

# Sustainable Eel Group Conference

## 31 May 2016

### Fishmongers Hall



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**Sustainable  
Eel Group**



## SEG Defining the Intended Change

### SEG Vision and Mission

#### The SEG Vision

Healthy wild eel populations distributed throughout their natural range fulfilling their role in the aquatic environment and supporting sustainable use for the benefit of communities, local economies and traditions

#### SEG Mission

Provide the respected leadership alliance that enables and promotes the joined up conservation and management of the eel in the Member States of Europe and beyond, linking all interests in an open and effective process to achieve SEG’s Vision.

### SEG Theory of Change

SEG’s vision leads to the definition of its aspirational goal.

#### Aspirational Goal

Healthy Wild Eel Populations: defined as eel populations across suitable habitat within the eel’s historical range that are at least 40% of the levels estimated to have been present prior to anthropogenic influence

SEG recognises that this definition is subject to considerable scientific uncertainty in relation to both current and historical eel populations, but considers that it provides a clear long term goal, well-aligned with regional policy objectives and sufficient to guide SEG’s programmes and activities at the current time.

SEG believes that this vision of Healthy Wild Eel Populations will be achieved most effectively by focusing on meeting two interdependent and mutually reinforcing outcomes: Healthy Water Habitats and a Sustainable Eel Sector

**Healthy Water Habitat/Aquatic Ecosystems:** defined as functionally intact water flow to support habitat for fish and vegetation, water quality, and ecosystem health, where natural residence of elvers, natural escapement of silver eels as well as free migration between the waters themselves is possible.

**A Sustainable Eel Sector:** defined as an eel sector that produces a fully traceable product, is financially viable, and is compatible with the achievement and long-term maintenance of healthy wild eel populations and provides a positive net impact on eel populations.

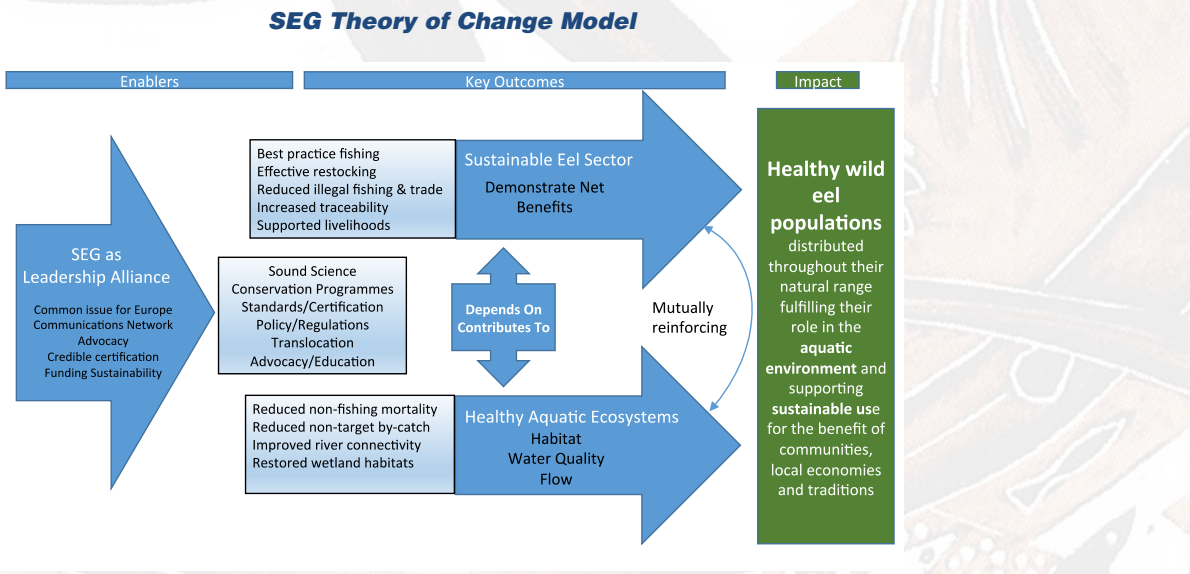
A healthy water habitat is an obvious pre-requisite to achieving SEG’s Vision. Eel populations have been decimated by the destruction of wetlands, damming of rivers, and deterioration of water quality, and without major improvements to all these factors healthy wild eel populations will never return.

Equally clearly, a healthy eel sector is dependent on a healthy wild eel population. To date it has proven impossible to breed eels in captivity, despite more than a century of effort. Without a healthy, self-sustaining wild eel population, there is no eel industry, no recreational fishing for eels, no eel culture and no market for sustainable consumption.

The motivation for the sector to support the restoration of eel populations is clear. But it is only in the last decade or so that the sector’s potential to contribute has become clear as well. Illegal trade in eels is a major threat to the restoration of healthy eel populations, and so a major threat to a sustainable eel sector. Reputable eel fishermen and traders can be powerful allies against the illegal trade. Eel aquaculture or ranching is completely dependent on the capture of wild stock. Changes in fishing methods can have dramatic impacts on the mortality of eels for live trade. The capture of live eels can be the basis for restocking partially restored habit – but this will only make a contribution to the restoration of populations if the capture and translocation is legal, regulated and follows the highest standards. And habitat restoration and effective regulation cost money, and need political support – a motivated eel sector can contribute both.

SEG’s role is to bring together all stakeholders who believe in a future for eels, to help achieve its vision. This is SEG’s Theory of Change.

The SEG Theory of Change is a living document and is designed to be flexible to integrate learning and continuous improvement. The following graphical illustration summarizes the SEG Theory of Change. A more detailed internal version will be developed for monitoring and evaluating progress, and SEG’s effectiveness in achieving its vision over time.



### SEG’s Strategies and Priorities for Action

SEG’s Theory of Change provides the underlying logic for SEG’s strategy and priorities for action focused on achieving SEG’s two high level outcomes: the restoration of healthy aquatic ecosystems, and the development of a sustainable eel sector.

In relation to **Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems**, SEG will support actions and strategies that:

- Bring River Basin Districts into compliance with the EU Regulation – healthy river connectivity
- Restore wetland habitats
- Combat invasive species
- Reduce eel mortality due to water extraction and turbines
- Improve access to habitats by improving passage past barriers
- Reduce eel mortality due to non-eel industry commercial by-catch
- Reduce eel mortality due to recreational fishing
- Restore water quality

In relation to a **Sustainable Eel Sector**, SEG’s will support actions and strategies that:

- Encourage a united eel sector which supports the achievement of SEG’s Vision through both words and deeds
- Support the establishment of industry-financed Eel Stewardship Programmes which provide funding for restocking, “silver eel help”, and scientific research where there are gaps in knowledge that need to be filled
- Coordinate with and seek the support of other stakeholders interested in a sustainable eel industry
- Ensure that the whole eel fishing industry implements best practice eel fishing, holding and transport techniques
- Ensure that commercial eel fisheries and trade support effective restocking
- Combat illegal eel fishing and trade
- Ensure the full traceability of eel products from fisher to plate or re-stocked habitat.
- Support the establishment of (eel) fishing free periods, quota, areas or zones.

SEG will maximise its own impact by focusing on three mutually reinforcing areas of activity, all underpinned by sound science and conservation programmes:

- Providing leadership and building alliances to achieve SEG’s Vision
- Influencing actions to restore healthy wild eel populations
- Defining and promoting the uptake of best practices for commercial eel fishing and trade through the operation of a robust, credible standards and certification programme

#### Strategic area 1: Providing leadership and building alliances to achieve SEG's Vision

**Rationale:** Achievement of the long-term vision requires an organization that has the infrastructure and viability to sustain and scale up its long-term impact through partnerships and networks. SEG serves as the convening platform across diverse stakeholders and competing interests, with the Eel as a flagship/sentinel indicator for healthy water ecosystems. Through its commitment to strong, multi-stakeholder governance, and focused and effective programmes, SEG will earn the legitimacy to provide leadership in the achievement of its vision.

**Key Activities:** build a comprehensive inclusive network organization, act as a convener across interest groups, provide a forum to reach consensus on priorities and activities, build alliances to effectively lobby on the eel’s behalf. Organizational advancement through financial controls, funding diversification, member services

#### Strategic Area 2: Influencing Actions in Support of SEG's Vision

**Rationale:** The Eel is present across the EU with SEG unifying the different interest groups on collective impact. SEG places an emphasis on multiple stakeholders and coalitions between science, conservation and industry interests for the benefits of aligning the goals and addressing major threats to achieving the objectives of river connectivity and healthy aquatic ecosystems.

Cultural and political differences are addressed through country networks to address contextual and localized issues, in particular the blockages to freshwater eel migration pathways including dams, weirs, gauging stations, flood defenses, water pumps and hydropower. The sector can play a significant and measurable role in encouraging solutions to water management and pollution. In addition the fishery sector can help promote the meeting of many key measures from the European Eel Regulation.

**Key Activities:** engagement, education, research, advocacy, country network

#### Strategic Area 3: Defining and promoting the uptake of best practices for commercial eel fishing and trade through a credible certification scheme, and promoting market/ regulatory demand as a driver of uptake

**Rationale:** The objective of the SEG Standard is to maximise the contribution of eel fishers, ranchers, aquaculturalists, traders and consumers of eel products to the restoration of healthy eel populations, distributed throughout their natural range, fulfilling their role in the aquatic environment and supporting sustainable use for the benefit of communities, local economies and traditions. Requirements specified in the SEG Standard will be designed to ensure that implementation of the SEG Standard at the level of each individual SEG certificate holder has a positive net impact on eel populations. Traceability of the fish throughout the supply chain is an essential part of the standard scheme and will contribute to the elimination of the illegal trade.

**Key Activities:** standard, training, ISEAL membership, education and awareness raising

### Monitoring and Evaluation

The SEG Theory of Change makes explicit how we expect our strategies will lead to the expected outcomes and how these outcomes contribute to impact. The Theory of Change highlights the pathways to achieve change to achieve our mission in the long run. Our Monitoring and Evaluation system will be based on the Theory of Change that enables us to test the causal pathways and monitor progress towards the objectives. Lack of progress will trigger further analysis to identify whether strategies need to be refined. Monitoring and Evaluation at SEG will not be an academic exercise, but a management tool for providing information on what is or is not working.