

MarinTrust Improver Programme: NE Atlantic Blue Whiting Milestone Report End Year 2

This document focus on the milestones that make up the Fishery Action Plan (FAP) as part of the Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) aligned to the MarinTrust Assessment criteria.

FIP name	NE Atlantic Blue Whiting
Milestone	Year 2
Management authority (Country/State)	The North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). The European Union and the fisheries ministries of Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway and the UK
Date	September 25th, 2023
Developed by	Neil Auchterlonie, NAPA Project/Policy Lead

Outcome of Assessment	
Milestone	Year 2
Sections with milestones	A-3 Harvest strategies
Date	September 25th, 2023
Developed by	Neil Auchterlonie, NAPA Project/Policy Lead

Background

The North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA) launched the market-led approach to improving North Atlantic pelagic fisheries management in June 2021. Currently NAPA has 73 members including seafood retail and processing businesses , as well as trade and industry bodies and environmental NGOs. The reach of NAPA is worldwide as the partners are located across the globe. NAPA's activities are focused on advocacy and influence to secure long-term, science-based management of the North East Atlantic

pelagic stocks: for prospering oceans, fisheries, and business security

(<https://napafisheries.org/>). The MarinTrust FIP operates alongside another FIP which covers the species Atlantic mackerel and Atlanto-Scandian herring, and for which the FAP shows overlap. Byproducts from those species are also used for fish meal and fish oil (FMFO) production. Please note that some of the evidence provided also includes reference to these products.

As a first step for the Blue whiting FIP, the partners evaluated the fishery against the MarinTrust standard in 2021, which provided the basis for the fishery action plan (FAP), and the FIP commenced in October 2021. The first annual report was produced for MarinTrust in October 2022. This report updates MarinTrust on progress made over year 2 of the FIP.

The named Project lead (FIP Coordinator) on the NAPA FIP, Dr Tom Pickerell, moved on from his role in April 2023, and there was a short gap of two months before his successor, Dr Neil Auchterlonie, took on this role in June 2023. There was, therefore, a slight break in activities over this time within the reporting period.

Details on species designations

The fishery catch composition is mostly blue whiting, with 98% or more of the catch caught with pelagic gears. Therefore, it was considered that blue whiting is the only Type 1 species caught in the fishery and was assessed under Category A.

The catch composition data for purse seines indicated that the catch is effectively 100% blue whiting. EU & UK reports indicated no other species making up 0.1% or more of the catch with any pelagic trawl gears. Faroese and Norwegian reports did indicate the possible presence of Type 2 species in small quantities, which are listed below:

- Herring (*Clupea harengus*) – Norwegian spring-spawning – Category C
- Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) – North East Atlantic – Category C
- Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) – North East Atlantic – Category C
- Saithe (*Pollachius virens*) – Faroes and North Sea stocks – Category C
- Lesser silver smelt (*Argentina sphyraena*) – North East Atlantic – Category D

Gap Analysis and Improvement actions

The assessment and gap analysis identified the need to improve the factor **A-3 – Harvest Strategy. In particular, A3.2:**

“Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual

removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy".

The FAP included four actions aiming to fulfil this gap:

1. Engagement with fisheries management decision makers to Ensure Robust Harvest Strategies are adopted and implemented;
2. Dispute settlement legal framework and consultation processes;
3. Effective decision-making processes;
4. Ensure Key Data Elements (KDE) information is collected on vessels supplying MarinTrust factories.

This report reviews the status of the implementation of those actions.

IP Milestone report

Use the below tables to provide an update on actions in the Fishery Action Plan, with links to relevant evidence documents. Additional lines may be added where necessary.

M – Management Framework and Surveillance, Control and Enforcement

MT clause (if relevant)	Action in plan	Action update	Progress against milestones	Outstanding actions and rationale	Evidence	Status of action
N /A						

Category A: Data Collection, Stock Assessment, Harvest Strategy, and Stock Status

A-3 Harvest Strategy - Minimum Requirements

MT clause (if relevant)	Action in plan	Action update	Progress against milestones	Outstanding actions and rationale	Evidence	Status of action
A- 3.2 Total fishery removals of this species do not regularly exceed the level indicated or stated in the stock	1. Engagement to Ensure Robust Harvest Strategies Adopted and Implemented	NAPA has been actively engaged with different fishery stakeholders. Using different and multiple approaches. The main goal has been to align the vision that inaction	M 1.1. Lobby all parties in seeking a joint solution of a long-term management plan, highlighting the market consequences of inaction.	M 1.1., 1.2., and 1.3. combined. NAPA has grown over time with regular inclusion of new Partners and as of 30/9/2023 included 73 Partners across the supply chain, Trade bodies and NGOs.	Website. 47 sourcing statements from industry partners. Slide decks for Steering Committee, Partners, and Catching Sector Roundtable meetings attached.	Ongoing

assessment. Where a specific quantity of removals is recommended, the actual removals may exceed this by up to 10% ONLY if the stock status is above the limit reference point or proxy.		on improving harvest strategies (in particular those related to TAC allocation) will have severe consequences on the long-term sustainability and supply chain confidence in the fishery. From post on social media, organizational statements, magazine articles to, direct communication with state representatives, as well as participation on public and private forums and events (e.g. during negotiations for TACs), the goal is to promote dialogue and generate momentum to	<p>M 1.2 During negotiations for TACs and sharing arrangements, arrange meetings with catching sector ("roundtable") to encourage a management solution.</p> <p>M 1.3. Continue communication with Coastal States representatives to</p>	<p>Commercial partners produce sourcing statements describing their organisation's A website was commissioned for NAPA in March 2023, which acts as a resource to communicate NAPA activities, as well as a library of documents.</p> <p>NAPA hold regular meetings for the Steering Committee (every 2 months), Partners (quarterly) and the Catching Sector Roundtable (twice a year). NAPA produces a resource pack to support Partners' engagement with CS representatives.</p> <p>NAPA is well connected and engaged with the Coastal State negotiations and attends plenary meetings where</p>	<p>NAPA Partners Skretting and the Swedish Seafood Association presented at the MSC's NEA Pelagics Event.</p> <p>NAPA produced a Position Statement which it communicated to NEAFC at the 41st NEAFC Meeting in November 2022 (attached).</p> <p>NAPA Partners resource pack (attached).</p> <p>NAPA produced a Position Statement in reaction to the 2022 CS negotiations and NEAFC meeting (attached).</p> <p>In advance of the 2022 Coastal States and NEAFC meetings in October and November respectively, we</p>	
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		<p>improve the management and align the vision among all stakeholders. The message has been appropriately shared, and more industry has been actively engaging in the efforts.</p> <p>We focused on Blue Whiting in February to March 2023 with the Golden Opportunity Campaign. In line with the spike in biomass, we sought coastal states to commit to a lower share of the catch to bring the total allocation in line with the science advice – even though this would have seen a reduction in individual coastal state allocation each country would have</p>	<p>promote adherence to exploitation levels consistent with the requirements of Principle 1.</p>	<p>the discussions are summarised. NAPA has Observer status at NEAFC. Together with individual connections for NAPA through the CS Delegations, government depts., public bodies and supply chain, NAPA also works closely with the Partners through the Steering Committee. NAPA Partners have an extensive global reach. This network is used to effect in sourcing information and communicating messages.</p>	<p>launched a communications campaign calling on the Coastal States to agree on sustainable catch shares, follow the scientific advice, and commit to long-term management of Northeast Atlantic pelagic stocks (#AgreeFollowCommit). The campaign was highly successful, garnering significant press and media attention and the support of several external organisations working in the Northeast Atlantic region: the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Sciaena, and the Pew Charitable Trusts Open letter to Ministers on the need for action - October 2022. https://napafisheries.org/this-overfishing-cant-go-on-napa-and-the-</p>	
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		secured in increase in the volume of blue whiting they could land. It would have been a win win situation.			<p>mssc-unite-in-calling-for-tangible-action-on-sustainable-management-of-pelagic-stocks-at-the-2022-coastal-states-meeting/</p> <p>See also NAPAs Annual Report for 2022.</p> <p>Blog on impacts of inaction on the management of Blue Whiting. https://napafisheries.org/eminent-uk-salmon-retailers-step-forward-to-highlight-consequences-of-inaction-on-north-east-atlantic-blue-whiting-management/</p> <p>Our Golden Opportunity Campaign for Blue Whiting ran during February/March 2023 https://napafisheries.org/</p>	
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					rg/golden-opportunity-for-northeast-atlantic-blue-whiting-dont-blow-it-say-top-seafood-supply-chain-businesses/	
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	2. Dispute settlement legal framework and consultation processes	<p>NAPA released a document with a series of recommendations that include the urgency to agree and implement an allocation mechanism for the NE Atlantic mackerel, Atlanto-Scandian herring and blue whiting; to adopt NEAFC Guidelines for Coastal State Consultations in the NE Atlantic in their discussions, and consider a cap on catching in international waters to constrain further overfishing. The document has been the main tool for conversations with coastal states to motivate support on this endeavour.</p>	<p>M 2.1 NAPA reviews and produces a document summarizing the coastal states' and NEAFC's dispute settlement protocols.</p> <p>M 2.2 Lobby a coastal state (i.e., UK) to initiate negotiations for a mechanism, for cooperation and dispute resolution between the Coastal States which is effective in agreeing an appropriate management mechanism consistent with the management plan.</p>	<p>M2.1. NAPA has produced a draft dispute settlement document referencing an EU Proposal for an amendment to the NEAFC Convention that is yet to be adopted. This will be further developed in 23/24.</p> <p>M2.2. NAPA produced a Summary, Position statement and analysis of the 2022 advised TAC allocations, updating the 2020 and 2021 figures.</p>	<p>Draft NEAFC Dispute Settlement document attached.</p> <p>Summary, Position statement and analysis paper attached.</p>	Ongoing
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	<p>3. Effective decision-making processes</p>	<p>NAPA has been actively using different channels to promote the importance of improving the decision-making process. From publicly identifying the interest from different countries and companies that supply from the fishery. To continue lobbying with coastal representatives about the market benefits of pursuing these new mechanisms.</p>	<p>M 3.1 During negotiations for TACs and sharing arrangements, arrange meetings with the catching sector ("roundtable") to encourage a more precautionary management solution.</p> <p>Communication to continue with Coastal States representatives to promote responsive and precautionary decision-making, particularly regarding TACs.</p>	<p>Reference to mackerel campaign 2022 which has read-across to actions on the NAPA FIP (the first 3 actions of the NAPA FIP are common to the mackerel/herring FIP). There were unfortunately divergent views on the TAC level, with the UK supporting a TAC constraint principle. The UK were keen to set a TAC for blue whiting that was below the ICES advice. NAPA heard that the Heads of Delegation had been receiving letters from NAPA Partners, and this was having an impact.</p> <p>Prior to the 2023 negotiations, NAPA published a social media short film (September 2023) and released a statement.</p>	<p>2023 Campaign strategy document attached.</p> <p>Link on Twitter to 2023 film. https://x.com/NAPAfishes/status/1708747758759223318?s=20</p> <p>Position paper and Coastal state meetings' summary paper attached.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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				NAPA Commenced its 2023 Campaign on 25 th September.		
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	4. Ensure KDE information is collected on vessels supplying MarinTrust factories	This action is aim to start later on the project	By year 3 ensure KDEs for whole fish are – fishing vessel(s), species, catch area and date of landings			Pending
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B – Category B Stock Status

MT clause (if relevant)	Action in plan	Action update	Progress against milestones	Outstanding actions and rationale	Evidence	Status of action
N / A						

C – Category C Stock Status

MT clause (if relevant)	Action in plan	Action update	Progress against milestones	Outstanding actions and rationale	Evidence	Status of action
N / A						

D – Impacts on Species Categorized as Vulnerable by D1-D3

MT clause (if relevant)	Action in plan	Action update	Progress against milestones	Outstanding actions and rationale	Evidence	Status of action
N / A						

F – Impacts on ETP Species, Impacts on Habitats and Ecosystem Impacts

MT clause (if relevant)	Action in plan	Action update	Progress against milestones	Outstanding actions and rationale	Evidence	Status of action
N / A						

SOCIAL CRITERION

MT clause (if relevant)	Action in plan	Action update	Progress against milestones	Outstanding actions and rationale	Evidence	Status of action
N / A						

Milestone reporting template

MarinTrust Fishery Assessment Section			Initial score	Immediate (6 months)	End of Year 1	End of Year 2	End of Year 3	Status notes
Date								
M1	M1.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	M1.2	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	M1.3	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	M1.4	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						

	M1.5	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	M1.6	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
M 2	M2.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	M2.2	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	M2.3	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	M2.4	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
A1	A1.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	A1.2	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
A2	A2.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	A2.2	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	A2.3	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	A2.4	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	A2.5	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
A3	A3.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator

		Actual						
	A3.2	Projected						Despite the efforts, commitments and discussions made by NAPA and NAPA Partners, there is still work to be done to reach agreement on TAC allocations for this stock and the milestone is behind schedule. Work on the Action #4 (Key Data Elements) was planned to commence in Year 3., and work on this Action is just starting. Summaries for the other work:
								For the Coastal State Negotiations:
								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were divergent views on the TAC level, with the UK supporting a TAC constraint principle. • Parties agreed to reconvene to continue discussions on the TAC for blue whiting before the NEAFC meeting
		Actual						<p>For the NEAFC discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions on a total allowable catch for blue whiting were ongoing. • Measures were adopted for blue whiting in the NEAFC Regulatory Area (international waters) in 2023. • These measures reflect the outcomes of Coastal State consultations and prevent countries who are not Coastal States or fishing parties accessing these stocks. <p>NAPA has continued to engage with the CSs and NEAFC in 2023. Work on KDEs action is just commencing (October 2023). As noted above this FIP is at an important juncture and the future of the FIP will be discussed at a meeting of the Steering Committee (and stakeholders) in London in November 2023. In the meantime work will continue on the 4 Actions in the FAP, but there may be some requirement to apply for an extension to this FIP from 2024 onwards, given the timing of the FIP and the lack of synchronicity with the CS Negotiation process and NEAFC Discussions.</p>
	A3.3	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator

		Actual						
A4	A4.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
F1	F1.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	F1.2	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	F1.3	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
F2	F2.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	F2.2	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	F2.3	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
F3	F3.1	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	F3.2	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						
	F3.3	Projected						No significant changes to rescored this indicator
		Actual						

Additional Information

The following section highlights any information provided by the fishery in support of this Milestone Report which does not relate directly to any of the Milestones above, but which is relevant to the ongoing monitoring of fishery management status.

Given the disappointing lack of progress seen with this FIP, the NAPA Secretariat is organising a meeting of the Steering Committee, and other stakeholders to discuss the implications and mechanics of applying for an extension to the original 3-year FAP. MarinTrust has also been invited to this meeting. This meeting will be held in London on the 7th November as an in-person event. NAPA understands that the current timeline for the FIP is challenging.

Amended timeline

The following section allows the applicant to explain if there are any amendments to the improvement timelines and provide the reasons and evidence for this.

The timeline is under review, per the text above. Significant progress is possible, but unfortunately unlikely in early 2024, so NAPA will re-assess the relevance of the FIP in Q423/Q124.