

# **Stop Illegal Trafficking of European Eel.**

## **Fishmongers Hall Declaration**

**31 May 2016**

**The stock of the European Eel is in a deplorable state, and every effort should be made to protect and recover it for sustainable use. While Europe is struggling to get its protection in order, about half the numbers caught are illegally exported mostly to Asia!**

Based on the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species*, the EU outlawed any trade of eel from its territory, because it might be detrimental to the survival of the species. However, there is increasing evidence, that this trade ban is not yet implemented effectively; that – despite current efforts of national Customs and enforcement authorities - In short, the continued exports of young eels to Asia is Europe's equivalent to Africa's “ivory trade problem”.

The eel stock is at a historic minimum, all over Europe. Landings have declined gradually to less than 10% of the 1960s level, and recruitment of young eel has diminished sharply since 1980, to only 1-10% of the abundance before. In most recent years, an upward trend occurred in the recruitment of young eels to the continent, giving hope that adequate protection might indeed recover the population!

Since 2009, national *Eel Management Plans* were developed in all Western-European countries, and since 2010, any export of eel from the EU has been banned completely. Nevertheless, illegal trade and trafficking exported over 100 million live eels - the greater part of the total catch of young recruits in Europe.

We call upon the legally responsible authorities (all national authorities and the European Commission) to stop this illegal export, which is jeopardising Europe's eel protection plans and, in line with the *EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking*, to fully implement the following measures agreed in the *European Eel Regulation* and/or the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species*:

- Tracking and Tracing of all trade in live eel (Article 12 of the Eel Regulation);
- Reserving 60% of the catch of young eels for restocking elsewhere in Europe (Article 7 of the Eel Regulation), not for illegal export;
- Reducing mortalities to a truly sustainable level – avoiding inflated quota, which currently exceed the demand considerably;
- Enforcing the CITES ban on export of the European eel effectively.

ADD NAMES OF SIGNATORIES AND RELEVANT INSTITUTION...