



North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA):

Coastal States negotiations unpacked: Are pelagic fisheries entering new waters?

The [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group \(NAPA\)](#) has released a [position statement](#) evaluating the outcomes of the 2022 Coastal States negotiations on hotly debated Northeast Atlantic pelagic stocks. The negotiations led to significant progress for the first time in more than 10 years. NAPA reports that the Coastal States have committed themselves to continued discussions on quota sharing for mackerel and herring, and reflects on the implications for consumers and the global marketplace.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For years, the unified voice of the global marketplace for sustainable seafood – [The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group \(NAPA\)](#) – has criticized the Northeast Atlantic Coastal States for their inability to come to an accord on sustainable quotas for three of the region’s most lucrative pelagic stocks – Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring, and blue whiting. Many eminent retailers and supply-chain businesses source from these stocks to supply nutritious, oily fish to consumers, but they are also politically sensitive. Resolving the inadequate governance surrounding these fisheries is therefore critical for NAPA Partners; their continued sourcing of these stocks depends on it.

“As our business is based on the health of the oceans and sustainably harvested wild-caught raw materials, we are concerned by the lack of agreement on the fishery of Northeast Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring, and blue whiting. This issue affects our business, and our customers, and we want to see improved fisheries management delivered quickly.” – **Kenneth Storbank, Chief Commercial Officer at [TripleNine](#) (NAPA Partner)**

The dust is now settling from 2022’s negotiations on Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for Northeast Atlantic pelagic stocks, which set out what the likely scenarios will be in 2023. So how did the negotiators fare?

In a new [position statement](#), NAPA distills the key moments and main outcomes of the complex and drawn-out negotiations, and evaluates what they mean for consumers and the market. The statement indicates that progress made during last year’s quota-sharing discussions have the potential to pave the way to a new agreement in the future. However, NAPA’s coalition, which is made up of global retailers and supply-chain giants, is cautious of being too optimistic, as highlighted by **Storbank**:

“We once again call on the Coastal States to work collaboratively to agree on sustainable catch shares, follow the scientific advice, and commit to long-term management.”

Unlike in previous years, some significant steps were made during the 2022 negotiations, particularly for Northeast Atlantic mackerel, as detailed in [NAPA’s statement](#):

- *The Coastal States agreed to set the 2023 TAC for mackerel **in line with scientific advice**. This means that states will commit to fishing within limits that scientists feel are not damaging to the long term welfare of the stock.*
- *The States agreed to initially set quotas for 2023 at levels which would set a **positive tone** and pave the way for reaching a firm agreement on fishing limits in 2023. This is a significant improvement on the previous year, when two states set their mackerel allocation before discussions had even begun.*
- *The Parties developed a plan of action for continuing discussions on sharing in 2023. The plan includes the ambition to reach a **final agreement on sharing quotas before 31st March**.*
- *If it is met, the deadline should enable a sharing agreement to be reached for 2023. This is an improvement on recent years, when Parties were unable to reach an agreement before the mackerel fishing season started.*

For Atlanto-Scandian herring, the Coastal States agreed to set the TAC in line with scientific advice. They also expressed a genuine willingness to continue working towards a new, sustainable quota sharing arrangement for the imminent future, and agreed to continue discussions in January 2023.

Dr Tom Pickerell, NAPA Project Lead, reflected: *“This year we have seen progress; the previous ‘rubber-stamping’ of pledges to adhere to ICES advice, followed by a lack of political will to agree on allocations resulting in TACs collectively exceeding said advice, was only seen with Atlanto-Scandian herring. That in itself was likely a consequence of the geopolitical situation in Ukraine. There were also more involved discussions on mackerel and blue whiting this year.”*

According to NAPA, the good news did not extend as far as blue whiting. High levels of recruitment into the fishery last year meant that stock numbers have boomed, and the scientific advice for the catch in 2023 was 81% higher than in 2022. This would have been a golden opportunity for the Coastal States to scale-back their allocations – adopting a more ‘precautionary’ approach and opting for a sustainable TAC level, without cutting catches. The UK supported this approach but was overruled, as **Pickerell** explained:



“The UK position of restraint to ‘bank’ the unexpected boom in blue whiting must be recognised; it is unfortunate that other Coastal States were not as ambitious. Finally, the setting of a deadline for a mackerel sharing agreement is very positive; NAPA will hold the Coastal States to their timeline.”

NAPA’s position statement is available to read [here](#).

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Notes to Editors:

More on NAPA

The [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#) (NAPA) is a collective of up to 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, 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 – North East Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring, and North East 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 North East 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](#)