



Sustainable
Eel Group

The SEG Standard Accreditation System

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Versions Issued

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1.0	1 July 2018	Initial
1.1	26 September 2018	Minor edits to sections 5.1 and 7.1
1.2	1 July 2022	Minor edits and clarification of responsibilities of SEG and CABs

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For further information please see:

www.sustainableeelgroup.org

Or contact us at:

standard@sustainableeelgroup.org

Registered address:

c/o Wetlands International - European Association
Mundo J, Rue de l'Industrie 10, 1000,
Bruxelles, Belgium.

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1. Purpose

This document describes the Accreditation System for the Sustainable Eel Group (SEG). It outlines SEG's programme set-up and defines requirements and procedures for accepting Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) into the programme, overseeing their activities, ensuring auditor competence and reviewing the Accreditation System. The system has been tailored to correspond to the narrow focus and relatively small size of the SEG programme. The full suite of documentation to define and manage the SEG standard system can be found at: <http://www.sustainableeelgroup.org/the-seg-standard-system/>.

2. Applicability and responsibility

SEG oversees CABs directly and the Accreditation System is for use by SEG and CABs. The SEG Board approved this document and, as system owner, SEG holds responsibility for its content. The Accreditation System is published on our website www.sustainableeelgroup.org in the page [SEG Standard System](#) for transparency. Those using and applying it are responsible for ensuring they use the latest version.

3. The Sustainable Eel Group - our purpose

The European eel population has declined significantly. 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 and livelihoods.

The reduced population is a risk to the species itself, wildlife and ecosystems and the socio-economics of communities that fish for, trade in and eat eel.

Our primary purpose is to assist the recovery of the European eel, with multiple concurrent benefits to habitats, communities, traditions and economies that rely on it.

Our work and strategies are designed to support the recovery of the European eel, and the European Commission's 'Eel Regulation' ([Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1100/2007](#)). The primary objective of this Regulation is a framework for the eel's recovery and, as described in Article 1, 'the protection and sustainable use of the stock of European eel'.

The SEG standard, one of our principal strategies, has been developed and designed as a code of conduct for best practice in the commercial eel sector, to support the recovery of the European eel and the to meet the objectives of the Eel Regulation. This Assurance system describes the rules and procedures to be applied to support the effective working of the SEG standard.

4. Independence

The SEG programme is designed to safeguard the independence of accreditation and assurance. Audits and certification decisions shall be made by the CABs whilst accreditation and logo licensing rests with SEG. SEG does not charge CABs an accreditation or other fee, nor do CABs make any payments to SEG.

The SEG Board is comprised of a balance of interests: two for each science, conservation and the commercial eel sector. This maintains a balanced and independent oversight of the development and operation of the SEG Standard.

When and where it is needed, SEG can re-instate the independent SEG Standard Panel as a temporary measure in the absence of a CAB. That Panel is composed of scientists and conservationists and, when needed, is responsible for acting as the CAB and providing independent advice to the SEG Board.

SEG Standard Panel members and SEG personnel entrusted with accreditation functions shall not have a commercial or financial relationship with CABs, or indeed with any certified clients. Any other conflict of interest or situation that might be perceived as a conflict of interest shall be made known by members of the SEG Standard Panel, by SEG personnel and the SEG Board, to the SEG Chairman, who will decide if and how to address the situation. Actions may include removing standard panel members from oversight activities such as shadow audits or removing SEG personnel from accreditation functions. SEG personnel shall not undertake audits, but may shadow audits in their oversight and accreditation capacity.

5. CAB Eligibility

Only registered and accredited CABs shall issue SEG certificates.

5.1 Requirements for CAB registration

Audits against the SEG standard shall be conducted by CABs that are registered with SEG. Registration requires applicant CABs to provide the following to SEG:-

1. Evidence of the applicant CAB being a legal entity;
2. Proof of valid ISO 17065 accreditation and / or
3. Proof of valid accreditation against other relevant certification standards, such as MSC or ASC;
4. Evidence of relevant auditors possessing the competences outlined in this document;
5. Evidence of relevant auditors having participated in a training on the SEG standard as outlined in this document.

Once SEG has reviewed the applicant's documentation, they shall register the CAB and inform them that they can now start conducting audits against the SEG standard as per their requested accreditation scope.

5.2 Requirements for CAB accreditation

Following registration, the CAB shall conduct audits of clients which will be reviewed and overseen by the SEG Standard System manager. These will review how the CAB applies the Assurance System section 2 'Audit procedures', the interpretation of the application of the standard criteria, and the accuracy and quality of scoring and reporting.

Upon successful completion of the review of three audit reports, the registered CAB shall be accredited by SEG's Standard System manager and shall be listed as such on the SEG website. The CAB shall issue SEG certificates only after it has been accredited by SEG and is listed on the SEG website.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 CAB Responsibilities

The CAB shall:

1. Sign a SEG CAB Agreement with SEG prior to conducting SEG-related auditing activities;
2. Implement the requirements outlined in the SEG Assurance System;
3. Assign auditors to SEG audits that meet the competence and training requirements outlined below;
4. Comply with the SEG Claims and Labelling Guide for claims made in relation to SEG accreditation;
5. Provide specified data and information about audits to SEG to enable SEG to operate its Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system;
5. Provide copies of SEG certificates and audit reports to SEG for publication by SEG;
6. Inform SEG of any changes to the CAB's ISO 17065 or other relevant accreditation status within five days of the change;
7. Participate, where requested, in SEG efforts to investigate complaints and incidents of potential transgressions and non-conformance with the standard.

6.2 SEG Responsibilities

SEG shall:

1. Provide training to the CAB and their relevant auditors on the SEG standard at the time of CAB approval for accreditation and as needed thereafter, for example when the SEG standard has been reviewed and updated. Training details are provided in 7.2 below;
2. Maintain a list of registered and accredited CABs on the SEG website;
3. Provide training to SEG personnel entrusted with accreditation functions on the SEG standard and ensure they understand the principles of assurance, including accreditation and oversight. See 7.2 below for details;
4. Review 25% of all CAB audit reports every year to confirm that the Assurance System is properly applied. Where departures from the Assurance System are identified, the issue is brought to the attention of the respective CAB who shall take action to prevent recurrence;
5. Review the Accreditation System as described below;
6. Apply learning from the results of points 1. to 5. into the SEG Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system.

7. Competence and Training

7.1 Auditor Competences

At a minimum, auditors shall possess the following competences before engaging in SEG-related activities:

Education and knowledge	Work experience	Auditor training and experience	SEG training
Bachelor's degree in a relevant field, e.g. Environmental Management, Natural Resource Management, Fisheries Biology, Aquaculture, Food Technology	5 years of professional experience in an area of work relevant to the fishing or fish farming industry or environmental evaluation	Successful completion of a 4-5 day auditor training course on an ISO management standard Participation in 5 on-site audits of any fishing, fish farming or fish	Participation in SEG standard training as provided by SEG

Knowledge of the European Union Council Eel Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007		processing operations	
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To remain an auditor for the SEG programme thereafter, auditors shall conduct at least 2 SEG audits per year.

7.2 SEG Personnel Competences

At a minimum, SEG personnel carrying out accreditation functions shall possess the following competences:

Assurance	SEG training
Understanding of the principles of assurance, including accreditation and oversight. This may be acquired through e.g. self-study of relevant documentation or an ISEAL training course Knowledge of the SEG Accreditation System and Assurance System	Participation in SEG standard training as provided by SEG

7.3 SEG Standard Training

CABs, their relevant auditors and SEG personnel carrying out accreditation functions shall participate in SEG standard training as requested and delivered by SEG.

The training shall be designed to:

1. Help participants understand the SEG Theory of Change and the SEG programme overall;
2. Provide background on the European eel life history, threats to the European eel, its conservation status, protective legislation, fishing and farming of European eel and the commercial market for European eel;
3. Educate participants in-depth about the components and criteria of the SEG standard, placing emphasis on the most critical issues;
4. How to generate and present audit reports.

8. Review

The SEG Accreditation System shall be reviewed every five years or as needed based on feedback during implementation or through the SEG Standard Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system. The review shall aim at ensuring that the System is sound, adequate and effective. It will take account of:

1. Results of CAB, auditor and SEG personnel training;
2. Insights gathered from CAB review reports, CAB audit reports and shadow audits;
3. Outcomes of label and claims monitoring activities;
4. Insights gathered from the SEG Standard Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system;
5. Any input received from stakeholders.

SEG will provide notification of changes within thirty days of making a change to the following SEG stakeholders:

1. SEG registered and accredited CABs;
2. SEG personnel;
3. SEG standard certificate holders.

Notification will include, minimally:

1. the original requirement;
2. the revised requirement; and
3. the timeline for implementation of the new/revised requirement.

9. Termination

SEG may suspend or terminate accreditation under any of the following conditions:

1. The CAB repeatedly fails to implement the requirements of the Assurance System;
2. The CAB fails to submit data and information for the SEG Monitoring and Evaluation System;
3. The CAB does not undergo a shadow audit as requested by SEG;
4. The CAB's auditors do not take part in training as requested by SEG.

The CAB may terminate its SEG accreditation with two months' notice to its SEG certificate holders and SEG.



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