

Global seafood coalition highlights urgency of pelagic fisheries reform as Waitrose stops sourcing Atlantic mackerel

“The market is moving. The consequences are real.”

This is today's statement from the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA), issued in response to UK supermarket [Waitrose's](#) decision to halt sourcing of North East Atlantic mackerel amid escalating and unresolved sustainability concerns.

Since 2020, NAPA, on behalf of almost 60 global seafood businesses, has consistently pressed for credible, science-aligned management of North East Atlantic mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring. It has worked through its innovative Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) to coordinate research, advocacy, and political and market engagement. NAPA has called for comprehensive quota-sharing agreements that keep catches in line with scientific advice, underpinned by a dispute resolution mechanism. This work includes proposing a series of interim asks to encourage Coastal States to reduce fishing pressure on the mackerel stock. Over this period, NAPA has tirelessly engaged with all interested parties, from government ministers to coastal state negotiators, business and the fishing community. While there has been some progress, the core problem for mackerel, herring and blue whiting remains unresolved.

NAPA, on behalf of its partners, including Waitrose, has been clear from the outset: without credible efforts to improve these fisheries through the FIPs - which will end in 2026 - it remains challenging for retailers, and the businesses that supply to them, to continue sourcing. This decision from Waitrose follows actions taken by other NAPA partners, including Princes, Thai Union, Albert Heijn, Jumbo and Lidl Netherlands. Previous criticisms that the market would not take action have been roundly dispelled.

While the statement from Waitrose was not unexpected, it is disappointing to face a situation where some of the most information-rich fisheries, accessed by some of the most mature governance regimes globally, are losing their foothold in UK and EU supply chains because of poor management. These failures are causing not only environmental impacts, but increasingly severe social and economic consequences.

The consequences for supply-chain businesses, coastal communities, and the people whose livelihoods depend on these fisheries are profound. Once a product loses its position in a supply chain or on a retail shelf, experience from other fisheries shows that market confidence erodes quickly. The global disruption will be far-reaching.

With FIPs ending, the mackerel stock below safe levels, and stringent cuts in fishing pressure needed to facilitate its recovery, the continued absence of a resolution is indefensible.

Aoife Martin, NAPA Executive Chair, said, “The market is clear: healthy fisheries are essential for sustainable businesses. If the supply chain cannot rely on a long-term future for North East Atlantic fisheries, they will look elsewhere, and indeed this is what we’re now seeing. These are the direct consequences of the lack of action by Coastal States.”

The next round of Coastal State negotiations for mackerel will take place in Reykjavik in early March. NAPA reiterates its call for all parties to commit to a comprehensive sharing arrangement that has space for all. Anything less will prolong instability, increase the economic burden for business, and further undermine confidence in the long-term future of these fisheries.

These are difficult decisions for businesses. While other NAPA partners may shift their sourcing activity over the coming year, the coalition remains committed to reaching a resolution. NAPA and its partners will continue to work diligently to secure a resolution for these fisheries and the businesses, communities and livelihoods that rely on them.

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 2025, the UK, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Iceland signed a four-party catch-sharing agreement. NAPA’s position is that until all six nations - including Greenland and the EU - are included in an agreement, it is incomplete, and further efforts are needed to secure a sharing arrangement that All Parties can support and comply with.

NAPA is calling for comprehensive agreements that ensure quotas are shared 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
- NAPA LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/napafisheries