



North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA)

Statement to the Press: While the UN Ocean Conference backs sustainable fisheries, major Coastal States commit to continued overfishing back home

Date: 30 June 2022

Contact: Fiona Birch fiona@mindfullywired.org

The [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) (NAPA) is the unified voice of the marketplace for sustainable seafood. We are advocating for Coastal States¹ fishing for Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring, and blue whiting to put an end to more than a decade of chronic overfishing and unilateral quota setting – where quotas are set by a country of its own accord, without previous consultation or negotiation with others.

We are alarmed by the recent decisions of the Norwegian and Faroese governments to ignore calls for cooperation and set unilateral quotas for Northeast Atlantic mackerel. In doing so, they directly challenge the cooperative and sustainable management of this crucial stock.

Combined, both countries monopolise more than half of the total ICES advice for Northeast Atlantic mackerel, which is shared between six Coastal States². Their actions undermine efforts to reach an agreement between all parties to achieve long-term sustainability of the stock. Ironically, this development has arisen in the shadow of the UN Ocean Conference taking place in Lisbon this week.

Coastal States have consistently set catch levels well above the established scientific advice for Northeast Atlantic mackerel. The result? Annual overfishing and the suspension of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. Major brands worldwide have lost their supply of sustainably endorsed mackerel, and so have consumers.

Our 50-strong membership comprises global brands and supply-chain businesses united by a desire to see these fisheries managed sustainably – with overall catches that comply with the scientific advice, and robust, long-term management measures firmly in place. These should be minimum requirements for the sustainable, responsible management of any fishery – Coastal States therefore have no excuse for disregarding their collective responsibility.

Positive discussions at the Coastal States meetings last October, provided promise for NAPA retailers and suppliers that mackerel quotas could once again be on a track towards sustainability. All parties

¹ UK, Europe, Norway, Iceland, Faroes, Greenland, Russia

² UK, Europe, Norway, Iceland, Faroes, Greenland (note that Russia is **not** a Coastal State for mackerel)

proactively agreed that total allowable catches for 2022 would adhere to the scientific advice, and discussions on crucial sharing arrangements would “take place at the earliest opportunity next year”. Our hopes were quickly dashed, however, when, over Christmas, the UK and EU set their own mackerel allocations in advance of the much anticipated quota sharing discussions ([read NAPA’s previous statement on this story](#)).

Following a series of seemingly “productive” sharing discussions over recent months, Norway and the Faroe Islands have now published their own mackerel allocations. The Norwegian mackerel quota for 2022 is set at [278,222 tonnes](#), accounting for 35% of the overall ICES advice for mackerel. Meanwhile, the Faroes has set its quota at [155,804 tonnes](#), or 19.6% of the ICES advice for this stock. Disappointingly, both countries have claimed the same proportion of the ICES advice as they did in 2021 – the year when Norway and the Faroes unilaterally raised their allocations by an unprecedented 55%; the same year that the overall total allowable catch (TAC) **exceeded** ICES advice by 41.8%. Only the EU and UK have made any attempt to keep fishing effort within the allocations agreed under the historic allocation agreement, but even this has not been sufficient to prevent the TAC from being breached.

We therefore ask these Coastal States: How can you be invested in safeguarding the future of these fisheries by setting catch levels above the established scientific advice, year on year? How does this lead to sustainable management?

Conservationists, scientists, policy-makers, and ocean activists worldwide are coming together for the UN Ocean Conference to review progress against Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 ‘life below water’ – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. Of particular pertinence is SDG target 14.4:

*By 2020, **effectively regulate harvesting, and end overfishing**, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and destructive fishing practices and **implement science-based management plans**, to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.*

The Northeast Atlantic Coastal States publicly endorse this goal, yet, as is becoming increasingly evident, their actions are entirely contradictory. Commitments are ignored whenever it is convenient. We are seeing individual countries prioritise their own political gain ahead of the needs of supply-chain businesses, fishing industries, fishing communities, and the stocks on which they all depend.

Regardless of the complexities surrounding historic agreements, unilateral decisions, or the migration of pelagic stocks, the solution is simple. All the Coastal States fishing for mackerel – the UK, EU, Norway, Iceland, Faroes, Greenland – need to individually and collectively fish less.



****ENDS****

For further information, images or quotes, please contact:

- Fiona Birch, NAPA Communications
 - fiona@mindfullywired.org
- Sara Mynott, NAPA Communications
 - sara@mindfullywired.org
- Dr Tom Pickerell, NAPA Executive Director
 - tom@tomolamolaconsulting.com

Notes to Editors:

More on NAPA

The [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) (NAPA) is a collective of more than 50 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, 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 detail can be found at:

- NAPA website: <https://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/fisheries-management/north-atlantic-pelagic-advocacy-group/>
- Twitter: [@NAPAFisheries](https://twitter.com/NAPAFisheries)