



European Association of
Fish Producers Organisations



Association of National Organisations of
Fishing Enterprises in the EU

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PRESS RELEASE

EU fishing industry denounces NGO advice to stop buying mackerel fished by EU fleet

The EU fishing industry laments and criticizes this week's ill-informed decision by several fish consumption guides in the EU, run by environmental NGO's such as GoodFish and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), to advise against buying and consuming Northeast Atlantic mackerel¹. As no other, we understand and share the major concerns about mackerel's declining biomass, but by 'red-listing' now, fish guides deviate from current scientific advice which puts the stock above the precautionary management trigger point. If buyers and retailers follow the advice of the NGO's, this will still not improve the chances of successful Coastal States negotiations. What it will do is deal a major blow to the last fleet that is showing restraint and responsibility in this fishery: the EU fleet.

Management of the mackerel stock has been compromised by the lack of a quota distribution key between the Coastal States involved - the EU, UK, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland and Russia - since the last of such agreements expired after 2018. The EU industry has consistently urged all Coastal States to reach a comprehensive sharing arrangement that reflects genuine, sustainable track records and interests, while also calling for action against the continuous setting (and fishing) of excessive, artificially increased (by up to 55%) unilateral quotas by parties other than the EU. These inflated claims are based on alleged changing migration patterns and geographic distribution of the stock; scientists dealing with the topic have however stated there is insufficient data for conclusions to be drawn. The EU is now the only party that still exercises caution by adhering to the most recent distribution key.

The mackerel stock has shown great resilience in the face of this onslaught by countries like Norway and the Faroe Islands. Importantly, the ICES² advice for 2025 not only put forward a still substantial catch limit of 576 958 tonnes, but also shows that despite years of fishing more than the recommended quota, the stock is not considered overfished. Biomass is still within safe biological limits, as it sits above the levels that should trigger precautionary or emergency measures. Unfortunately, the NGO fish guides fail to consider the actual biological status of the stock. If they did, the appropriate 'colour' of their sustainability advice would remain yellow/orange.

Being fish guides for the EU market, the impact of a red-listed mackerel fishery will be felt by precisely those fishers who are to blame the least for the current stock decline. The EU industry calls on the NGO's in question to reverse the downgrades. We also call on buyers and retailers to take

¹ All positions on mackerel in this press release apply in equal measure to Atlanto-Scandian herring, which has also been red-listed.

² International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, the independent scientific advisory body for fish stock management in Europe.

into account the scientific advice and the different approaches to the fishery between the EU and others. Finally, the industry expects those buyers and retailers that are members of NAPA³ to keep their commitment in the context of the Fishery Improvement Programme (FIP) for mackerel, which has set a deadline for the Coastal States negotiators to reach agreement before May 2026 – if they don't, mackerel sourcing will cease.

Tim Heddema, spokesperson for the EU pelagic fishing industry, comments: *“The alarm bells have been ringing for mackerel for some time. As an industry, we do believe that solutions can be found before the buyers’ deadline of May 2026. We will try to contribute to that process together with our counterparts from the other Coastal States, while remaining committed to responsible fishing. In the meantime, we strongly urge retailers to maintain a procurement policy based on scientific stock status and not on the arbitrary opinion of a partisan NGO, which seems to have randomly decided that negotiations have dragged on long enough.”*

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³ [North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group](#).