

Transitioning our Fisheries Improvement Projects

Statement from the NAPA Board

NAPA is committed to delivering a sustainable future for mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring in the North East Atlantic. This has been our mission for the past six years, and our commitment remains unchanged.

Since 2020, we have worked to advance this mission and to secure progress on our three core asks: follow the science, establish a comprehensive sharing arrangement, and implement a dispute-resolution mechanism. Through our two innovative, supply-chain-led Fisheries Improvement Projects (FIPs), we have pursued these objectives with determination.

Our work has been extensive and comprehensive. It has included meeting directly with Ministers, and holding regular meetings with catching sector representatives, with Coastal State Negotiators, and with NGOs. We have developed policy papers, presented the NAPA voice at global conferences, and delivered innovative and dynamic advocacy campaigns. We have also undertaken detailed analysis of catch data to develop a model comprehensive sharing arrangement that includes all three species, is applicable across all coastal states, and is, we believe, a solution to the current stalemate.

While some progress has been made, overall we have not seen sufficient action and fishing nations have failed to reduce catches or to agree a sharing arrangement in line with scientific advice. This is not due to any lack of effort or evidence from NAPA but reflects the limitations of the existing tools in resolving political challenges that sit beyond NAPA's control.

However, we have demonstrated something important: that the supply chain is a critical voice in these discussions, and its needs and requirements must sit alongside those of the fishing industry in government decision-making.

From the outset, NAPA has been clear that if a comprehensive sharing arrangement is not reached before the FIPs conclude, businesses would be forced to review their individual sourcing arrangements. Many have now taken the difficult decision to step away from these fisheries. This is not a position that any business wants to be in. It has imposed significant cost and operational burden and created disruption across the supply chain.

These shifts in sourcing are also not without consequence. They create operational and economic challenges across supply chains and can lead to unintended impacts, including the displacement of sourcing to other regions or supply chains where oversight and shared understanding of sustainability challenges may differ. This underlines the importance of achieving a durable, science-based management solution within the North East Atlantic itself.

As the FIPs come to an end in October 2026, a new advocacy approach is required, one that can help deliver improved governance, a sustainable future, and a management framework that is resilient to climate change. NAPA is developing this next phase while continuing to engage constructively with all parties. This will take time and from April to October 2026 NAPA will transition away from its two FIPs as we develop a new advocacy approach that reflects the shift in relationship that many NAPA members now have with these fisheries.

Both FIPs will formally end on 5 October 2026: the mackerel and herring FIP has been realigned to end at this date to match the planned end of the blue whiting FIP.

While we are frustrated that after six years there is still no resolution in place for these fisheries, they are too important for NAPA to abandon. NAPA businesses remain committed to supporting long term improvements in these fisheries. We have an ambition to source from them again, once a long-term solution is in place, and we will continue to advocate for improved management on behalf of NAPA and for the communities, and livelihoods that depend on them.

We are positive that a resolution can be reached, but existing ways of working will need to change. As we have shown, the supply chains that depend on these fisheries deliver significant financial value for the industry, for the communities that rely on these businesses, and for food security.

NAPA is not giving up on a sustainable future for North East Atlantic pelagic fisheries. Consumer demand for these products is strong, and we are determined to meet it responsibly. We welcome continued collaboration with all key parties in the search for a durable and science-based resolution, one that will enable us to create the conditions for the market to return.

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