



**European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)  
(Northern Pelagic Working Group)**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Position paper of the EU pelagic fishing industry on the North East Atlantic mackerel negotiations**

**Now Wednesday 19 October 2011 the coastal states EU, Norway, Faroe Islands and Iceland will resume their negotiations on a future arrangement to manage the North East Atlantic mackerel stock, the EU pelagic fishing industry wishes to underline clearly their position on this issue.**

The situation analysis on which the NPWG bases its approach to resolve the current problem in the management of the NEA mackerel stock is based on the following facts:

- Since the introduction of the coastal states agreement in the mid 90's the long term management plan for this stock has evolved into a successful, science-based management of the stock.
- Although it is true that in recent years the expanding mackerel stock has included Icelandic waters as feeding ground during the summer months, the reproduction of the stock (i.e. the egg production) still takes for 99% place in EU waters.
- In recent years Iceland has increased its catches from 363 mt in 2005 to close to 150,000 mt in 2011. The autonomously set Icelandic quota now account for 22.7% of the scientifically advised catch opportunities for 2011.  
The Faroe Islands have increased their share in this fishery in 2 years from their agreed share of 4.6% (up to 2009) to 23.2% in 2011. Faroe Islands did so by unilaterally deciding to step out of the mackerel coastal states agreement early 2010.  
Therefore, both Iceland and the Faroes jointly account in 2011 for 45.9% of the scientifically advised catch opportunities.
- The Faroe Islands have not the fishing capacity nor processing facilities to utilize their autonomously set 2011 quota of 150,000 mt, which is why the Faroe Islands have swapped away 25,000 mackerel quota mt to Russia in exchange for arctic cod and invited/accepted fishing and freezing capacity from third countries. In this way the Faroes have in fact increasing their fishing and processing capacity where the other countries involved in this fishery are ring-fencing or even reducing these capacities.
- Because the fisheries in Iceland and Faroese waters take place during the summer months the average quality of the catches are rather low. This is also showing in the mackerel sales prices realized in the Faroese and Icelandic market, which are between 50% and 65% lower than the prices made in the EU and Norway.
- Both Iceland and Faroes have shown not to act in conformity with the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) obligation to manage their fishery. This obligation exists for every nation that has ratified UNCLOS (as Faroes and Iceland both did).

For the NPWG the principles on which the coastal states shall have to come to an agreement on the management of the NEA mackerel fisheries are the following:

- Bad behavior must not be rewarded, i.e. catch records based on bad behavior cannot be used as the basis for a new sharing arrangement between the coastal states (allocation key).
- No future mackerel arrangement between the coastal states nor any bilateral arrangement between individual coastal states in addition to a coastal states agreement should include access for Iceland into EU waters. The NPWG in this respect considers the 2005 blue whiting coastal states agreement as a bad example that should not be followed.<sup>1</sup>

The Faroes on the contrary have always enjoyed some access for catching mackerel in EU waters. Therefore, if the Faroes would request more access into EU waters this could be considered on the condition that an increase of access to catch mackerel in EU waters should be paid by a lower share for the Faroe Islands in the sharing arrangement. The price for access that the NPWG has calculated is: 1% access would reduce the Faroese share with 3%.

- The EU must not let itself feeling trapped by the time factor. In other words: time is working for the EU and not for Iceland and the Faroe Islands. The longer Iceland and the Faroes are overfishing the stock the more likely is that the stock will recede from their waters. Also, according to ICES, the current state of the stock is very healthy, at least for another 2 years.
- Moreover, the EU pelagic fisheries sector has requested the European Commission to develop an effective trade sanction measure. Now, 18 months later, it's about to be presented to the European Parliament and Council, we should allow time for the measure to be adopted and take its full effect.
- A new coastal states sharing agreement should be concluded between all relevant parties at the same time: EU, Norway, Iceland and Faroe Islands. A piecemeal approach is considered to be a strategical mistake by the NPWG.
- A new coastal states sharing agreement should be valid for 5 years without any procedure of a silent prolongation.

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Contact :

Gerard van Balsfoort : tel: +31 651 411 431 / e-mail: [gbalsfoort@pelagicfish.eu](mailto:gbalsfoort@pelagicfish.eu)

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<sup>1</sup> this sharing agreement followed a period of Olympic fishing by coastal states such as Iceland in a situation that the stock size and distribution reached an all time high. After the 2005 agreement Iceland has not been not capable to catch their share of the blue whiting in its own waters.