

Much of the French glass eel fishery certified 'responsibly sourced'



Brussels, 15 January 2021

Following the certification of an additional 106 fishers, the **Sustainable Eel Group** announces that a large portion of the French glass eel fishery is now certified as supplying responsibly sourced eel.



Fishing for glass eels as used in Brittany, on the Loire, the Garonne, Dordogne and the Adour estuaries

Source: F.Douaud

106 glass eel fishers in France have been recently certified as catching and supplying responsibly sourced glass eels (baby European eels), meeting the strict requirements of the **SEG standard**. With a total of 219 fishers now certified in France, this means that much of the sector there has now chosen to join this voluntary scheme to demonstrate their commitment to a sustainable future for the eel. Another 40 are currently going through the certification process. With France being the supplier of more than 90% of all European glass eels, this means that responsibly sourced eel will be available all over Europe within a year's time. There are about 520 fishers licensed for glass eel fishing in France.

The European eel stock has been in decline for decades. It reached a low point in 2009 just as the EU Regulation came in – designed for the protection and sustainable use of the eel stock. To protect the stock fishing was reduced, sales to Asia banned and regulations to improve habitats, migration and screening of pumps was introduced. To help show sustainable use, the Sustainable Eel Group (SEG) developed a voluntary standard as a code of good practice in 2010 for fishers, merchants, eel farms and suppliers. One group of 12 fishers on the Seudre and Gironde near Royan became the first to be certified in 2011. As knowledge of the scheme and demand from customers for sustainability has increased, so has the number of fishers joining.

About 56 tonnes of glass eels, 13% of the **estimated annual total** of 440 tonnes (1.3 billion fish) are caught in France each year. They are caught mostly for two reasons. One is to transfer them from the west coasts of Europe, where they are very abundant, to inland waters across Europe where they are scarce, to increase eel numbers and help the species to recover. Others are sold to eel farms to be grown for human consumption, satisfying tastes and traditions enjoyed for centuries.

For customers wishing to purchase responsibly sourced, SEG certified eel, there should now be sufficient supply to meet demand. A full register of SEG certified suppliers can be found at:

<https://www.sustainableeelgroup.org/seg-certificate-register/>

There are about 3000 fish in a kilo of glass eels. Fishermen sell their catch for €250 - €400 per kilo.



Glass eels – baby European eels, caught for restocking other rivers, and also for growing for human consumption.

Source: A.Kerr

Since the eel's low point of 2009, there have been some signs of a start to recovery, and in 2019 and 2020 the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) **reported that the eel had stopped declining**. With **illegal trade to Asia now much reduced** and a majority of the sector now trading in certified, responsibly sourced fish, the **future for the European eel** is looking much brighter than it has for a long time.