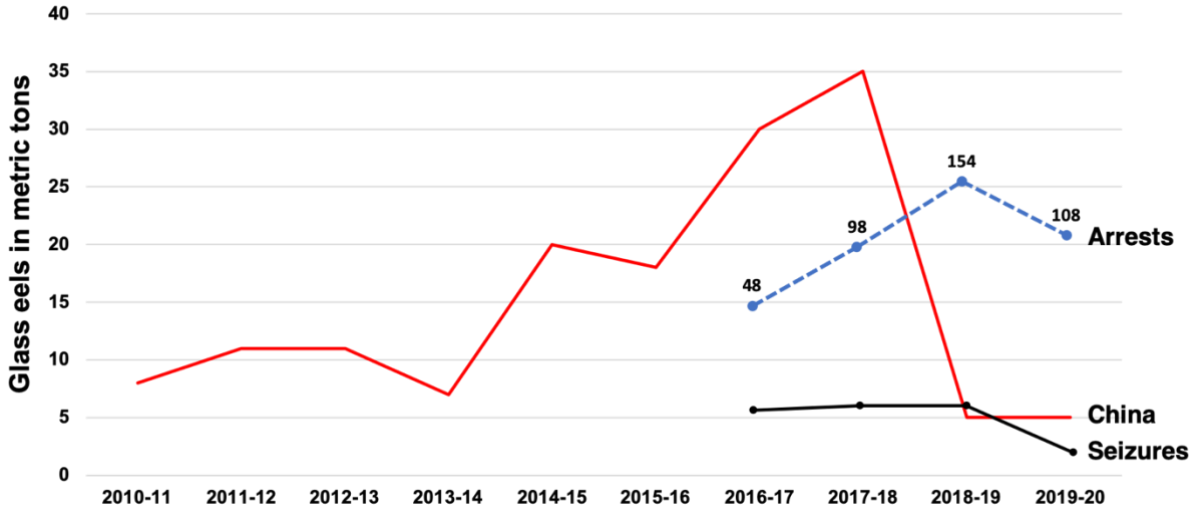
Data compiled by Florian Stein, Director of Scientific Operations, Sustainable Eel Group (SEG)
September 2020

Success of counter glass eel trafficking in Europe is reflected by crash in European glass eel supply into Chinese eel aquaculture

TITLE: European glass eel input into Chinese eel farms, seizures and arrests



Sources: Arrests and seizures in metric tonnes (Europol press releases 2017-2020); China = Glass eel Input into Chinese eel aquaculture in metric tonnes (Nihon Yoshoku Shimbun 2020)

Note: the figure is provided as editable .pptx file

- The peak of glass eel input into Chinese eel aquaculture in 2017/2018 aligns well with the peak in seizures and the 100 t estimate reported by Europol [1].

- International enforcement efforts between 2016-17 and 2018-19 are reflected in high numbers of seized glass eels and numbers of arrests [2].

- Following the enforcement efforts, reported European glass eels input into Chinese aquaculture crashed by 85 % (from 35 t to 5 t).

- The discrepancy between Europol estimate (100 t) and the reports in the Japanese Eel Newspaper (35 t) for the 2017/2018 season may have several causes:
  - Transport mortality en route from Europe to Asia,
  - Lacking visibility of the entire (illegal) glass eel input by Japanese Newspaper,
  - Uncertainties included in the Europol estimate

[1] https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/glass-eel-traffickers-earned-more-eur-37-million-illegal-exports-to-asia

[2] Reported by Europol

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Further Chinese sources that confirm the decreasing European eel supply.

The first web source confirms the reduction to 5 t:

"In the 2019 year of eel (September 2018-August 2019), the total number of farmed eels globally continued to decline severely, approaching the lowest in 2012 and 2013; the East Asia region suffered a historically bad harvest of eels, and the high price of Japanese eel make it difficult to import European glass eels. Additionally, prices of American elvers have risen, reaching the highest price since start of the cultivation. In 2019, my country released only 3 tons of Japanese eel fry, 8 tons of North American eel fry, 17 tons of South American eel fry, ***5 tons of European eel fry****, and 1 ton of eel fry."*

(google translated from: http://www.tensfish.com/news-detailed--33002.html; edited; dated: 2020-03-23)

The second web source describes the struggles resulting from decreasing supply:

In late June, the Fujian Eel Industry Association held a board of directors. While summarizing the work in the first half of the year, it conducted an in-depth study of future development and decisively proposed a strategic decision to "restore Japanese eel farming."

Why, after turning to European eel and American eel for more than 30 years, has it regained its traditional varieties and resumed Japanese eel farming? Confused about this decision, Zheng Qingrong, the old secretary general of Fujian Eel Industry Association, consulted several chairmen.

They said that the resumption of Japanese eel farming is mainly due to two reasons:

one is to maintain the existing production pattern. Fujian and Jiangxi have more than 40,000 acres of standardized eel farms, and more than 200 million eel seedlings are needed each year. These eel seedlings rely on imports and rely on international resources that the merchants have struggled to obtain from thousands of miles away. Nowadays, the situation is changing drastically, and the import of eel seedlings is becoming more and more difficult. It is necessary to plan for the big problem of how to maintain the survival of the eel industry under the situation that the import is greatly reduced or even cut off. Can't the more than 40,000 mu eel farm be basking in the sun? How to do it? Looking around, it is the only time to resume Japanese eel farming.

Second, there is a certain foundation for the restoration of Japanese eel farming. The breeding technology is self-evident, the key lies in eel seedlings. Domestic production of Japanese eel seedlings accounts for more than 60% of East Asia, with an average annual output of 43.8 tons in the past six years. A considerable part of them are produced in Fujian Province or operated by enterprises in Fujian Province. Do a good job of organizing and coordinating, make full use of this resource, and have a basis for replacing the insufficient imports to maintain the continued production of seedlings.

There are two reasons for this. But now that the Japanese eel resources are declining, and the competition for eel seedlings is fierce, will it be possible to resume Japanese eel farming? Zheng Qingrong was still puzzled.

The presidents said: It's okay! As long as the eel industry strengthens its unity and relies on its own production and management, it is possible to quickly restore Japanese eel culture to 20 tons. Reaching this level can reduce the dependence on imported seedlings by more than half. This also has a great effect on resisting the continuous price increase of foreign eel fry. American eel fry last year was 2,000 US dollars per kilogram, but this year it reduced imports and fell to only 500 US dollars. Reducing the import of eel seedlings and making good use of domestic resources are beneficial to the eel industry as a whole.

The chairmen also said: Resuming Japanese eel farming will not only solve the farming needs of eel farms, reduce dependence on imported eel fry, but will also have a decisive impact on improving the status of Chinese eels in the international market and raising eel export prices!

After hearing the explanations from the chairmen, the old secretary-general Zheng Qingrong regained confidence and was deeply encouraged! He believes that this is an extremely important strategic adjustment written in the minutes of the meeting: "Continue to maintain the development advantages and vitality of Fujian's eel industry", it will be successful!

(Google translated from: http://www.chinaeel.cn/index.php?c=content&a=show&id=41037, dated: 07-07-2020)

The source furthermore mentions a demand of 200 Million glass (equates to estimated 67 t European glass eels) for the provinces Fujian and Jiangxi, which produce more than 40 % of the annual Chinese eel aquaculture production.

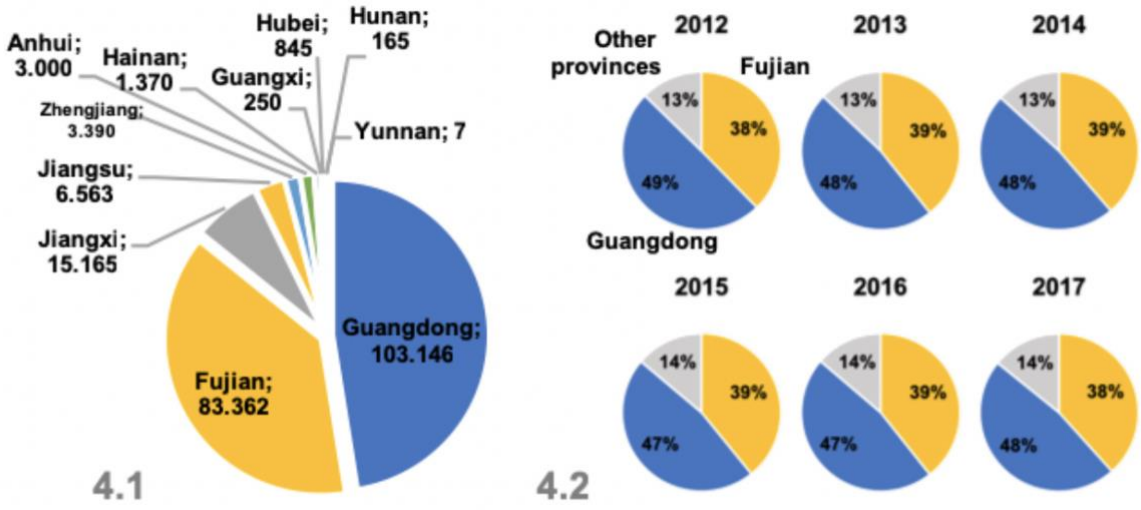

***Figure 4.1 & 4.2: Chinese eel aquaculture production by province in t**. Source: China Fishery Statistical Yearbook 2018*