



**European Association of
Fish Producers Organisations**



**Association of National Organisations of
Fishing Enterprises in the EU**

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PRESS RELEASE

Four-party mackerel agreement sidelines EU, rewards overfishing and creates unlevel playing field

The EU fishing industry is deeply disappointed by the partial mackerel sharing arrangement agreed between the UK, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Iceland. With the four parties opting for a total catch limit of 299,010 tonnes for 2026, there is now a formal disruption of the level playing field, with the EU following the ICES headline advice. The EU industry calls on the EU to do everything in its power to repair the imbalance, to act against institutionalised overfishing, and help broker a fair comprehensive agreement between all Coastal States.

On 16 December, the UK, Norway, Faroe Islands and Iceland concluded a partial agreement on the sharing of Northeast Atlantic mackerel fishing opportunities, as well as on the level of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for 2026. This outcome effectively rewards the unilateral setting of excessive and inflated quotas by non-EU countries in recent years, while disregarding genuine, sustainable track records and the legitimate interests of the EU and its fishers. The collective share of the four parties now totals 79.45%, leaving not enough space to accommodate the EU claim based on historical, sustainable track records and legitimate economic interest. The agreement does not only exclude the EU but also Greenland, while doing nothing to prevent overfishing by Russia.

As the four parties agreed that “299,010 tonnes should represent the Total Allowable Catch” for 2026, they deviate from the approach taken by the EU. The TAC and Quota Regulation contains a preliminary catch limit of 156,921 tonnes - 90% of the ICES headline advice for the TAC - for the first six months of 2026.

EU fishers continue to pay the price for years of irresponsible behaviour by other countries, facing a sharp reduction and an unlevel playing field in mackerel fishing opportunities for 2026 and long-term damage to their market position. Therefore, the EU industry calls on the EU and other Coastal States to reconvene without delay and negotiate a fair and equitable comprehensive arrangement between all Coastal States. The EU must make full use of its leverage as the primary market for seafood exports from other Coastal States. Concrete action against the continuous and repeated overfishing is urgently needed, up to and including trade measures. Threats of action are no longer enough.

Tim Heddema, spokesperson for the EU pelagic fishing industry, comments: *“This development causes deep concerns and raises many questions. Does this represent a breach of the EU-UK TCA by the UK? How will the EU deal with the differences in catch limits and protect EU fishing rights? In any case, we need a course of action from the EU side and we need it now. It is extremely distressing to note that while the EU is still the chair of the mackerel consultations, it has lately not managed to be involved in actual negotiations. We are in a deep crisis.”*

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