

Sustainable Eel Group Standard-Setting Code System Report



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Standard

Scope

The SEG Standard is designed to be applicable to eel fishing within European coastal, estuarine and freshwater systems, to eel ranching and aquaculture, and to the trade and transportation of live eels. It includes provisions for the monitoring of the trade in live eels and for the monitoring of the trade of eel products from source to end consumer.

Sustainability outcomes

SEG's vision is to achieve "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 believes that this vision can be achieved most effectively by focusing on achieving two interdependent and mutually reinforcing outcomes: Healthy Water Habitats and a Sustainable Eel Sector:

Healthy Water Habitats: 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.
(from The SEG Theory of Change, May 2016)

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.

Why is it needed (justification)

The European eel, *Anguilla Anguilla*, is listed by the IUCN as critically endangered, and there is widespread agreement across Europe that effective action is urgently required to save it.

A healthy water habitat is an obvious pre-requisite to achieving this. Eel populations have been significantly affected 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 habitat – 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.

The Sustainable Eel Group (SEG) believes that the creation of a responsible, sustainable commercial eel sector is essential to achieving SEG’s vision, and the SEG Standard and certification scheme are tools to support this.

Performance level

The SEG Standard is currently divided into seven components. It has a generic requirement that applies to all applicants and six additional components applicable to specific aspects of the eel sector: Glass eel fisheries, Glass eel buying and trading, Eel culture, Restocking, Yellow and silver eel fishing, and Traceability.

For each component, a set of indicators are defined which describe ‘green’, ‘amber’ or ‘red’ levels of performance. Applicants are evaluated to determine their level of performance against all applicable requirements. In order to be certified, applicants must achieve a majority of ‘green’ scores for every applicable component, with some ‘key’ requirements counting as double. There must be no ‘red’ scores for any component.

Adaptations

The SEG Standard does not require local adaptation, and has been designed so that eel fishers, ranchers and aquaculturalists of all scales can implement its requirements.

Standard-Setting and Revision Process

When standard was first written and by whom

The SEG Standard was developed initially between 2012 and 2013 by MacAllister-Elliott Ltd on behalf of SEG, with input from SEG’s Board and stakeholders. Version 5 of the Standard was approved by the SEG Board in June 2013, and has been used as the basis for a pilot certification and labelling programme since that date. SEG is now committed to revising the SEG Standard following ISEAL Standards Code compliant procedures during 2017, with the intent of publishing a fully revised version by November 2017.

Stakeholder categorization and geography

SEG defines key stakeholder groups as parties with a special interest in or potentially affected by measures related to eel conservation. For the purposes of governance and balanced decision-making it divides these interests into three broad categories comprising those whose interests are primarily commercial, conservation, or scientific. Within these broad categories scientific interests include: fisheries scientists, marine scientists and research ecologists; commercial interests include: hydropower companies, water supply companies, water extractors, commercial eel fishers (glass eels, yellow eels & silver eels), ranchers and aquaculturalists, traders/ transporters of live eels, processors and traders of eel products and other industries and activities affecting or affected by water quality; and conservation interests include local, national, and regional conservation organisations from both the private, public and non-government sectors.

A wide range of additional stakeholder interests, such as government advisors, law enforcement agencies, political representatives, river/ wetlands governance bodies, policy experts, recreational

fishers, consumers and multi-stakeholder organisations are allocated to different membership categories on a case by case basis, or may participate in SEG processes as observers.

The scope of application of the SEG Standard is the range of the European Eel, and SEG invites participation from stakeholders across the whole of this range.

Summary of the revision process

At the outset of the Standards Development Process, SEG sends an email to its extensive stakeholder list informing all stakeholders of the launch of the process and providing summary information about the timeline and opportunities for engagement. The same information is published on the SEG website and remains accessible throughout the development process.

Engagement may be by submitting comments by email, attending workshops, or attending the SEG annual general meeting. After each public consultation, the SEG Team reviews the level of participation from different stakeholder groups, and determines whether proactive steps are needed to ensure that the views of under-represented stakeholders can be taken into account.

Governance

The SEG Standard Panel is responsible for drafting the SEG Standard in accordance with the approved SEG Standard Development Procedure, for approval by the SEG Board of Directors, on the recommendation of the SEG Leadership Group. The SEG Standard Panel is appointed by the Board and consists of a minimum of three (3) and maximum of ten (10) people comprising one member of the SEG Board representing each of the three SEG membership categories, and up to seven (7) additional experts.

The SEG Board aims to ensure that the SEG Standard Panel's membership includes members with experience and expertise in:

- **Science:** eel ecology, eel population studies, water quality, etc.
- **Conservation:** wetland management, eel conservation, etc.
- **Commercial and Recreational Use:** commercial fishing of juvenile and adult eels, recreational angling, eel ranching and/or aquaculture, trade in eel products, etc.

The SEG Board also aims to ensure that the SEG Standard Panel's membership includes members from a broad range of countries affected by the implementation of the SEG Standard, and in particular, seeks to include individuals from France, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands, as these countries are considered key to the restoration of sustainable eel populations and trade. The current SEG Standard Panel membership is given in Doc 006 SEG Membership List.

Decision-making process

The SEG Standard Panel aims to achieve consensus in all its decisions, but if consensus cannot be achieved a decision may be taken by the affirmative vote of at 67% of the members present at a meeting at which there is a quorum.

Review and Revision process

Stakeholders are invited to submit comments or proposals on the interpretation or revision of the SEG Standard at any time, via the SEG website. Complaints relating to the implementation of the SEG Standards Development Procedures can similarly be submitted at any time via the SEG website.