

Protecting the eel stock

10 November 2017

Dear Minister

In response to the result of the Fisheries Council meeting on October 9th with regards to postponing the ban of fishing for eel in the Baltic Sea, we the undersigned would like to follow up on the proposal to address the critical state of the European eel on an EU wide level. To ban the fishing on adult eels to allow them to spawn is clearly supported by science¹, it is in line with the main objective of the Common Fisheries Policy², the Convention on Biological Diversity, the EU 7th Environmental program, the Convention on Migratory Species and of course the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14.

We appreciate that Member States are now envisaging EU wide measures, instead of only adopting a Baltic Sea fisheries ban, to be discussed at the December Council meeting. We would be interested in the possible measures that will be considered. The CFP goal of reaching MSY by 2020 and to halt all further loss of biodiversity is something all Member States have committed to, and the eel clearly falls under the scope of the CFP. The most [recent advice from ICES from 7th of November](#) 2017 shows that recruitment is now at an extreme 1,6% of the long term average in the North Sea and 8.7% in the Elsewhere Europe series.

Following scientific advice, CFP objectives, conventions and environmental goals, we ask you to establish the following EU wide measures:

- Closing of the fishery for adult eels, in all EU waters, including fresh water. Only addressing marine fisheries is not sufficient nor constitutes a fair distribution of responsibility between Member States.
- Ensuring free migration routes in all European Rivers with historical data of migratory eels.
- Only stocking eel for pure conservation purposes. Stocking cannot be allowed as a compensatory measure for eels killed in hydropower plants or by fisheries. Stocking should also not be done in tributaries with hydropower plants and any downstream fisheries.

We are aware that not all of these measures can be addressed through the Fisheries Council meeting in December. A thorough revision of the eel recovery plan from 2007 is imperative, **but addressing the critical threat of fisheries here and now is necessary for the recovery of the eel.**

In this respect we would kindly ask you to reply to the following questions before the Council meeting in December:

1. Do you agree that the state of the European eel is critical and that eel must have better protection than what the current recovery plan provides?
2. What further measures do you envisage in addition to closing the EU-wide marine fisheries?
3. What measures will you take at a national level to further protect the European eel?

¹ ICES advice to reduce all anthropogenic impacts as close to zero as possible. Same advice since 2008

² Main objective of the 2013 CFP to ensure the sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources, incl. diadromous species during the marine part of their lifecycle. For analytical stocks this means achieving F_{MSY} by 2020 at the latest

We look forward to your reply and welcome your support to the recovery of the European eel.

Yours sincerely,

