

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 3-8 February 2025

Species conservation and trade

Aquatic species

Eels (*Anguilla spp.*)

REPORT OF THE INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP

1. This document has been submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as the Chair of the Standing Committee working group on *Eels (Anguilla spp.)*.*

Background

2. At its 19th meeting (Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 19.218 to 19.221 on *Eels (Anguilla spp.)*, as follows:

Directed to Range States of European eels (*Anguilla anguilla*), transit and importing Parties

19.218 *Range States of European eels (*Anguilla anguilla*), transit and importing Parties are encouraged to:*

- a) *strengthen co-ordination between range States, (re-)exporting and importing Parties to improve traceability and effective enforcement measures for trade in *Anguilla spp.*, particularly the European eel;*
- b) *submit any non-detriment finding studies on European eels they have undertaken to the Secretariat for inclusion on the CITES website; explore the different approaches that might be taken for making non-detriment findings for European eels traded as fingerlings (FIG) compared with those traded as other live eels (LIV); collaborate and share information with other Parties regarding such studies and their outcome, especially where the Parties share catchments or water bodies; seek review and advice from the Animals Committee or other suitable body on any non-detriment findings for European eels, where appropriate;*
- c) *develop and/or implement adaptive European eel management plans at national or sub-national (or catchment) level, with defined and time-bound goals, and enhance collaboration within countries between authorities and other stakeholders with responsibilities for eel management, and between countries where water bodies or catchments are shared;*
- d) *implement the reporting recommendations in document SC75 Doc. 12 to ensure that, where possible, trade in Anguillid eels is reported at species-level and differentiated by life stage (as set out in the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports);*

* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

- e) *share information on stock assessments, harvests, the results of monitoring and other relevant data with the Joint Working Group on Eels (WGEEL) of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission, the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas and the Central Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (EIFAAC/ICES/GFCM), so that a full and complete picture of the state of the European eel stock can be established;*
- f) *develop measures or implement more effectively existing measures to improve the traceability or assessment of legal acquisition of eels in trade (both live and dead) and aquaculture and share these with the Secretariat;*
- g) *provide the Secretariat with information regarding any changes to measures they have in place to restrict the trade in live 'glass' or fingerling European eels;*
- h) *share with the Secretariat, where available, protocols and guidelines for reintroduction of seized live European eels to the wild; and*
- i) *provide information to the Secretariat on the implementation of this Decision or any updates to the information previously submitted in response to Notification to the Parties No. 2021/018 on eels, to allow it to report to the Animals Committee and Standing Committee, as appropriate.*

Directed to the Secretariat

19.219 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *issue a Notification inviting range States of European eels (*Anguilla anguilla*), transit and importing Parties to submit to the Secretariat information on the implementation of Decision 19.218, any information sought in Notification No. 2021/018 not already provided or any updates to the information previously submitted in response to Notification to the Parties No. 2021/018 on eels, especially information on current levels of, or emerging trends in, trade in specimens of *Anguilla* spp.;*
- b) *prepare and submit a summary of the responses to Notification to the Parties No. 2021/018 on eels, including any updates provided under Decision 19.218, with draft recommendations on the conservation and management of European eels to the Animals Committee and draft recommendations to improve implementation of the Convention for European eels to the Standing Committee, for their consideration; and*
- c) *submit the study prepared in the implementation of Decision 18.199, paragraph d), on levels of trade and trade patterns, especially in live eels for aquaculture, and sources of supply, identify any disparities between these, and draft recommendations for the more effective future management of harvests and trade for consideration by the Animals Committee and Standing Committee, as appropriate.*

Directed to the Animals Committee

19.220 *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *if requested, consider any reports submitted by Parties with respect to the making of non-detriment findings for trade in European eels and provide advice and guidance as needed; and*
- b) *consider the study referred to in paragraph c) of Decision 19.219, the report produced by the Secretariat under paragraph b) of Decision 19.219 and make recommendations to improve the conservation and management of European eels, for consideration by the Standing Committee or the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

19.221 *The Standing Committee shall:*

- a) *consider the report prepared by the Secretariat and any other available information relating to illegal trade in European eels and make recommendations as appropriate;*

- b) *review any advice and recommendations from the Animals Committee concerning Decision 19.220 and make recommendations to improve the implementation of the Convention for European eels and the applicability of developing a specific Resolution to the Parties or the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate;*
 - c) *with the assistance of the Secretariat, engage with the World Customs Organization to examine the feasibility of harmonizing customs codes relevant to trade in all Anguilla species; and*
 - d) *report on the implementation of this Decision to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*
3. At the 32nd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC32, Geneva, June 2023), the Committee considered document [AC32 Doc. 36](#), which was prepared by the Secretariat and agreed to establish an intersessional working group with the mandate presented in the summary record (see page 36, [AC32 SR](#)).
4. At the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC77, Geneva, November 2023), the Committee considered document [SC77 Doc. 66](#) on *Eels (Anguilla spp.)* and agreed to establish an intersessional working group with the following mandate and membership:
- a) *review the Secretariat's summary of the responses to Notification to the Parties No. 2021/018 and Notification to the Parties No. 2023/062 on eels, including any updates provided under Decision 19.218 and any recommendations from the Secretariat to improve the implementation of the Convention for European eels;*
 - b) *consider the recommendations of the Animals Committee;*
 - c) *consider the applicability of developing a specific Resolution on European eel; and*
 - d) *make draft recommendations to improve the implementation of the Convention for European eel for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 78th meeting.*

Membership

Chair: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Chair)¹:

Parties: Australia, Canada, China, Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America; and

IGOs and NGOs: Convention on Migratory Species, International Union for Conservation of Nature; Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Global Guardian Trust, World Wide Fund for Nature, and Zoological Society of London.

5. The Standing Committee also invited the views of the Animals Committee on the possible development of a specific resolution on European eels or a Resolution on the genus *Anguilla* spp.
6. Following SC77, the Chair of the Animals Committee agreed to amend the mandate of the Animals Committee intersessional working group on eels so that it would also consider the potential development of a specific resolution on European eels or a Resolution on the genus *Anguilla* spp..
7. At the 33rd meeting of the Animals Committee (AC33, Geneva, July 2024), the Committee considered the report of the AC working group in document [AC33 Doc. 40](#) and agreed to the following (see [AC33 Summary record](#)).

The Animals Committee:

¹ *The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was identified as the Chair after SC77 following consultations with the members of the working group.*

- a) *requested that China, Cuba, Egypt and Türkiye submit detailed information on trade in eels for consideration at the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee, and invited the Standing Committee to propose a specific draft decision directed to those Parties that do not respond, seeking this information;*
- b) *noted the information in paragraph 11 of document AC33 Doc. 40 concerning the potential use of source code R (ranching) for specimens of European eel (A. anguilla) from aquaculture production systems;*
- c) *agreed to propose the following draft decision to renew the unfinished task to discuss the potential risks and benefits of reintroducing seized live European eels into the wild to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties; and*

Directed to the Animals Committee

20.AA *The Animals Committee shall:*

- a) *review the potential risks and benefits of reintroducing seized, live European eels to the wild; and*
 - b) *make recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee or the 21st meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.*
 - d) *agreed to convey the contents of paragraphs 13 and 14 to the Standing Committee for its consideration, through its intersessional working group on eels, noting the need for refinement.*
8. Paragraph 13 of document AC33 Doc. 40 states that “Concerning the potential development of a specific resolution on European eels or a Resolution on the genus *Anguilla* spp, the working group concluded that regardless of whether or not a future CoP decides to list additional *Anguilla* species, the remit of the Resolution should cover the entire genus, as it is not possible to separate the problems associated with the implementation of the listing of *Anguilla anguilla* from wider issues.”
 9. Paragraph 14 of document AC33 Doc. 40 consists of a list of topics with associated comments that might be considered for inclusion in a potential Resolution on eels.

Standing Committee intersessional working group discussions

10. The joint intersessional working group worked via electronic means through its mandate, taking into account document AC33 Doc. 40 and the outcomes of AC33 (see AC33 [summary record](#)).

Paragraph a) of the mandate

11. The working group considered the information in the Secretariat’s summary of the responses to Notification to the Parties No. 2021/018 and Notification to the Parties No. 2023/062, and the additional information provided by China to the Secretariat after the Secretariat’s summary was produced. This information was factored into the discussion on the other points of the working group mandate.

Paragraph b) of the mandate

12. The working group reviewed the recommendations of the Animals Committee captured in document [AC33 Doc 40](#) and agenda item 40 in the [summary record](#) from AC33. Discussion in the working group focused on the agreed AC recommendations a) and c) which contain draft decisions for the Standing Committee to consider, paragraph 11 of document AC33 Doc 40 which contains information noted by the AC relating to the applicability of source code R (Ranching) to eels and paragraphs 13 and 14 which contain the views of AC33 regarding the potential development of a specific Resolution on eels.
13. The working group agreed with the draft decisions proposed by AC33 in recommendations a) and c), and these are included in Annex 1 to this document as draft decisions 20.BB and 20.DD respectively with additions to the text proposed by AC33 to support reporting to and from the Animals Committee. The information on ranching and a specific Resolution on eels was considered against paragraph c) of the mandate.

Paragraph c) of the mandate

14. The working group considered the need for a specific Resolution on eels and whether this should be for European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), as the only anguillid eel species currently listed in the CITES Appendices, or a genus-level Resolution. The working group also reflected on the Animals Committee recommendation that any eel-specific Resolution should be at genus level with the rationale set out in paragraph 8 above. There was a general consensus within the working group that a specific Resolution for eels would be beneficial and should be at genus-level. There was also support for the suggestions in paragraph 14 of document AC33 Doc. 40 outlining topics that could be considered in the development of a specific Resolution for eels, although several working group members noted that the list was too extensive, went beyond the mandate of CITES or should be limited to those relevant to the conservation of eels.
15. The working group drew on the AC suggestions in paragraph 14 of document AC33 Doc. 40 on potential Resolution scope, previous CITES Decisions or recommendations relating to eels and other taxa specific CITES Resolutions to develop a draft Resolution for the Standing Committee to consider. This is included in Annex 2 to this document and incorporates the suggestions of the working group members provided within the time available to the group.
16. Regarding ranching and the views of AC33 captured in paragraph 11 of AC33 Doc 40, the working group agreed that this should be included in the draft Resolution but was not able to agree specific wording for SC78 to consider. The points discussed by the working group are included below and the Standing Committee is invited to consider including language on ranching in the draft Resolution in Annex 2.
 - a) Based on information available, ranching may not be generally appropriate for aquaculture of anguillid eels.
 - b) There may be local circumstances or conditions which mean that the criteria for ranching set out in Resolution Conf. 11.16 (Rev. CoP15) can be met.
 - c) The use of source code R (Ranching) for anguillid eels may be a beneficial way to differentiate in CITES trade data adult specimens produced in aquaculture from those that have been wild-caught.
17. The working group also supported the inclusion of a reference to the draft IUCN Conservation Translocation Specialist Group guidance on *Guidelines on Responsible Translocation of Displaced Organisms* under current paragraph 2 (with suggested text included below) in principle, however, considered it premature to reference this guidance while it is in draft and Parties have not had a chance to consider a final published version. SC78 or CoP20 are encouraged to consider including a reference to this guidance in any draft resolution if a final version has become available. If a reference to this guidance is added to the draft resolution by SC78 or CoP20, the necessity of paragraph a) of draft Decision 20.DD included in Annex 1, as recommended by AC33 and supported by the working group, should be considered.

2. *RECOMMENDS that Parties in which illegal harvest or trade of anguillid eels species occurs:*

[...]

x) utilise the IUCN Conservation Translocation Specialist Group Guidelines on Responsible Translocation of Displaced Organisms for any planned reintroductions of seized live eels into the wild or any planned restocking projects that support harvest and/or trade;

18. A further draft decision 20.EE has been included in Annex 1 to provide the Standing Committee with a role after CoP20 in the review of the implementation of the Convention for anguillid eels. This will allow the Standing Committee to provide CoP21 with recommendations.

Paragraph d) of the mandate

19. The working group has provided recommendations below in fulfilment of its mandate.

Recommendations

20. The Standing Committee is invited to:
 - a) take note of the present document;

- b) propose the draft decisions contained in Annex 1 and the draft resolution contained in Annex 2, considering the points set out in paragraphs 16 and 17 of this document, to CoP20;
- c) propose to CoP20 that Decisions 19.218 to 221 can be deleted.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON *EELS (ANGUILLA SPP.)*

Directed to Parties and relevant stakeholders

20.AA Parties and relevant stakeholders are invited to provide information to the Secretariat on the implementation of Resolution Conf. 20.XX on *Trade, conservation and management of anguillid eel species (Anguilla spp.)*.

Directed to Cuba, Egypt and Türkiye

20.BB Cuba, Egypt and Türkiye are requested to submit to the Secretariat up-to-date detailed information on trade in eels using the templates provided in Notification to the Parties No. 2021/018, to allow it to report to the Animals Committee and Standing Committee, as appropriate.

Directed to the Secretariat

20.CC The Secretariat shall:

- a) subject to extrabudgetary resources, develop a dedicated page on the CITES website to make relevant information on the trade and conservation of anguillid eel species or activities relating to the implementation of Resolution Conf. 20.XX on *Trade, conservation and management of anguillid eel species (Anguilla spp.)* provided by Parties or others, available; and
- b) bring any updated information received under Decision 20.BB and the results of activities under Resolution Conf. 20.XX on *Trade, conservation and management of anguillid eel species (Anguilla spp.)* to the attention of the Animals Committee or Standing Committee, with recommendations, as appropriate.

Directed to the Animals Committee

20.DD The Animals Committee shall:

- a) review the potential risks and benefits of reintroducing seized, live European eels to the wild;
- b) consider any information brought to its attention by the Secretariat under Decision 20.BB, paragraph b); and
- c) make recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee or the 21st meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

Directed to the Standing Committee

20.EE The Standing Committee shall:

- a) review the comments and recommendations provided by the Animals Committee and the Secretariat under Decisions 20.AA to 20.DD; and
- b) prepare a report with any necessary recommendations for improving the implementation of the Convention for anguillid eels, including possible amendments to Resolution Conf. 20.XX on *Trade, conservation and management of anguillid eel species (Anguilla spp.)*, for consideration by the 21st meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

**DRAFT RESOLUTION ON 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 anguillid eel species can support sustainable fisheries and contribute to sustainable livelihoods, food security and development;

RECOGNIZING the important role that sustainably managed anguillid eel species play in supporting the rights of Indigenous peoples, local communities, and international trade that does not threaten the conservation status of anguillid eel species;

NOTING common threats to anguillid eel species, including unsustainable and/or illegal fisheries and 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 ALSO that CITES-listed anguillid eel species are trafficked internationally as non-CITES-listed anguillid eel species contrary to the requirements of the Convention, 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;

RECOGNIZING the duty of all States to cooperate, either directly or through appropriate sub-regional or regional organizations in the conservation and management of anguillid eels;

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 the difficulties in identification among different anguillid eel species across life stages and specimen types, including parts and derivatives, notably where domestic trade, traceability, and management measures are insufficient to support such identification;

COMMENDING the efforts to date towards improved fisheries management and legal, traceable and sustainable trade of anguillid eels, including national or regional trade restrictions for particular species; 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. URGES 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 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 regional fisheries bodies 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. 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) 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;
 - c) 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
 - d) identify opportunities to collaborate internationally amongst law enforcement agencies on investigative and prosecutorial best practice for addressing illegal trade of *Anguilla* species, to characterise illegal trade routes and share intelligence to support enforcement efforts;
3. ENCOURAGES Parties to improve coordination between the respective national focal points for other relevant international bodies or instruments, such as Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) or CMS, where appropriate, and work through the respective mechanisms to strengthen research, training and data collection and harmonize with activities under CITES;
4. ENCOURAGES Parties to engage with relevant stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, in the development and/or implementation of conservation strategies and management plans for anguillid eel species.

5. 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.
6. 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 other relevant aquatic species.
7. INVITES Parties to provide information to the Secretariat on the implementation of this Resolution to allow the Secretariat to provide recommendations to Parties via the Animals Committee or Standing Committee, as appropriate.
8. 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.