



PRESS STATEMENT: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement to the Press: NAPA urges Coastal States to use 2027 ICES advice as a turning point for sustainable management

Date: 30 September 2026

The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) is calling on Coastal States to treat the 2027 International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) advice as a catalyst for securing a comprehensive sharing agreement for North East Atlantic pelagic fisheries – not as justification for maintaining the status quo.

NAPA cautiously welcomes indications of improvements in the stock status of North East Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto Scandian herring and blue whiting going into 2027. However, we warn that these signals must not be **misinterpreted as a licence to continue excessive fishing pressure** and stress that the slight uptick in mackerel occurred despite a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) in 2026 that permitted fishing at more than double the recommended scientific advice.

Recent years have seen severe fluctuations in stock biomass across the three stocks, including mackerel falling below safe levels, Atlanto Scandian herring approaching reproductive impairment, and extreme volatility in blue whiting. We stress that **Coastal States cannot afford to mistake short term good fortune for effective long-term management.**

The latest ICES advice for **mackerel** shows that the stock has now moved to just above the danger zone after last year's shock of it falling to below safe levels. In response, the ICES catch advice is proposing a 352,938 tonnes fishery for 2027. This reflects a 102% increase. While improvements in stock recovery are welcome news, care is needed as the stock is still in a precarious position – only 4.5% above the limit where the risk of stock collapse increases. The ICES advice warns that there is 33% chance that it could fall below safe limits within the next twelve months, even if catch advice is followed.

The advice for **blue whiting** is a good deal more positive, with a recommended catch limit of 1.064m tonnes, an increase of 25% on last year's advice. There is an existing cap on the management advice for blue whiting of 25% and it is possible that the stock could withstand further fishing pressure. Unfortunately, despite this positive story, the imminent end of the blue whiting FIP means that NAPA members may not be able to take advantage of this opportunity.

Finally, **Atlanto-Scandian herring** is seeing a 10% increase in catch advice to 588,004 tonnes, which is positive. However, ICES has also revised downwards some of the recent recruitment assessments, suggesting that care is needed and managers must not be complacent.

NAPA is urging all seven Coastal States – Norway, Iceland, Faroes, Greenland, the UK, the EU and the Russian Federation – to reach a comprehensive sharing agreement that ensures combined catches remain within scientifically advised limits. Without an effective management regime, these stocks remain at risk of falling below critical biological thresholds.

For more than a decade, the absence of a fair and comprehensive quota sharing arrangement has undermined sustainable management. While countries have at times committed to following scientific advice on total catches, unilateral quota setting has repeatedly driven fishing activity above sustainable levels. In 2025, mackerel catches exceeded the scientific limit by 39%.

Our coalition of 58 global seafood businesses believes the lesson from the latest advice is clear: **Coastal States narrowly avoided a more serious downturn.**

We urge political leaders to treat the 2027 advice as a **floor for responsible management, not a ceiling to be pushed against**. Stability, predictability and alignment with scientific advice are essential for businesses to re-engage with these fisheries and source with confidence.

NAPA recognises the need for continued advocacy to deliver collaborative, science-based management of North East Atlantic pelagic fisheries, and for a durable agreement that brings all relevant Coastal States into a fair, effective and long term sharing arrangement which will benefit the entire supply chain – including fishers, processors, distributors, salmon farmers, retailers and consumers.

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Notes to Editors

About the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA):

The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) is a market-led approach to improve North Atlantic pelagic fisheries management. The pre-competitive coalition includes retailers, suppliers, foodservice companies, fishmeal producers, feed companies, and salmon farmers. They have 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.

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 under the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, and one for blue whiting under the MarinTrust. 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. Both FIPs will end in October 2026.

For more information, visit:

- <https://napafisheries.org/>

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