

Conf. 20.3

Trade, conservation and management of anguillid eel species (*Anguilla* spp.)

RECOGNIZING there is significant international demand for and trade in specimens of anguillid eels, and this can vary depending on the availability of certain species;

NOTING that anguillid eel species are traded internationally at several life stages, both live and processed - as juvenile/fingerling eels for consumption, restocking and aquaculture, as larger specimens both wild-caught and from aquaculture, and as processed products;

RECOGNIZING the important role anguillid eel species play in their ecosystems and in promoting the long-term conservation and restoration of these ecosystems;

RECOGNIZING that well managed populations of anguillid eel species can support sustainable fisheries and contribute to sustainable livelihoods, food security and development;

RECOGNIZING the important role that sustainably managed populations of anguillid eel species play in supporting the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, and international trade and the conservation of anguillid eel species;

NOTING common threats to anguillid eel species, including unsustainable and/or illegal fisheries and associated trade, lack of appropriate domestic regulatory measures, habitat degradation or loss, barriers to migration including hydropower, disease and parasites, invasive species, pollution, and oceanic and climate change;

CONCERNED that some anguillid eel species have poor conservation status, including low juvenile recruitment, and the aforementioned threats have contributed to this status;

CONCERNED that anguillid eels are illegally traded on a global scale, driving declines in eel populations and the economic value for the legal eel trade as well as undermining anguillid eel conservation;

RECOGNIZING that anguillid eels are semelparous and panmictic across their natural ranges with multiple life stages often migrating through different jurisdictions and therefore require international collaboration for successful conservation and management, including aligning domestic measures, where appropriate;

RECALLING that coastal States in whose waters anguillid eel species spend the greater part of their life cycle have a responsibility for the management of this species in accordance with the paragraph 1, Article 67 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;

RECALLING that European eel has been listed in CITES Appendix II since 2009 and in the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) Appendix II since 2015;

ACKNOWLEDGING certain difficulties in identification among different anguillid eel species across life stages and specimen types, including parts and derivatives. However, glass eels are morphologically identifiable and rapid DNA identification technologies have been developed;

COMMENDING the efforts to date towards improved fisheries management and legal, traceable and sustainable trade of anguillid eels, including national or regional trade restrictions; and

WELCOMING the availability of updated CITES guidance on the making of non-detriment findings (NDFs) for trade in CITES specimens from the NDF workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya (December 2023), applicable to anguillid eel species;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. RECOMMENDS Parties, especially range States of anguillid eel species and Parties involved in their trade, to:
 - a) strengthen sub-national, bilateral, and multilateral co-ordination and information sharing within and between countries involved in international trade in anguillid eels to improve traceability and the effectiveness of enforcement measures;

- b) identify knowledge gaps that contribute to uncertainty relating to population status and hinder effective conservation and management of anguillid eels, including prioritising species-specific research and data collection in all life stages, trade patterns and volumes and mitigation measures for addressing direct and indirect threats;
 - c) ensure appropriate monitoring of anguillid eel populations, including use of fishery-dependent and fishery-independent methods, and share the results and other relevant data on the status of anguillid eel populations with the appropriate bodies (e.g., regional fisheries or other bodies with management authority) so that a current assessment of the state of anguillid eel stocks can be established and updated on a regular basis;
 - d) collaborate and share information with other Parties regarding any non-detriment finding or other sustainability studies and fisheries management best practice on anguillid eel species they have undertaken, especially where the Parties share catchments or water bodies, and explore the different approaches that might be taken for making non-detriment findings for species traded as fingerlings (FIG) compared with those traded as other live eels (LIV), seeking the review and advice from the Animals Committee or other suitable bodies on any non-detriment findings, where appropriate;
 - e) develop and/or implement adaptive eel management plans with defined and time-bound goals at national, sub-national, or catchment level to enhance collaboration between authorities and other stakeholders with responsibilities for eel management both within and, where water bodies or catchments are shared, between States;
 - f) provide the Secretariat with information regarding new or updated measures, including quotas, that have been implemented to restrict the trade in live anguillid eels or their parts and derivatives at any life stage; and
 - g) report trade in CITES-listed anguillid eels at species-level and differentiated by life stage (as set out in the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports) and consider modifying their national customs code system to differentiate between different eel products and life stages;
2. URGES Parties in which illegal harvest or trade of anguillid eel species occurs to strengthen existing measures that safeguard the effective implementation of the Convention, ensuring that the trade in CITES-listed anguillid eels is legal, sustainable and traceable;
 3. RECOMMENDS that Parties in which illegal harvest or trade of anguillid eels species occurs:
 - a) if not yet in place, develop and enact legislation and other enforcement measures to address illegal harvest or trade in anguillid eel species;
 - b) collaborate with national and sub-national enforcement authorities and fisheries bodies to ensure that measures are in place to adequately address and tackle any illegal trade, such as evaluating the data and cases of illegal trade for anguillid eels and adapting, where appropriate, fisheries management and authorisations to reduce unsustainable and/or illegal harvest and eliminate opportunities for illegal trade; and
 - c) identify opportunities for collaboration amongst law enforcement agencies, at the national, sub-national, and international level, on investigative and prosecutorial best practice for addressing illegal trade of anguillid species, to characterise illegal trade routes and share intelligence to support enforcement efforts;
 4. URGES Parties, due to limited understanding of the stock recruitment relationship for CITES-listed eel species, to not authorise exports, re-exports or imports of eels with source code R (ranching), unless there is sufficient scientific evidence that the definition of ranching as included in Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15) on *Ranching and trade in ranched specimens of species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II* is met, including requirement for NDFs;
 5. ENCOURAGES Parties to improve coordination between the respective national focal points for other relevant national or international bodies or instruments, such as the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, or CMS, where appropriate, and work through the respective mechanisms to strengthen research, training and data collection and harmonize with activities under CITES;

6. ENCOURAGES Parties to engage with relevant stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and sub-national authorities, in the development and/or implementation of conservation strategies and management plans for anguillid eel species;
7. INVITES Parties to share via the Secretariat any additional science-based conservation actions that have been implemented or are being considered to address non-harvest threats and improve the conservation status of anguillid eel species, such as altered hydrology, barriers to migration, habitat loss, pollution, parasites, disease, invasive species or climate change. This should include metrics used to assess the effectiveness of such measures;
8. INVITES Parties to share with other range States any lessons learned or best practices pertaining to the implementation of effective management and population monitoring of anguillid eels, and encourage Parties to exchange scientific, management, responsible fisheries and enforcement best practices;
9. INVITES Parties to provide information to the Secretariat on the implementation of this Resolution related to CITES-listed anguillid species and, where available, other anguillid species, to allow the Secretariat to provide recommendations to Parties via the Animals Committee or Standing Committee, as appropriate; and
10. REQUESTS the Secretariat to make relevant information on the trade and conservation of anguillid eel species provided by Parties or others, including any relevant information provided under paragraph 1 of this Resolution, available on the CITES website and provide recommendations to Parties via the Animals Committee or Standing Committee, as appropriate.