

European Eel

(wild and farmed)



Biology facts

Depth Range	demersal, catadromous, 0–700 m
Max Age	88 years
Maturity Age	6-30 years
Max Size	133 cm
Max Weight	6.6 kg
Prey	zoobenthos, nekton, detritus, plants
Other	European Eel is known to be long-lived and eels only spawn once in their lifetime. According to scientists, such characteristics make Eel stocks highly vulnerable to fishing pressure.

Fishery Facts

Latin Name	<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>
Fishing Method	scoop nets, fixed nets, traps, seine, hook & line, eel spears and aquaculture
Annual catch	Aquacultur production 8 375 t (2006)
Main fishing nations	In 2002, the top three producing countries of farmed European Eels were the Netherlands, Italy, and Denmark.

Main Concerns

- There is one single European stock. This is severely depleted and at a historical minimum which continues to decline (Fish Online, ICES 2007). Recruitment is at a historically low level (1-5% of the pre-1980 level) and most recent observations do not indicate recovery.
- ICES recommends that all exploitation should be reduced to as low as possible until there are clear signs of recovery (ICES 2007). An EU regulation in September 2007 has given measures for the recovery of the eel stock with

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the objective of the protection and sustainable use of the stock of European Eel (EU 2007).

- Eels have a difficult life cycle, migrating huge distances & only breed and produce eggs once in their lifetimes. The European species are CITES listed. Eels are threatened by overfishing, and habitat damage including damming and pollution. According to scientists, European Eel is highly to very highly vulnerable to fishing pressure (Fishbase).
- Aquaculture of Eel has increased rapidly since the mid 1980s and an increasing part of the glass Eel catches has been devoted to aquaculture in Holland, France and Italy. Farming of eel is dependent on the supply of juveniles (glass eels/elvers) from the wild (natureserve.org). For the feeding of farmed eels, 3.1-3.9 kg of wild-caught fish are needed to produce 1 kg of eel (Tacon 2005). This increases pressure on marine ecosystems rather than reducing it.

Main Sources

http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Anguilla_rostrata.html

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<http://www.fao.org/fishery/species/2203>

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http://www.fishonline.org/search/simple/?fish_id=141

<http://www.fishbase.org/Summary/speciesSummary.php?ID=35&genusname=Anguilla&speciesname=anguilla>

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<http://www.ices.dk/committe/acom/comwork/report/2007/oct/eel-eur.pdf>

<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?searchName=ANGUILLA+ROSTRATA>

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