

PRESS STATEMENT: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Global seafood coalition renews urgent calls for mackerel management agreements after new seafood sourcing advice is published

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The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) has renewed its urgent calls for an end to the irresponsible management of key North East Atlantic pelagic fisheries – including North East Atlantic mackerel. The calls follow the recent announcements of declines in sustainability ratings for the stock by two environmental charities: the UK Marine Conservation Society and GoodFish in the Netherlands. The political impasse surrounding mackerel management - in which Coastal States have failed to reach comprehensive catch-sharing agreements - has led to individual countries setting their own quotas, resulting in average excess quotas of 40% above advised levels since 2010. The species has been experiencing a population decline since 2015.

NAPA, a coalition of over 50 global leaders in retail, aquafeed, food service, and seafood processing has been working with stakeholders from across the seafood and political sectors since 2020 to secure a sustainable future for North East Atlantic pelagic fisheries. Through its groundbreaking Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs), the group is calling for Coastal States to work together to deliver comprehensive sharing arrangements that keep total catches within scientific limits.

While international political agreements take time to achieve, NAPA has identified interim steps that all Coastal States can take to demonstrate that they are committed to making progress in their management of mackerel fishing. This includes limiting high seas catches to 10% of total catches, focussing on human consumption for the use of whole mackerel, and limiting banking and borrowing– in which countries bring forward or push back certain amounts of quota between years – to 10% of the annual total.

**Rob Blyth-Skyrme, NAPA Project Lead**, said, “We are bitterly disappointed to still be in this position and it is no surprise to see more and more calls for an end to this dearth of leadership. Coastal States must recognise their obligations to safeguard the future of North East Atlantic mackerel - and the damage caused by their continued inability to cooperate with each other. If they don't come together to find a way forward, they are taking environmental and economic risks that threaten to destroy the businesses and communities they serve, and who depend on the health of this species.

Blyth-Skyrme adds, “Individual NAPA members have a choice about where they source their raw material from: commitment to the interim steps that we have identified is, and will continue to be,

an important factor for consideration. We want to see meaningful action from individual Coastal States that demonstrates these steps are being followed – there is no excuse for complacency.”

NAPA's North East Atlantic mackerel FIP ends in April 2026. If Coastal States have not delivered sufficient improvements in management by then, the group warns that its members will be forced to seriously reconsider their pelagic sourcing decisions – potentially looking to other species and regions with a more dependable future.

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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. The collective has the shared aim of responsible sourcing and production of seafood in order to supply the growing demand for sustainable, certified products. 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.

Multiple Coastal States engage in mackerel fishing, and although there is a general consensus on the need to follow recommendations on catch limits, they have failed to reach comprehensive agreements on how to allocate those limits among themselves. In 2024, the UK, Norway, and the Faroe Islands signed a catch-sharing agreement that commits to reducing their catches and adhering to specified percentages of the recommended limits. However, this agreement excludes other Coastal States: the EU, Iceland, and Greenland.

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 that covers both 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](https://www.linkedin.com/company/napafisheries)

- Marine Conservation Society (UK) update:  
<https://www.mcsuk.org/news/mackerel-in-decline/>
- GoodFish (Netherlands) update:  
<https://www.goodfish.nl/makreel-overbevist-en-vanaf-vandaag-in-het-rood-op-de-viswijzer/>