF STOCKS IS NON-NEGOTIABLE”**

Following a landmark meeting of NAPA partners on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024, at which we welcomed catching sector representatives and Coastal States’ negotiators, [NAPA](#) (the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy group), wants to reinforce a message central to its mission; there is no space for ambiguity when it comes to the sustainable management and certification of pelagic fisheries. **Certified products hinge on responsible, long-term management of stocks and they are the only way to clearly evidence ethical procurement to consumers.** Either fisheries are certified as sustainable, and we source from them, or they are not, and we must reconsider. While we have consistently made our position plain, political stalemate continues to threaten sustainable, long-term management of pelagics – and therefore makes certification impossible at this time.

Northeast Atlantic mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring once held MSC certification, and can again, but they’re currently unable to fulfil the governance criteria of the certification process. Why? Because of the lack of a comprehensive, science-based sharing agreement - meaning the governance of the fisheries creates material risk to their long-term sustainability. This is a barrier that simply can’t be overcome by **any actors other than the Coastal States themselves.** There is no remedy to this, other than unanimous political agreement.

The science for these stocks is clear: there is good reason to be concerned for their long-term health. **Overfishing is occurring on all three species,** due to Coastal States’ inability to come to a comprehensive sharing agreement between parties - effectively ignoring the scientific advice that they all claim to endorse. **This will, inevitably, lead to stock decline. As a result, our ability to source from some of the most data-rich, well-resourced fisheries in the world hangs in the balance.**

We remain concerned that the finer details of stock health may well be a distraction from the big picture. It’s easy to point to the current ‘boom’ in blue whiting (which history tells us will become a bust soon enough), or a strong incoming year-class in herring, and feel reassured that the consequences of political inaction on pelagics can be postponed. They can’t.

**We want to be completely clear. The supply chain will reconsider sourcing products from fisheries if they do not have a robust and credible management regime in place that is capable of delivering stock sustainability.** At the moment, all three stocks are within [NAPA Fishery Improvement Projects \(FIPs\)](#) - a vehicle designed to give the market a voice and drive political agreement; offering Coastal States a chance to avoid the cliff-edge of purchasing decisions that is looming. While both FIPs have been extended up to 2026, there is no further extension beyond that point.

NAPA is looking to **all nations** to demonstrate their commitment to long term sustainability. While comprehensive sharing agreements are complex and take time, short term actions to protect stocks, such as limiting fishing in international waters, are not only within the reach of everyone, but essential to



pave the way for long-term success. NAPA expects to see meaningful improvements by all: **there is no excuse for inaction.**

Seafood buyers are already considering their purchasing decisions for 2026 and beyond, and remain resolute in their commitment to only source from fisheries that meet the required sustainability threshold.

NAPA, as a collective, remains eager to support Coastal States negotiators and any other actors working to secure a solution for northeast Atlantic pelagics management, with research, discussion, proposals and any tools at our disposal.



**\*\*ENDS\*\***



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**Notes to Editors:**

The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) is a market-led approach to improve North Atlantic pelagic fisheries management. It is a collective of over 50 global leaders in retail, aquafeed, food service, and seafood processing with the shared aim of sourcing and producing sustainable and certified seafood in order to supply the growing demand for sustainable, ecolabelled seafood. NAPA's reach extends across the world, attracting members from Asia, the USA, Australia, and Africa, as well as the EU and UK.

As a collective, NAPA is using its voice to advocate for long-term, science-based management of three key fish stocks in the North East Atlantic: mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring (also known as Norwegian Spring-Spawning herring). In all cases, disputes over quota allocation between the Coastal States that fish for these species have resulted in annual catches well in excess of the scientifically advised level.

NAPA is calling for agreements that ensure quotas are shared equitably between Coastal States, catch limits that are in line with scientific advice, and dispute resolution processes that will prevent a stalemate when countries fail to agree on quota shares. The ultimate aim is lasting economic and environmental sustainability, which are vital for the businesses and communities that depend on these species.

NAPA is tackling these issues through the coordination of two Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) – one for mackerel and herring, and one for blue whiting. The FIPs serve to drive political will for sustainable management, while holding key actors and decision-makers to account. Both projects are unique in that they are 'policy FIPs' – focusing on advocacy aimed at decision-makers, rather than on changing fishing practices on the water.

Further information can be found at:

NAPA website: [www.napafisheries.org](http://www.napafisheries.org)

NAPA LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/napafisheries](http://www.linkedin.com/company/napafisheries)