



**As usual, in order to understand  
the present and anticipate the  
future, we must look to the past.**

- In the '70s and '80s the eels consumption was very high. Since the '90s the selling of the eels started to decrease through all Europe. Over the past ten years the sale is at least halved. Older generations have succeeded only partially in passing on passion for this food. New generations appreciate eels but approach with distrust.



- The number of eel farms and their production has followed the same trend. At the beginning of the 2000s many farms located in Southern Europe have gone out of business, in recent years in Northern Europe the same thing happened. All of the remaining farms have reduced their activity compared to past productions.

- During a forty-years history, European farms have never exerted strong pressure on eel fishery. Farmers have always found the quantity of small eels they needed, sometimes producing more than required by the market.

- The equilibrium was broken when the Far East countries began to buy glass eels with both hands. The rules of international trade have never allowed to counteract this huge appropriation to the detriment of the European ecosystem. Only the Inclusion of eels in Cites has allowed to obtain effective results. A closed market has been created, eels of any size can no longer be imported or exported through European Union borders.



- Control authorities are working very good across Europe with unexpected diligence. A new equilibrium seems to have been reached: eel farms find the needed quantity of small eels and restocking can be done. Now eel farms operate in a declining market demand, without possibility to export outside EU: as a result they are not pushed to increase production, they don't press to have more small eels from wild environment. Also eels fishery seems not to be under big pressure.



- Reaching this new equilibrium has not been easy. New provisions have had a very strong organizational and economic impact on eel business, already afflicted by the economic crisis. Many firms, involved in eel business, for example trade, transport, smoking, have gone out of business, as well as farms have made before. Now working with eels is more difficult than it was in the past. Anyway everyone have agreed to new rules, aware to need them.





- Now the moment of patience has come, it's necessary to avoid the rush to get results not obtainable in the short.





- The life cycle of eels takes very long time and most of the undertaken initiatives will have long-term effect. Two or three years will not be enough for a final evaluation, more time is needed to see results. In the meantime it will be better to avoid who wish to increase restrictions, to list eels in Annex A of Cites, to provide more bureaucracy and to spread unwarranted panic.

- European, national and regional institutions and all people involved in eel business are working greatly . New rules have created an interest never seen before on eels, promoting initiative in many countries. Last but not least many research institutes are working on artificial breeding of eels. Positive results should be decisive towards sustainability.