

A joint NGO proposal to EU Ministers regarding European eel

On December 17th and 18th 2018 the EU Fisheries Council (AGRIFISH) will decide on fishing opportunities for 2019 and will address measures for critically endangered European eel. ICES has yet again repeated their advice that: *“all anthropogenic impacts (e.g. caused by recreational and commercial fishing on all stages, hydropower, pumping stations, and pollution) that decrease production and escapement of silver eels should be reduced to – or kept as close to – zero as possible in 2019”* [[ICES Advice 7th November 2018](#)].

We call upon the EU Commission and Member States to act accordingly in light of this advice, the same advice ICES has given for over 15 years. Last year’s Fisheries Council, agreeing on the urgency to improve the stock status and acknowledging that eel do fall under CFP and the TAC and quota regulation, decided to create a 3-month closure period for eel and agreed on a [Declaration](#) that among a number of points specifically notes:

[...]“Understanding that the recovery of the stock requires measures in all natural eel habitats in the EU and during all stages of the eel life-cycle from the glass eel to the silver eel stage.”

Considering the content and intention of the Declaration and the scientific advice showing no recovery for the eel stock, the active fishery on all life stages of eel must be phased out until the eel stock has recovered.

We therefore ask the Commission and Member States to:

- ***list eel under prohibited species in the TAC and quota regulation decision, a prohibition valid in all EU waters and on all life stages of eel.***
- ***prohibit all recreational fishing in all waters of the critically endangered eel, starting summer 2019 to give sufficient time to inform the public of such a ban.***

Regarding fishery closure periods

The agreement last year to establish a partial fishery closure period for eels above 12 cm resulted in closed fishing during the least important catch months, i.e. November to January, reducing the effect of the ban in some cases to almost zero (e.g. Germany, data from Fed. Instit. Agriculture and Food, Hamburg. 2017 catch records show only 3% of total catches during Nov-Jan).

Recently, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) has agreed on an eel management plan based on its [Scientific Advice Committees proposal](#). This plan and proposed fisheries closure is more ambitious than what the EU Member States agreed on last year, covering recreational fishing, all life stages of eel and in all waters. If the Council would again venture into discussions of only agreeing on a closed period for eel, the GFCM plan must be the lowest acceptable level and the closed period must be set in a more relevant way.

If a continuation of a closure period is considered, it must be more effective and results oriented:

- ***Set a fishery closure period of at least 3 consecutive months in a period that, based on historic catch records, represents at least 50% of total catches on eel;***
- ***A closure period shall be set relevant for both adult eel (yellow and silver eel) and glass eel separately and include all water areas and at least all estuaries and lagoons.***
- ***Prohibit all recreational fishing in all waters on the critically endangered eel starting summer 2019 to give sufficient time to inform the public of such a ban.***

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References

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