



 Sustainable Eel Group	ISEAL Community Member System Overview
Organisation	Sustainable Eel Group
Year	2022
Version	1.0

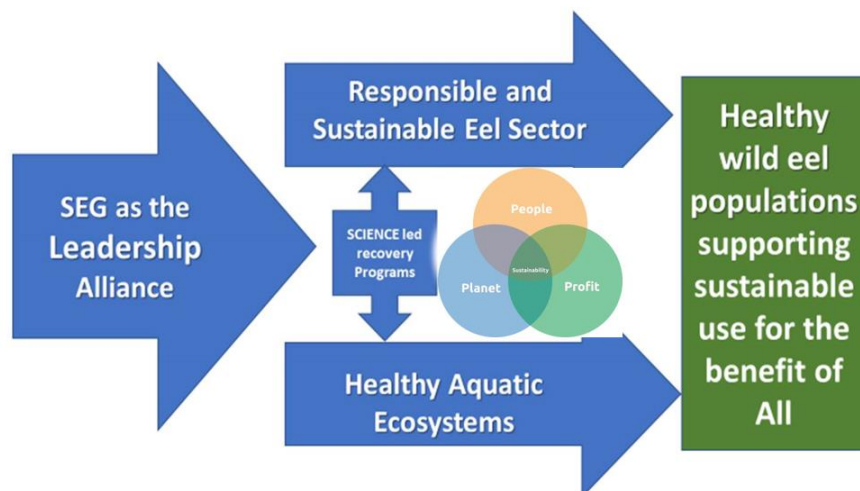
The Sustainable Eel Group and our purpose

The [Sustainable Eel Group](#) (SEG) is the leading independent organisation in Europe with its sole focus being the recovery and long term sustainability of the stock of the European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla L.*). The European eel population declined significantly between 1980 and 2010. 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, livelihoods, culture and traditions.

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

Strategies to meet our sustainability objectives

We employ several strategies to achieve our aims, as summarised in [Theory of Change](#) diagram:-



Elaborating on these:-

SEG as the leadership alliance – advocacy, influencing and collaborative working

- SEG aims to be highly influential with the European Commission and national government policies that affect the aquatic environment and the eel.
- We are a small NGO and must work in partnership with a balanced collaboration of scientists, conservationists, governments and the commercial sector to influence, gain funding and manage projects that will directly help eel populations or scientific knowledge, and to present its views in the most compelling way.
- We promote and support scientific research to enhance our knowledge to make healthier aquatic ecosystems for eels and other species, and to improve the SEG standard and other policies to build a more sustainable eel sector.

Responsible and sustainable eel sector

- The SEG standard is designed to promote sustainability and best practice in the commercial sector and to provide a certification scheme for assured, traceable ‘responsibly sourced eel’.
- The SEG labelling scheme provides assurance and choice to traders and consumers who wish to buy responsibly and so encourage further adoption of the standard.
- This promotes more sustainable forms of fishing with reduced mortality, reduced illegal trade and a positive contribution to the recovery of the eel population.

Healthy aquatic ecosystems

- Dams, weirs, sluices, culverts, and drainage systems mean that the eel cannot access 90% of the freshwater habitats it once could. Then, pumps power stations and hydropower suck in, and kill or damage glass eels and elvers as they migrate into rivers and silver eels as they migrate to sea. Wetlands have been drained and rivers canalised so that the available habitat is often unsuitable for eels.
- So, we collaborate with and support partnerships and projects that seek to remove barriers, assist migration, screen pumps and improve aquatic habitats to help the eel’s recovery.

Support to the EC Eel Regulation (2007/1100)

- The European Commission’s Eel Regulation of 2007 is the most effective piece of legislation to effect the eel’s recovery. A review published in 2020 reported it to be effective, apart from the differing commitment of Member States to implement it fully, and the effectiveness of their eel management plans.
- SEG’s strategy is to fully support the Eel Regulation, for example by incorporating elements into the SEG standard, to develop the stewardship role for the sector and pressure to improve the natural world.

The SEG standard

The SEG standard is an assurance scheme that enables participants (fishers, eel traders, eel farmers, processors and those involved in restocking) to demonstrate that they are trading in eels responsibly, according to best practice. The SEG label provides assurance to customers that they are purchasing responsibly sourced eel. The system is designed such that those certified can demonstrate that they are causing a positive contribution to the recovery of the depleted and vulnerable population of the European eel.

The standard provides a series of tests (criteria) to indicate to what level they are complying with best practice. There are two levels of compliance for each criterion: ‘Responsible’ and ‘Aspiring’ which are assessed by an independent auditor. A minimum score of 50% responsibility, and no failures are required to achieve certification.

The standard applies to organisations in the following parts of the eel supply chain, with the aim that each can demonstrate that they have a certified responsible supply of eel, traceable back to the fishery:-

- Fishers
- Traders
- Eel farms
- Eel restockers
- Processing, wholesale and retail supply

The standard is supported by the following systems, each guided by the ISEAL Codes of Good practice:

- **Standard Overview**: a summary of what the standard is, why it is needed and how it works
- **Standard Development procedure**: ensuring the standard is developed and reviewed according to good practice and in consultation with all stakeholders
- **Assurance system**: defining the procedures by which the standard must be applied and governed
- **Monitoring and Evaluation system**: a description of the metrics by which we will measure the sustainability impacts of the system
- **Claims and Labelling guide**: guidance on what clients can claim as a result of certification.

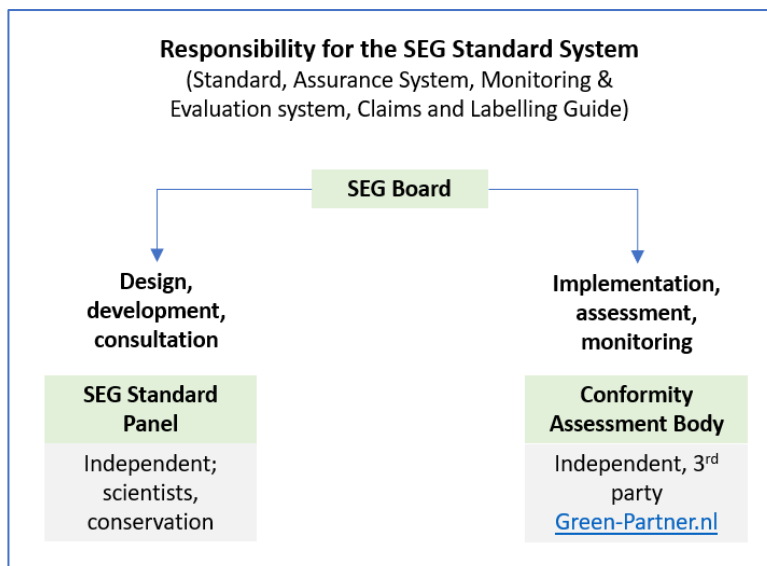
The SEG standard system and all supporting procedures are published on our website at:

www.sustainableeelgroup.org/the-seg-standard-system/.

Responsibility for decisions taken about and by the system

The current version of our standard and the supporting Assurance and Monitoring and Evaluation systems and Claims and Labelling Guide was designed in 2017 – 2018 following extensive consultation with the very many players who have an interest in the European eel. The work was undertaken by the SEG Standard Panel, with oversight by the SEG Board. The Panel is an independent sub-group of SEG, comprised of scientists and conservation interests; there are no commercial interests on the Panel.

Assessments and certification are undertaken by a third part independent Conformity Assessment Body (CAB), under formal agreement with, and oversight by, the SEG Board.



Commitment to improvement

The SEG standard has continuous improvement built in, each to the standard itself, and to the operations of participants; so that there are systemic improvements to the eel's sustainability:-

- the SEG standard is reviewed and improved at least every 5 years. It undergoes an extensive stakeholder consultation process to incorporate improvement ideas from a wide range of knowledgeable players. Improvements are also made at interim intervals when appropriate. So, over time, the standard improves and provides a progressively more comprehensive system and with higher thresholds to achieve, to test and demonstrate sustainability of eel fishing and trade.
- when a participant is audited they are provided with recommendations for improvement. Participants are required to demonstrate improvement at the next audit.

Monitoring and review to ensure relevance

We hold regular dialogue with stakeholders to obtain feedback to monitor the relevance of the standard and associated procedures, and we make adjustments as necessary. Such stakeholders include: the fishers, traders, farmers and processors who are certified, governments and their agencies, enforcement agencies, NGOs, other standard owners.

The key barriers to access and how they are minimised are:

1. **Language.** The standard applies across Europe, so it is translated from English into the languages of the countries with the greatest number of stakeholders, currently Dutch, French and German.
2. **Accessibility.** All of our documents are published on our [website](#), so that they are accessible to anyone that has access to the internet, whether by computer or smartphone.
3. **Fragmentation of the sector.** The eel sector across Europe has historically been poorly coordinated and connected. The eel regulation and the growth of SEG has generated better communication between fishers, traders, farms and processors across different countries. Communication with fishers is particularly challenging as they are usually the furthest from the understanding of regulations and standards and with least access to the internet. The network of SEG certified traders who have direct contact with the fishers is how we best communicate with them – helping them to understand our system and getting feedback from them. We also regularly visit different stakeholders in person, including fishers, to have direct dialogue.

We undertake a complete review of the standard every five years. To ensure that all of our stakeholders can have an input, we hold an extensive consultation exercise over nine months. All of our stakeholders are invited direct to contribute and notices are published on our website. All stakeholder comments are considered equally and responses are provided to each (and published) on how those comments were used. To see how our standard development process, see: <https://www.sustainableeelgroup.org/standard-development/>.

Implementation of the standard

The SEG standard system is interpreted and implemented consistently and accurately by:

- clear description of standard and supporting procedures in the documentation in the [standard system](#),
- having clear assessment criteria in the standard with minimal opportunity for interpretation,

- providing training to assessors in the application and interpretation of the standard,
- applying procedures for oversight of assessment reports and certification by the CAB by defining when (1) they should be referred to the standard owner and (2) random sampling,
- having designated, trained personnel to collate and report the relevant monitoring and evaluation data, so that the impacts of the standard can be measured and published,
- ‘claims’ that SEG and its stakeholders can make are simple and defined in our [Claims and Labelling Guide](#). In summary, this guide states that it can be claimed that SEG certified eels can be described as ‘responsibly sourced’.

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For further information please see:

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