

**CONFERENCE  
ON THE NEED FOR  
JOINT EFFORTS TO SAVE THE EUROPEAN EEL  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS  
22-23 MARCH 2007**

CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE ON THE NEED FOR JOINT EFFORTS TO SAVE THE EUROPEAN EEL AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS, 22-23 MARCH 2007

*On 22-23 March 2007, a conference on the need for joint efforts to save the European eel was held at the European Parliament. The event was organised by the Fisheries Secretariat (FISH). It was attended by around 60 representatives from the EU institutions, national ministries and authorities, inter-governmental organisations, the fisheries sector, environmental organisations and universities. Reflecting the discussions, the following key conclusions and recommendations are being forwarded to the Member States' representations, the German Presidency of the European Council and the Commission for consideration.*

The population of the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) has experienced a decadal decline. Fishing yield has gradually declined by 75 % and the abundance of glass eel (young eel migrating from the ocean) is now below 5% of the historical level. The stock is considered outside safe biological limits, and immediate protection measures have been recommended.

Considering the current state of the European eel, there is an urgent need for a joint management approach at the EU-level, including socio-economic considerations. The participants to the Conference note with interest the proposal to list the eel under CITES Appendix II (Annex B of Reg. (EC) 338/97). We also welcome the efforts by the European Commission and the European Presidency to reach agreement on a Council Regulation establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European Eel (COM(2005)472), and urge the Council of Ministers to make a decision later this spring.

It is of utmost importance that protective measures are taken as soon as possible, concerning quality and quantity of the spawner production, such as:

- re-distribution of glass eel from the core area of high abundance towards other areas, where appropriate – an action with potential rapid positive effect
- safeguards that eel fisheries are sustainable and within safe limits
- reducing the impact of hydropower, barrages and other anthropogenic factors affecting eel migration
- strengthening existing policies to reduce pollution and to improve water quality

Participants also support the call for an advice and scientific framework for Member State administrations in support of the development of the Eel Management Plans, and urge the European Commission to take the initiative to move this forward. Such a framework would coordinate and support the development of specific management plans for river basins all

over Europe. Furthermore, it might facilitate communication among different stakeholders, including the fishing sector, water managers, hydropower industry and others.

The following areas need to be addressed in the joint management approach:

#### *Hydropower installations*

- The high mortality of eels in hydropower installations and turbines promptly need to be reduced by the hydropower sector, exploring possibilities such as bypasses, selection of turbines and operational measures [ie seasonal or daily interruptions]. Responsibility for this must be placed on the hydropower companies.
- Actions to reduce mortality in hydropower installations must not be jeopardized by current political efforts to address climate change.

#### *Habitat restoration*

- Further efforts to restore suitable habitats and improve water quality are needed across the EU, addressing issues such as loss of wetlands, obstacles to migration and pollution. In order to do this in a cost-effective manner, it might be necessary to identify priority river basins of importance for the eel population with possibilities for some rapid improvements. Additional funding will need to be provided by the EU and national Governments, for example through the new European Fisheries Fund (EFF).

#### *Fishing mortality*

- Necessary restrictions of the EU eel fisheries need to apply to fishing of all life stages, and not exempt any particular part of the sector, nor recreational fishing.
- The current wastage caused by high mortality rates and low quality of much of the glass eel catch must be improved through changes in fishing practices and technical solutions that increase survival.
- Part of the glass eel catch has to be used for restocking purposes in order to increase the spawning stock biomass. The socio-economic consequences of this action have to be shared by all stakeholders in the fishing and aquaculture sector, and the need for government funding will have to be looked at.

#### *Trade and Illegal fishing*

- The illegal fishing (poaching) of eel at all life stages, but particularly in the glass eel fishery, has to be addressed immediately.
- We urge the EU and other Parties to support the proposal for listing of European eel under CITES Appendix II at the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties in June 2007, in order to reduce in particular illegal catch by regulating the international (external-EU) trade in eel.

#### *Lack of knowledge*

- Current work to increase knowledge and understanding of the eel biology needs to continue, in particular attempts to assess the success of restocking efforts and their effectiveness in increasing spawning success.

- Efforts to breed European eel in captivity are ongoing. Successful breeding has not yet been achieved. If and when this is achieved, it is crucial to regulate the use of cultivated eel, to ensure that the natural population is not adversely affected and that the aquaculture sector shifts to using cultivated glass eels.

*FISH is a Swedish NGO-secretariat dedicated to work towards more sustainable fisheries at an international level.*