

The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA)

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS:

**A message in a bottle from the unified voice of the marketplace:
Enough is enough. It's time to land solutions and stop overfishing in the Northeast Atlantic.**

In an open letter to Ministers, a pioneering collective of global retail and supply-chain giants warns its patience is running out. The consortium of seafood companies demands that Coastal States seize their chance to turn the tide on over two decades of unsustainable management.

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[Open letter from the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group to the Fisheries Ministers of the UK, EU, Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Russia](#)

Dear Ministers,

We, the [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group \(NAPA\)](#), represent the global marketplace for seafood in the Northeast Atlantic. We are writing to tell you; enough is enough.

Sustainable fisheries in the Northeast Atlantic must be your priority at the upcoming 2023 Coastal States consultations. We are asking you **not** to walk away from this year's talks without a unanimous and sustainable agreement on catches for 2024.

The voice of the market.

Your inaction to date is driving the supply chain to re-think their purchasing decisions. If sustainable management cannot be achieved, our members will consider taking matters into their own hands:

“We would continue our stand to not source fishmeal containing uncertified blue whiting” – Skretting Norway, NAPA Member

“We would cease sourcing Northeast Atlantic mackerel from FAO Area 27” – Asda, NAPA Member

“We would stop purchasing this material as we work to high responsible sourcing standards” – Biomar, NAPA Member

“Young’s branded products would cease sourcing from these fisheries” – Young’s, NAPA Member

The **barriers** are political – so we thought we'd write to a politician.

The **solutions** are laid-out in long-term management strategies, based on robust science and designed to ensure responsible, ethical, sustainable seafood for consumers.

Here's the situation.

The sustainable future of Northeast Atlantic fish stocks hangs in the balance awaiting your agreement. Atlanto-scandian herring, mackerel and blue whiting are being overexploited because you, the key fishing nations of the Northeast Atlantic, are unable to agree on total quotas that are in line with the evidence-based advice of international scientists' – advice that is drafted with the specific aim of making your decisions easier.

The bilateral deal made in July between the UK and Norway that saw the UK allow Norwegian pelagic vessels to access its waters in exchange for mackerel quota, demonstrates that you do possess the will to collaborate and forge agreements. Now, we want to see all seven Coastal States unite in the spirit of common sense and consensus.

The science is clear.

Given the latest International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) advice for 2024, it is hardly surprising that stock biomass for these fisheries continues to decline. The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) set for these species has been consistently above the advice – regularly at 30-40% above sustainable levels and the impact on these fisheries is clear to see. Herring, in particular shows a significant decrease in advised catch, from 511,00 tonnes in 2023 to 390,000 tonnes in 2024 – a steep cut of 44%. This is a serious and sad reflection of the Coastal States' (in)ability to manage the fishery in line with scientific advice.

In contrast, we see an increase in blue whiting advice from 1.35m tonnes in 2023 to 1.52m tonnes in 2024. High levels of recruitment into the fishery last year meant that stock numbers have boomed, but this should not automatically translate into higher catches. Instead, it offers a golden opportunity to take that smaller slice of the blue whiting "pie", and scale back your allocations. Disappointingly, last year you squandered that opportunity.

These fisheries are vitally important to your coastal communities – they make a significant contribution to domestic food security, and provide an inexpensive, nutritious food source in a time of rising costs. Yet your actions to date suggest you are content to see these fisheries fail. How far do these stocks have to fall before you will take action?

Old habits die hard.

Since 1996, there has only been one year with effective agreements in place supporting sustainable management across all three stocks. The remaining 26 years saw you collectively set excessive quotas – quotas that were unsustainable, untenable, and directly caused the loss of Marine Stewardship Council certifications, with huge implications for NAPA members who are significant buyers of these fisheries. If businesses were to withdraw from these fisheries, the economic impact on Coastal States would be sizable.

The Northeast Atlantic should represent an easy case for international cooperation. You are some of the wealthiest democracies in the world boasting access to rich stock data, scientific

expertise and highly sophisticated resources in terms of fishing technology, controls and enforcement. It's time to put your old habits to bed and protect these vital stocks.

Message in a bottle.

As the unified voice of the global marketplace for seafood, this is our message in a bottle:

Coastal States, the future of Northeast Atlantic fish stocks is in your hands. What will it take for you to back the drive for sustainable seafood and well-managed fisheries, and land solutions?

Regards,

The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group





****ENDS****

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Notes to Editors:

More on NAPA

The [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) (NAPA) is a collective of over 60 global retailers, food service companies, and suppliers with the shared aim of sourcing sustainable and certified seafood in order to supply a growing demand for sustainable, ecolabelled fish products. NAPA's reach extends across the world, attracting members from Japan, Asia, USA, Australia, and Africa, as well as the EU and UK. It represents an unprecedented coalition of business leverage, pushing hard to prevent overfishing of three iconic pelagic stocks – Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring, and Northeast Atlantic blue whiting. As a collective, NAPA is using its voice to advocate for long-term, science-based management of these stocks: for prospering oceans and fisheries, and business security. To achieve this, NAPA is seeking an agreement on total allowable catches for Northeast Atlantic pelagic fisheries in line with scientific advice, and for a long-term science-based management agreement.

Further information can be found at:

- NAPA website: napafisheries.org
- Twitter: [@NAPAFisheries](https://twitter.com/NAPAFisheries)
- LinkedIn: [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#)