

## **WGEEL – Joint GFCM/EIFAAC/ICES Working Group on Eels**

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2013/2/ACOM18 The **Joint GFCM/EIFAAC/ICES Working Group on Eels** (WGEEL), chaired by Alan Walker, UK, will meet at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy from 3-7 November 2014 to:

- a) Assess the latest trends in recruitment, stock and fisheries, including effort, and other anthropogenic factors indicative of the status of the stock, and report to ACOM, EIFAAC and GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee on the state of the international stock and its mortality;
- b) Review the life-history traits and mortality factors by ecoregion;
- c) Overview of available data and gaps for stock assessment
- d) Identification of suitable tools (models, reference points etc) in both data rich and data poor situations
- e) Further develop the stock–recruitment relationship and associated reference points, using the latest available data;
- f) Explore the standardization of methods for data collection, analysis and assessment, and work with ICES DataCentre to develop a database appropriate to eel along ICES standards (and wider geography);
- g) Provide guidance on management measures that can be applied to both EU and non-EU waters;
- h) Address the generic EG ToR from ACOM.

WGEEL will report by 24 November 2014 for the attention of ACOM, WGRECORDS, SSGEF and FAO, EIFAAC and GFCM.

## Supporting Information

Priority	<p>In 2007, the EU published the Regulation establishing measures for the recovery of the eel stock (EC 1100/2007). This introduced new challenges for the Working Group, requiring development of new methodologies for local and regional stock assessments and evaluation of the status of the stock at the international level.</p> <p>In its Forward Focus (2011), WGEEL mapped out a process for post-evaluation of the EU Regulation, based on 2012 reporting to the EU by Member States, including an international assessment of the status of the stock and the levels of anthropogenic mortalities.</p> <p>The 2012 and 2013 meetings of WGEEL were the first step in this process. The WGEEL meetings in 2013 highlighted the following main issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-lack of standardization of the methods used by MS to estimate the required stock indicators</li> <li>-lack of quality assessment of the assessment methods and reported stock indicators</li> <li>-incomplete reporting by MS of the required stock indicators to the EU in 2012, and to ICES in 2013</li> <li>-lack of stock indicators of countries that are outside the EU but inside the natural range of the European eel (i.e. north African countries)</li> </ul> <p>In its Forward Focus (2013), WGEEL mapped out a process how (some of) the current limitations of the assessment process could be improved before the next EMP evaluation in 2015. In order to complete the international stock assessment, countries must be committed to this process in order for it to succeed. The international assessment would be improved if it could include information from outside the EU. ICES and the WG will continue to work with relevant countries and umbrella institutions (e.g. GFCM) to facilitate the provision of these indicators.</p>
Scientific justification	<p>European eel life history is complex and atypical among aquatic species. The stock is genetically panmictic and data indicate random arrival of adults in the spawning area. The continental eel stock is widely distributed and there are strong local and regional differences in population dynamics and local stock structures. Fisheries on all continental life stages take place throughout the distribution area. Local impacts by fisheries vary from almost nil to heavy overexploitation. Other forms of anthropogenic mortality (e.g. hydropower, pumping stations) also impact on eel and vary in distribution and local relevance.</p> <p>Exploitation that leaves 30% of the virgin spawning–stock biomass is generally considered to be a reasonable target for escapement. The EC Regulation set a limit for silver eel escapement to the sea of at least 40 % of the silver eel biomass relative to the best estimate of escapement that would have existed if no anthropogenic influences had impacted the stock.</p> <p>WGEEL (ICES, 2010a; Annex 5) recommended that Eel Management Plan reporting must provide the following biomass and anthropogenic mortality data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<math>B_{\text{post}}</math>, the biomass of the escapement in the assessment year;</li> <li>-<math>B_0</math>, the biomass of the escapement in the pristine state. Alternatively, one could specify <math>B_{\text{lim}}</math>, the 40% limit of <math>B_0</math>, as set in the Eel Regulation;</li> <li>-<math>B_{\text{best}}</math>, the estimated potential biomass in the assessment year, assuming no anthropogenic impacts (and without stocking) have occurred and from all potentially available habitats.</li> <li>-<math>\sum A</math>, the estimation of <math>B_{\text{best}}</math> will require an estimate of <math>A</math> (anthropogenic mortality (e.g. catch, turbines)) for density-independent cases, and a more complex analysis for density-dependent cases.</li> </ul> <p>Most but not all EU Member States reported quantitative estimates of the required stock indicators to the EU in 2012. The reliability and accuracy of these data have not yet been fully evaluated. Furthermore, the stock indicators of all non-European countries that lay within the natural range of the European eel are lacking.</p>
Resource requirements	Sharepoint; Access to the EU Commission evaluations of EMP progress reports.
Participants	ICES, GFCM and EIFAAC Working Group Participants, Invited Country Administrations, EU representative, Invited specialists
Secretariat facilities	Support to organize the logistics of the meeting.
Financial	At countries expense
Linkages to advisory committees	ACOM
Linkages to other committees or groups	WGRECORDS, SCICOM, SSGEF
Linkages to other organizations	FAO EIFAAC, GFCM, EU DG-MARE, EU DG-ENV