



AAC Recommendation on the Recovery of Eel Stock

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1. Background

In August 2018, the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) published its first recommendation on the recovery of European eel stock, which called on the European Commission (EC) to take effective management measures to improve the eel stock situation¹. Then, the AAC followed up by sending a letter to the EC in 2022 on the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea's evaluation of the national eel management plans' progress reports².

In February 2023, the EC communicated an EU action plan for protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable, resilient fisheries, which calls on Member States to improve the protection of the European eel by adopting or updating existing eel management plans under the Eel Regulation by the end of June 2024 to strengthen conservation and management measures³.

Following debates in the European Parliament, a report by the Committee on Fisheries regarding the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 established measures for the recovery of European eel stock was adopted in November 2023⁴. The report mentions that the implementation of the Eel Regulation needs to be improved.

In light of this, the AAC decided to follow up on the points included in its first Eels Recommendation.

2. Justification

There is a common basic understanding between the AAC members regarding the following elements:

- The measures implemented by the EU for the recovery of eel have not led to the expected results.
- There is full recognition that eel plays a role in ecosystems biodiversity recovery.

It is essential to recognise the strong impact of illegal fishing, trade and unreported catches, toxic pollution of waters and other anthropogenic activities, such as hydroelectric production in the reduction of the eel population in the different stages and migrations (from larvae to reproducers). In many areas, the negative impact on eels is also caused by the strong presence of predators.

¹ [Aquaculture Advisory Council \(2018\). Recommendation on the Recovery of the European Eel Stock.](#)

² [Aquaculture Advisory Council \(2022\). Letter to the European Commission on the AAC Position on the ICES Evaluation of the national eel management plans progress reports.](#)

³ [European Commission \(2023\). Communication from the Commission: EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries.](#)

⁴ [Committee on Fisheries of the European Parliament \(2023\). REPORT on the implementation of Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1100/2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel.](#)

3. Recommendations

By consensus, the AAC recommends the following:

To the European Commission:

- To reinforce the implementation of the Regulation 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for eels, including eel trade between Member States and third countries;
- To develop EU funding for research efforts on eel biology and its interactions with the environment that allow the identification of effective recovery techniques.

To the Member States:

- To take vigorous steps to further implement the Water Framework Directive⁵ by facilitating the natural migration of eels upstream and downstream rivers and reduce mortality caused by hydroelectricity production, toxic pollution and other anthropic activities (also in light of what emerged in the EC's Marine Action Plan seminar (MAP) of 24 April 2024⁶) and to reach the MAP objectives on certain scientific and experiential bases; and
- To channel research funding toward the study of eel biology and its interactions with the environment to allow for the identification of effective recovery techniques.

The AAC sector organisation members believe that the roles that aquaculture can and must play in restocking are important, such as managing the transition from glass eels collected on a quota basis to (yellow or) silver eels that are more resilient and suitable for inclusion in nature.

The AAC sector organisation members ask for recognition of the importance of small-scale fishing and eel farming in European cultural traditions as well as the small-scale producers' know-how that can only be preserved via an uninterrupted activity.

The AAC representatives of the Other Interest Groups respect the sector organisation's position and believe that the welfare and ecological risks of restocking eel outweigh the benefits and that the ICES's recommendation for a fishing ban should be enacted.

⁵ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy

⁶ https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/8ba8dc69-4226-4d6d-92d7-9ba25b40fc50/library/5d652dde-afe2-483a-83d5-a252d5c16adb?p=1&n=10&sort=modified_DESC.



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