

14 October 2024

Dear Gudmundur Thordarson,

Urgent Call from the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) for Sustainable Management of Northeast Atlantic Pelagic Stocks

The future of the North East Atlantic's pelagic fisheries hangs in the balance. At this critical juncture, we must act swiftly to protect not only the environment but also the livelihoods and economies that depend on North East Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring, and North East Atlantic blue whiting. NAPA's coalition of over 50 global leaders in retail, aquafeed, food service, and seafood processing is calling more urgently than ever for long-term, science-based management agreements - the only path forward to ensure these waters remain a source of life and prosperity for generations.

As representatives of Coastal States, you are well aware of the importance of adhering to annual catch advice from ICES. We recognise the significant challenges involved in negotiating quota-sharing agreements for stocks that straddle national boundaries and international waters, especially in the context of the profound ecological changes in the Northeast Atlantic. However, the latest advice makes it clear that these challenges must be overcome.

All three major pelagic stocks are now in decline, largely due to excessive quotas and continued overfishing. Once again, catch reductions are recommended. ICES continues to highlight that failing to heed these scientific recommendations threatens to push stocks to critical levels - reducing fishing opportunities for all. Acknowledging scientific advice is not enough - decisive action is urgently required to deliver the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of these fisheries and the communities that rely on them.

For three years, NAPA has been tirelessly advocating for robust, science-driven quota-sharing agreements that include effective dispute resolution mechanisms. The establishment of responsive and adaptive management frameworks is essential not only for preventing continued stock decline but also for enabling the recertification of these fisheries.

Recertification is not just a box to tick - it's a lifeline for businesses striving to uphold their sustainability commitments and meet consumer demands for responsible sourcing. Without it, companies will be forced to look beyond our own waters to meet these expectations. This shift would represent a collective, damning failure by advanced fishing nations to safeguard our shared resources. It would not only have consequences for local economies and coastal jobs, but also increase the carbon footprint of supply chains, pushing us further from our global sustainability goals. It would be a missed opportunity to protect the environment right on our doorstep, and will further undermine trust in Coastal States' ability to manage shared resources responsibly.



In 2019 and 2020, NAPA launched two pioneering Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) aimed at driving political action toward cooperative decision-making and sustainable stock management. Both were set to conclude in 2024, which would have resulted in NAPA Partners formalising their decision to source outside of the North East Atlantic. Instead of walking away, we believe now is the time to push back. We have reset the clock, extending the FIPs to 2026 and offering a final opportunity for Coastal States to collaborate and secure sustainable agreements. This extension is the last chance we can offer: Coastal States must not squander this opportunity.

We cautiously welcomed the trilateral agreement between the UK, Norway, and the Faroe Islands on mackerel management in the North East Atlantic. It is a positive signal that better collaboration between Coastal States is possible. However, it does not go far enough. It is vitally important that all parties engaged in negotiations for these pelagic stocks stay the course and pursue comprehensive, multilateral agreements that significantly reduce fishing pressure. Ultimately, the ability to cooperate and work towards a collective vision for the future is what will ensure that our region's pelagic stocks and the businesses that depend on them can continue to thrive.

NAPA remains ready to provide research, propose actionable solutions, and offer the unified support of the seafood supply chain to help Coastal States reach sustainable, long-term sharing agreements. The next two years will be critical. If we fail to act, millions of Euros in purchasing power will shift to other global markets, and coastal communities that rely on these stocks will bear the brunt of these impacts.

We urge you to seize this pivotal moment. The upcoming negotiations are not just another round of talks—they are a defining opportunity to secure a sustainable future for our fisheries and coastal economies. Leadership, cooperation, and commitment are the only ways forward.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rob Blyth-Skyrme
NAPA Project Lead
On behalf of the North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group

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