



# SEG Standard Assurance System Public Report



## Assurance System Structure

### Structure

The European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) population has declined significantly and is now classified by the IUCN as 'critically endangered'. It was once very common and widely spread across its range from North Africa, through Europe and up to Scandinavia, and supported fishing, associated trade and livelihoods.

**Our primary purpose is for the recovery of the European eel, with multiple concurrent benefits to habitats, communities and economies that rely on it.**

The SEG assurance system has been tailored to correspond to the narrow focus of our scheme and to the comparatively small size of the market. Audits and certification decisions are made by accredited Compliance Assessment Bodies (CABs) while accreditation and logo licensing rests with SEG. SEG has an independent standard panel composed of scientists and conservationists and is responsible for developing the standard and for carrying out oversight of the application of the SEG standard by CABs. Final approval of the standard is conducted by the SEG board.

### Standards

The only standard in the SEG scheme is "The SEG Standard - A Code of Conduct for a Responsible Eel Sector", which is now in its 6th version and published on the SEG website [here](#). For chain of custody, SEG relies on other schemes such as MSC and ASC.

### ISO 17065 compliance

One of the requirements for CB accreditation is ISO 17065 accreditation. Alternatively we require accreditation against equivalent certification standards, such as MSC or ASC.

### Link to approved assurance providers

Currently, there is only one approved CAB, i.e. Control Union Pesca, which in 2018 purchased MacAlister-Elliott Certification. See [Approved CABs](#).

### Stakeholder engagement in assurance process

Stakeholder consultation is currently not part of the assurance process. However, audit reports are [published](#) and stakeholders can submit complaints as described in the SEG Assurance System.

### Scheme owner driving improvements

SEG monitors assurance and oversight activities as per our [Assurance and Accreditation Systems](#). This includes, e.g. shadow audits of CABs and audit report reviews. These activities inform the further development of the SEG standard system.

## Personnel Competence

### **Auditor qualification, training and experience**

Auditors are required to have at least a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field and possess knowledge of the European Council's 'Eel Regulation' prior to carrying out SEG audits. In addition, a minimum of 5 years of professional experience in a relevant field or in environmental evaluation are required. A 4-5 day auditor training course on an ISO management standard and participation in 5 on-site audits of fishing, fish farming or fish processing operations are a must. Participation in SEG standard training is mandatory for auditors to work under the SEG scheme.

### **Auditor evaluation and assuring auditor competence**

Auditors are evaluated in the shadow audits during the accreditation process and through reviews of their audit reports. Where needed, SEG offers additional standard training to increase and ensure competence. Where departures from the Assurance System are identified, the issue is brought to the attention of the respective CAB who must take action to prevent recurrence.

## Assessment

### **Assessment process**

Audits are conducted by third party CABs and include an on-site visit as well as desk reviews of documents. The initial certification audit is followed by surveillance audits. Surveillance audits are either conducted remotely or on site. Depending on the outcomes of a risk assessment, they are conducted every year or every two years.

Audit duration is between 1 and 5 days and is determined by the CAB. The intensity of the audit depends on a number of factors such as type and size of business. Audits are carried out by a single auditor.

### **Decision-making and levels of non-conformity**

The CAB takes the decision on certification. Each criterion of the SEG standard comprises a Responsible Indicator and/or an Aspiring Indicator. During the audit, the CAB allocates findings of 'Responsible', 'Aspiring' (where applicable), or 'Not in conformance' to the client. The weighting of each criterion is outlined in the SEG standard. Together, the findings and the weightings result in a total score for each component of the SEG standard. Comparing the client's total score with the maximum achievable score results in the Percentage Responsibility Score.

Clients receiving a 'not in conformance' finding for any criterion and clients with a Percentage Responsibility Score of less than 50% are not issued a certificate.

A Percentage Responsibility Score of at least 50% results in certification for the respective component. Clients not yet achieving an 80% Percentage Responsibility Score will be required to make improvements to achieve a higher score by their next recertification audit. If they show no improvement after two attempts, they will revert to the Aspiring status and will no longer be considered certified.

SEG certificates are withdrawn if the client no longer meets the standard. They may be suspended, for example if the client received a finding of not in conformance or a Percentage Responsibility Score of less than 50% in any component during a surveillance audit, or if they are under criminal investigation.

SEG does not allow group certification.

Further detail on audits and the associated process can be found in the Assurance System.

## Oversight

SEG only accepts CABs into the scheme that are also accredited for other relevant schemes such as ASC or MSC. Both have contracted ASI as their sole accreditation body. ASI is specialised in accreditation and assurance services for sustainability schemes and has long-standing experience in the sector. This gives us confidence that there is good oversight of the CBs.

In addition, SEG itself carries out accreditation and oversight functions. The CB accreditation process has two phases: Registration and accreditation. During registration, we check CB evidence of meeting our requirements, for example on competence of auditors. CBs can only be accredited if they successfully undergo a shadow audit carried out by SEG personnel or a member of our standard panel. SEG also reviews 25% of all audit reports annually and carries out 1 additional shadow audit per year.

## On-going Scrutiny

Every year, SEG will visit 10% of all fishmongers, markets and restaurant outlets that offer SEG or ESF (Eel Sustainability Fund) labelled products to check how the products are labelled and advertised.

We will also annually check SEG and ESF labelled products in a quantity that makes up 10% of labelled products and request the chain of custody certificates of companies in the respective supply chain with the aim of identifying the origin of the product.

We investigate any information we receive in relation to potentially fraudulent products. Where labels, claims or origins are faulty or cannot be identified, SEG takes action to stop or correct the situation, for example we might request packaging to be corrected and reprinted or we might request the CAB to carry out an unscheduled audit. If needed, we draw on the support of CABs in carrying out investigations.