

PRESS RELEASE  
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## BLUE WHITING: 'BEST SUPPORTING FISH' IS WORST SUPPORTED FISH, SAY NAPA

London, 3rd March 2025

The [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) (NAPA) renews warnings that continued mismanagement of North East Atlantic blue whiting stocks and ongoing political inaction on sharing pelagic quotas pose a very real threat to Coastal States' economies and the environment.

This week's Oscars signal the start of awards season, where accolades are handed out on a global stage, and where the ceremony is used as a platform to shine a light on the issues depicted on the big screen. Climate action, politics and business will be some of the key components of the stories published from this year's Hollywood event. At the same time, on the other side of the world, the annual North Atlantic Seafood Forum (NASF) will convene. But there certainly won't be the same level of political and media attention given to one of the critical stories unfolding right now in the North East Atlantic – one with the very same components at heart.

NASF's discussions will include the many challenges facing the seafood sector in a rapidly changing landscape - and they make for a compelling story. Plotlines include the long-term mismanagement of key pelagic fish stocks, the consequences for the industries they support, and the failure so far of political powers in the Coastal States to act. And for one pelagic species in particular - North East Atlantic blue whiting - time is running out. Often processed into fishmeal, blue whiting plays a crucial supporting role as a key feed ingredient for farmed salmon - one of the world's most popular seafood choices. Yet its huge importance is seemingly unrecognised by those with the power to protect it - who, through their own inaction, continue to enable overfishing.

As the unified voice of the global seafood market, NAPA's collective of over 50 retailers, fish feed manufacturers, salmon producers, food service companies, and suppliers are on a mission to drive long-term sustainability through robustly managed pelagic fisheries. NASF is an important moment to shine a light on this critical real-world challenge. A key part of this year's programme will see NAPA take to the stage to sound the alarm on the consequences of the continued overfishing of blue whiting, drawing much-needed attention from the seafood businesses, CEOs, experts, investors and analysts in attendance.

Blue whiting has already seen the suspension of its sustainability certifications, prompting NAPA to develop a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) in 2021. Through this ground-breaking project,



NAPA aims to see the fishery regain both Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and MarinTrust certifications once more, using science, research and advocacy to break the political deadlock and drive co-operation. However, this won't be possible until all the Coastal States - the nations responsible for agreeing management of the blue whiting fishery - come to a long-term, sustainable sharing agreement for the stock. Without this, NAPA members will be forced to reconsider sourcing from this fishery - and soon, because the FIP runs out in 2026.

*"Blue whiting has immense value, sustaining the fishmeal sector for decades." says **Dave Robb**, sustainability lead at Cargill and NAPA Blue Whiting subgroup Chair, "This locally sourced resource is vital to Atlantic salmon aquaculture, and our customers will not accept using blue whiting without certification. Time is running out, and there are very limited alternatives to replace blue whiting as a sustainable ingredient in salmon feed."*

**Aoife Martin**, independent Chair of NAPA, adds, *"Certified products are the only way to evidence sustainable and responsible procurement to consumers. If fisheries cannot be certified sustainable as a result of political complacency, then many important actors will need to reconsider what they source and from where. This will have a direct economic impact, not only on fishers but also on salmon farmers around the Coastal States. NAPA has seen a growth in membership across the last year from businesses in the salmon industry – for whom certified MSC and MarinTrust status across their feed supply is non-negotiable. It's a clear signal of how unsettled the marketplace is at the failure to reach agreement."*

NAPA is also keen to dispel any complacency due to recent stock advice for blue whiting - which may appear to show the fishery in robust health despite continued overfishing. Martin continues: *"Coastal states are simply not listening to the scientific guidance they claim to endorse. They are allowing the current healthy status of the blue whiting stock to distract them from the need for action. Far from being evidence that the fishery is not under pressure, the historical data - and everything we know about sustainable fishing practices as a set of advanced fishing nations - tells us that no stock can withstand overfishing indefinitely. This stock is relied upon by nationally significant and culturally essential industries. It's never been more urgent for Coastal States to come together to secure a future for North Atlantic blue whiting – a future that makes good business sense for everyone."*

NAPA encourages all actors who, like them, are working to secure the long-term sustainability of North Atlantic blue whiting to join them in encouraging Coastal States decision-makers to adopt science-based management of this stock and ensure business security for the future.

**\*\*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. Its members have a shared aim of sourcing and producing sustainable and certified seafood in order to supply the growing demand for responsible, ethical 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.

**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.

The **Coastal States** are a group of nations responsible for agreeing the shared management of these three stocks. In recent years, Coastal States have repeatedly failed to reach catch sharing agreements, resulting in long term overfishing of all three stocks. For North East Atlantic blue whiting, the Coastal States are the EU, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and the UK. Together, they are responsible for almost 90% of catches.

**MarinTrust** certification provides independent verification that a company is responsibly sourcing and producing marine ingredients, such as those used for feed.

The **North Atlantic Seafood Forum** is a seafood business held annually in Bergen, Norway. Topics covered include markets, technology, sustainability, and industry challenges.

#### Further information can be found at:

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

NAPA LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/28786526>