



European Association of
Fish Producers Organisations
Northern Pelagic Working Group

Association of National Organisations of
Fishing Enterprises in the EU

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PRESS RELEASE

EU fishing industry calls once again for EU action against Norway and Faroe Islands to stop their overfishing of the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock

The unilaterally set Northeast Atlantic mackerel quotas by Norway and Faroe Islands are unacceptable. The EU fishing industry is asking for an immediate EU response to stop Norway and Faroe Islands continuing their unsustainable and irresponsible behaviour, to prevent overfishing of the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock. We reiterate our call on the EU Commission and the Council to make use of the instruments at their disposal, such as trade measures, for concrete action. Right now, responsible EU businesses are at risk of being disadvantaged for doing the right thing.

Over the past days, first the Faroe Islands and then Norway decided to unilaterally set large excessive quotas for their share in the mackerel fishery in 2022, at 35% and 19.6% of the scientific advice for total catches respectively. They continue to fish at the same irresponsible, unrealistically inflated levels as in the past year, when both countries increased their shares by 55%. The basis for Norway's decision, the zonal attachment approach¹, was in this case recently judged by scientists from all involved Coastal States as highly flawed, since the data on geographic distribution is incomplete and gives room for multiple interpretations.

These actions fly in the face of the ongoing efforts to reach agreement on a sharing arrangement between all involved Coastal States for the Northeast Atlantic mackerel stock. Although the Coastal States have set the total fishing opportunities for 2022 in line with scientific advice (794,920 tonnes), total catches will again be much higher due to the fact that most parties are fishing substantially more than would be allowed on the basis of the last agreed shares. At this point only the EU and the UK are sticking with quotas based on the most recent sharing arrangement in place.

Tim Heddema, chair of the EU pelagic fishing industry, organized under the banner of EAPO and Europêche, comments: *"This overfishing remains entirely unjustified and at odds with the sensible and sustainable fisheries management that the world supports and demands. It puts unacceptable pressure on a stock that is of great importance for many European fishing nations. While appealing to Norway and Faroe Islands to work in partnership for the benefit of all, we now need a strong voice from the EU, and moreover, we need strong action. The solution is not to sit back and leave it to the EU to compensate for the recklessness of others by fishing less ourselves, which in turn is further disadvantaging the EU industry's market position. Instead, the EU has plenty of options available to counteract and deter this unacceptable behaviour, such as - but not limited to - using its power as the main market for the other Coastal States' seafood exports. We are calling on the Commission for immediate action. In addition, with regard to further negotiations on the sharing arrangement, the EU needs to make it 100% clear that it will not accept the current overfishing to count towards an increased fishing track record for those parties concerned."*

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¹ 'Zonal attachment' of a stock refers to the share of the stock residing within a particular country's economic zone, if necessary weighted by the time it spends in a country's zone over a year.