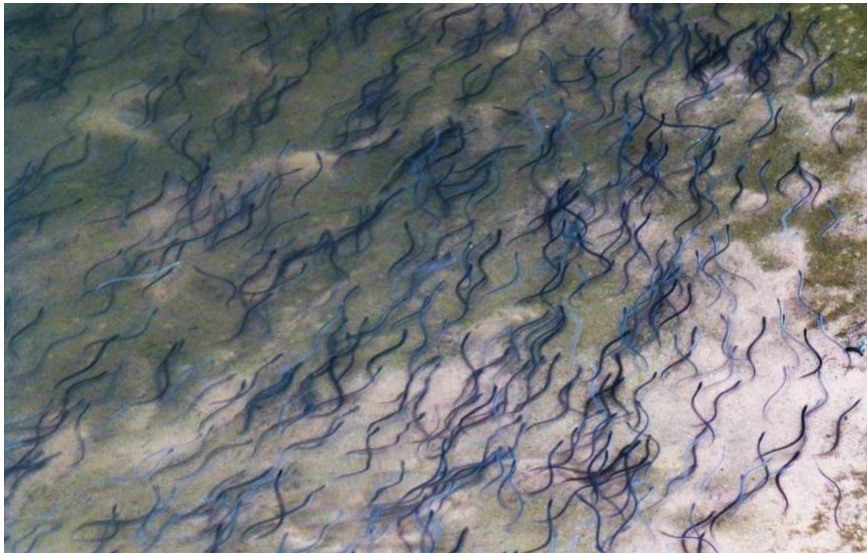


SEG Welcomes Review of Eel Regulation

Brussels, 21 April 2020

The Sustainable Eel Group welcomes the publication of the review of the 2007 EU Eel Regulation



The [EU Eel Regulation](#), 2007, was implemented in 2009 for the protection, recovery and sustainable use of the European eel stock. In 2018 the EU commissioned an independent review of the regulation to report on its effectiveness. That report was published by the EU on Monday 20 April 2020 and can be viewed in full [here](#).

SEG welcomes the publication of this review and comments as follows:

We endorse the conclusions in the report and especially that the Eel Regulation is fit for purpose. There is evidence that the eel is starting to recover.

We believe that implementation and management can be greatly enhanced by:

- **Improving the governance and ensuring the Regulation is fully applied**
- **Introducing effective controls that improve traceability and transparency of fishing and trade**
- **Greater emphasis on the environment factors: the non-fisheries impacts of habitat and migration**
- **Creation of an independent Eel Advisory Body to assist the Commission with implementation**

The Eel Regulation is fit for purpose

The finding that the Eel Regulation is fit for purpose confirms our experiences. SEG first expressed this view at the SEG Conference held at the Natural History Museum London June 2019 with the analysis of the [glass eel recruitment index](#). This view was strengthened in [March 2020](#), after this review was completed and with the [video footage](#) of glass eel migration in the Parrett and Severn. Full recovery will take many decades but SEG believes that the scale of improvements in the past 10 years is as fast as could have

been expected. In [some places](#), returns of glass eels in 2020 are reported by fishermen to have been as high as those seen in the late 1970s. Whilst biological targets are far from being met, the Regulation has been effective at creating an orchestrated approach for recovery to start.

What would we like to see next?

Improved governance

SEG agrees that the regulation could be more effective if:-

- More Member States made greater effort to implement their Eel Management Plans in full
- If Eel Management Plan were split into small management units – to catchment level (some are at full state level)
- Enforcement of Eel Management Plans and feedback on their effectiveness, be made more robust.
- More effort was made with countries outside of the EU that have eel populations, to make and apply Eel Management Plans
- An independent Eel Advisory Body is set up to co-ordinate and implement the regulation on behalf of the European Union.

Improved regulation of fishing and trade

We agree with the findings in the report and would like to see the following:-

- Improved traceability systems such as the [Telecapêche](#) system, that are properly enforced, to track from net to plate
- Continued pressure on Illegal, unreported and undocumented eel fishing and exports, to build on the successes [already seen](#)
- Wider adoption of voluntary best practice and sustainability standards such as the Sustainable Eel Group [Standard](#). This could be made mandatory - or the EU could support further implementation of certification schemes, guaranteeing responsible, traceable exploitation.

Improved non-fisheries impacts

SEG also agrees that much more should be done to improve non-fishing impacts, in particular improved passage at migration barriers, screens at pumps. Where that cannot be achieved effectively, a temporary turn off of hydropower during the peak of silver eel migration might become unavoidable (many countries report they kill 50% of their annual silver eel run in hydropower).

A new independent body

The Eel Regulation is conceptually fit for purpose, but it has problems with the implementation of the agreed protection. Rather than sharpening the rules, this requires a more effective leadership and management. Since SEG considers this to be a structural shortcoming of the current protection in the EU, SEG considers that a structural solution and change is required: the creation of an independent body for management, international coordination and feedback on national EMPs. This could take the form of an Eel Advisory Council or other body. Its role would be to:

- Act as the 'conscience' of the EU – having the information, authority and resources to review progress and advise on action where it is lacking. To 'steer' action to meet the objectives of the Regulation
- Set the priorities and actions for a range-wide Eel Recovery Programme
- Turn the useful scientific information from ICES Working Group on Eel into effective action

- Identify and commission scientific research
- Ensure the identification and collation of meaningful monitoring data
- Bring the sometimes competing, but synergistic elements of DG Mare and DG Environment in the European Commission together, for more effective and joined up action for eel
- Improving the engagement with non-EU countries that have important eel resources.

Notes

The Sustainable Eel Group [SEG](#) is the leading international organisation seeking to accelerate the recovery of the European eel through better conservation and management.

Our vision is: **Healthy wild eel populations supporting sustainable use for the benefit of all.**

Ends