

## SEG 11th Annual General Meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### Chairman's Report

### SEG the second Decade – what next?

Last year we held our AGM in March at Potsdam as part of the German Aal Initiative, it was just as Coronavirus took hold and of course has fundamentally changed all our lives and the way SEG is operating. It has been a very tough 12 months and from the SEG perspective I congratulate you all for showing eel like determination to adapt and survive. This 12 month report will seek to show further important steps towards eel recovery and start to develop plans and thinking for our second decade. Full eel recovery was always going to be a multidecadal journey and at the birth of the Eel Regulation it was often stated as 'not going to happen in our life time'.

#### The Eel Regulation

Right from the start, SEG recognised the importance of the Regulation for eel recovery but especially for its key words "protection and sustainable use." All SEG strategies have been developed to get behind the Regulation and make it work. None more so than the decision at the Potsdam Workshop in 2016 to frame SEG as the Leadership Alliance for eel - building on the existing governance structure of equal voting power between the stakeholders: Science, Conservation and Commercial. So in September 2020, when the Commission announced that following the evaluation and consultation that the Regulation was found 'fit for purpose', SEG was delighted. Especially as the thinking was influenced by SEG, our Position Statements in general and in particular that on Stock Assessment:

<https://www.sustainableeelgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SEG-position-on-the-status-of-the-eel-stock-July-2020.pdf>



**Retaining the EU Regulation and focusing on better implementation - SEG played a full part**

Furthermore in the briefings that have followed, the Commission has emphasised that better implementation of the Regulation is their key strategy for eel. One slide of theirs caught this perfectly and below I have linked its better implementation to the SEG Standard and how SEG helps deliver both the Regulation and Eel Recovery.



**SEG Standard is aligned with the message**  
**BETTER IMPLEMENTATION**

**Next steps – better implementation**

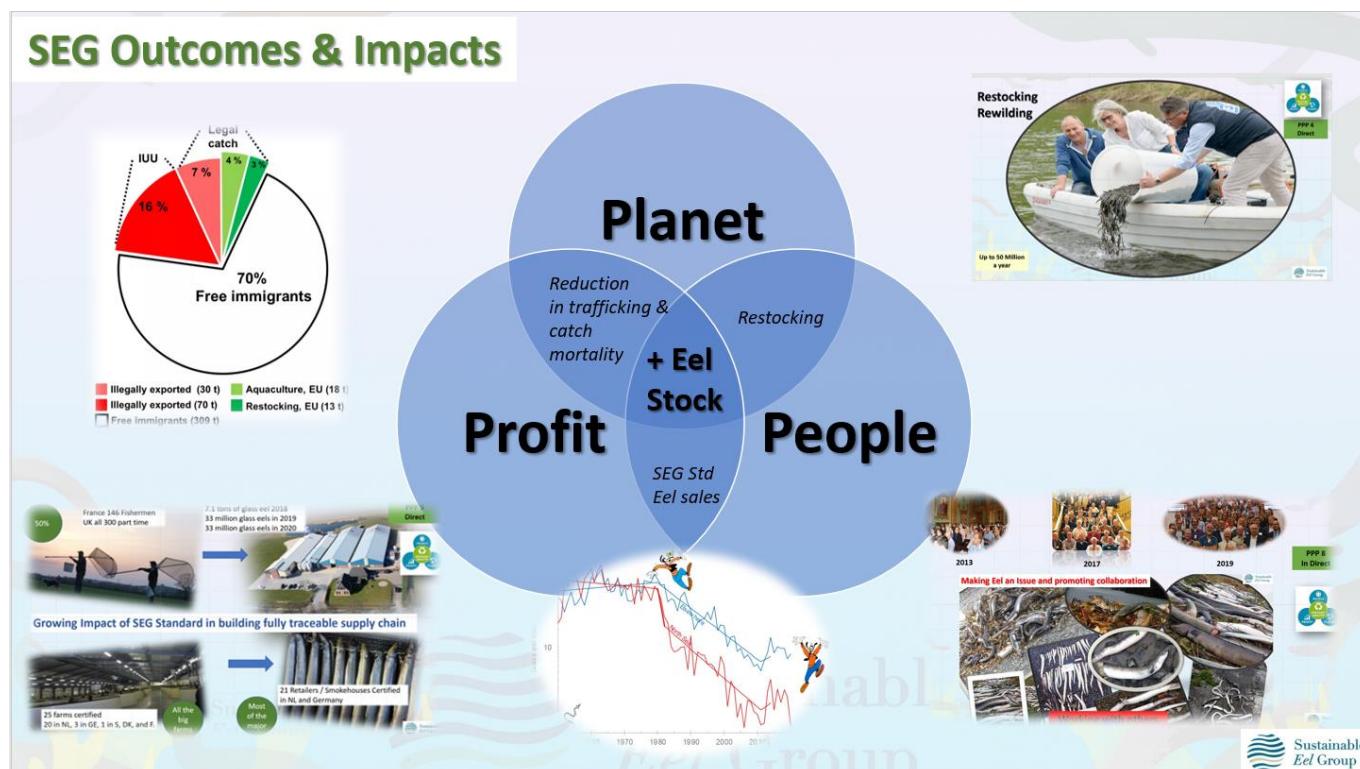
|                                     |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Focus on non-fisheries factors ★    | Continue addressing fisheries impacts ★ | Make use of good practices and projects ★ |
| Reinforce control and enforcement ★ | Strengthen transboundary cooperation ★  | Improve connectivity RBMPs and EMPs ★     |
| Increase EU funds uptake ★          | Improve efficiency of reporting ★       | Consider revising EMPs ★                  |

European Commission

## The SEG Standard and ISEAL

Version 6 of the SEG Standard was launched in June 2018 and has greatly benefited from the three ISEAL Codes of practice, not only through the stakeholder consultative process, but especially the development of better Assurance and now the demonstration of sustainability impacts. SEG was accepted as a Community Member in August 2019 (there are just 24 in total) and has been progressively demonstrating Code Compliance. We hope to reach this status during 2022. One aspect has been the production of an annual sustainability impacts report and the first one was published in December 2020:

<https://www.sustainableeelgroup.org/bending-the-curve-for-the-european-eel-2-2/>





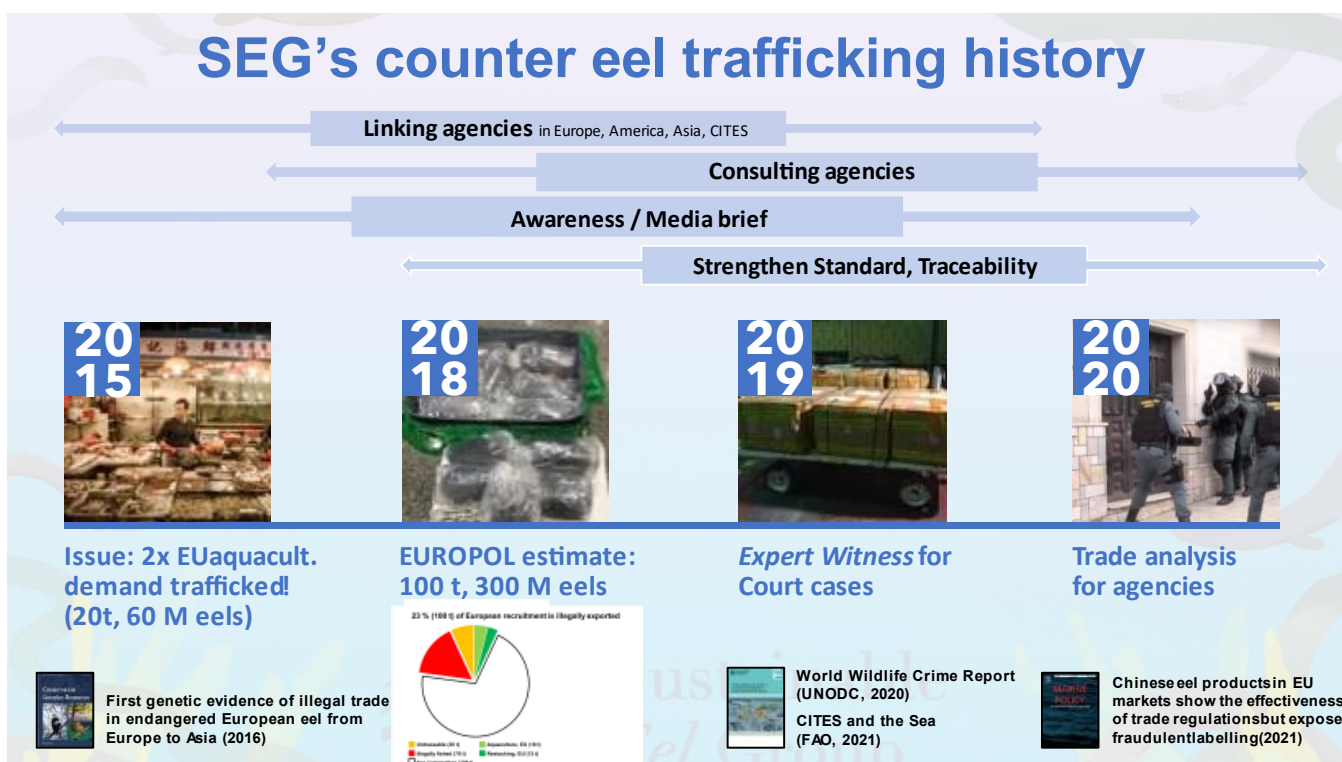
The 2<sup>nd</sup> such report will be prepared and published towards the end of 2021.

As I write this report (in March) it is possible to update on the progress made during 2021 glass eel fishing season with the take up of the standard and the development of the supply chain. There are now nearly 300 fishermen in France certified and given about 100 kilos of catch each, some 30 tons of supply will be available for the 2022 season. This is enough to meet the legal demand for both eel farms and restocking. The SEG audit programme will continue and many companies have completed their assessments for the third or fourth time. The revolution in glass eel trading is really happening.



## Counter Trafficking

There can be little doubt that the SEG programme has led to concentrated, coordinated and now effective action to counter and contain glass eel trafficking. Its exact level remains very difficult to determine so as a guess it is likely running annually at the 10 to 20 tonnes mark. The story is captured here:



## Eel and the Freshwater Crisis

WWF, Wetlands International and key partners developed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Planet Report and this highlighted the shocking state of fresh water especially in Europe and especially its negative impact on migratory fish. The growing awareness of the plight for freshwater is championed by many NGOs and we can expect a growing investment to correct this human engineering. Interestingly, the collapse in European Freshwater Migratory Fish matched our own experiences with eel.



## EU Commission Response

The seriousness of this crisis has met with a strong response from the Commission who are determined to make a difference and seek to do so by improved 'integration' of existing Directorate work. SEG has already witnessed this positive effect with the counter trafficking. This multi-disciplinary and multi member state approach has been caught within this graphic. SEG will apply for direct funding through the new EMFAF 2021 – 2025.



## SEG Directional Thinking

SEG leaders will gather mid summer 2021, probably via Zoom to work through and create a 5-10 year strategy with Aimee Russillo who led the 2016 Potsdam workshop facilitating. These are some of the thoughts prepared for that meeting.

# SEG Directional Thinking

## *To further develop SEG in its long term eel leadership role*

- Achieve ISEAL Code Compliance
- Increase sustainable eel thinking amongst all stakeholders
- Expand the standards adoption especially with yellow and silver eel
- Increase emphasis on 'non fisheries' work taking advantage of Green Deal thinking
- Extend and improve eel data collection and management
- Support the adoption of ESF and the Stewardship model in more countries
- SEG to develop Standards for other Anguillids
- Succession planning to secure the multi decadal strategy



## SEG and ESA Governance Development

One of the great strengths of SEG has been the pragmatic determination to win for eel and as the SEG journey has evolved, so too has our governance to match the challenge. SEG will continue to position itself internationally and we expect to see the Morocco Eel fishery and farming join the UK as meeting the SEG Standard but not being part of the EU. I am sure that this will continue and this slide is also meant to start to consider what next. The relationship between SEG as the 'standard owner' and the ESF funds will mature. I am sure that the Commercial sector can and will continue to grow in its 'stewardship role'. This is a narrative grounded on growing influence.

## The Evolving SEG & ESA Governance

Red is new developments to meet legal requirements



**SEG** ASBL  
(SEG Ltd)

**Standard Owner**  
Anguillaanguilla  
Anguilla Rostrata

*Contract to all  
certificate holders*

7 Voting Members &  
Adherent Members



30%

**ESA**

**Stewardship**

ESF (NL)  
ESF (G)  
*ESF(UK)/SEG LTD*  
*ESF (Dk)*  
*ESF (F)*

ESA members equal votes

