Recovery of the stock of European eel

2005/0201(CNS) - 18/09/2007 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish measures for the recovery of Europe's eel stock.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel.

BACKGROUND: recent scientific research, conducted by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), indicates that the European eel fish stock is so depleted that it is now outside safe biological limits. This, in spite of a number of measures taken by the Member States to protect eel's natural habitat (minimum landing sizes, licensing of eel fishermen, regulating the construction of dam and eel passes, the EU Habitat Directive etc.) The ICES advises that, as a matter of urgency, a new recovery plan be developed for the whole stock of European eel and that exploitation and other human activities affecting the fishery or the stock be reduced as much as possible.

CONTENT: the purpose of this Regulation, therefore, is the establishment of a new framework for the protection and sustainable use of the stock of European eel. It refers specifically to the species *Anguilla anguilla* and covers Community waters, coastal lagoons, estuaries, rivers and communicating inland waters of the Member States that flow into the seas.

The main measures introduced by the Regulation are the following:

Establishing Eel Management Plans:

- each Member State is to establish a national management plan for each eel river basin allowing the escapement to the sea of an average of at least 40% of the biomassof adult eel;
- management plans must include details on how the targets were reached, monitoring activities and verifying that the objective have been attained;
- an eel management plan may contain, for example: reducing commercial fishing activity, restricting recreational fishing, restocking measures; transportation of silver eel from inland waters to waters from which they escape freely to the Sargasso Sea.

Transboundary Eel Management Plans:

- where Member States share river basins with other Member States, they should jointly prepare transboundary plans or endeavour to develop cooperation with third countries;

Reporting and Evaluation:

- each Member State must communicate its national plan by 31 December 2008 and to implement them by 1 July 2009 at the latest - following Commission approval;
- each Member States is to report, by 30 June 2012, and every 3 years thereafter, to the Commission the results of their national eel management plans;
- the Commission is to report by 31 December 2013 to the Parliament and the Council on the scientific evaluation of the eel management plans;
- Member States that allow for the fishing of eels under 12 cm must reserve 60% of the catches for restocking, starting at 35% in the first year of application of the eel management plan and increasing by steps of at least 5% per year to reach the level of 60% by 31 July 2013;

- the Commission will report annually on the evolution of market prices for “glass eels” and, if necessary, make proposals either to balance the measures concerning restocking or to intervene on the above mentioned percentages.

As regards the Black Sea and the river systems connected to it, the Commission will take a decision after consultation of the Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries by 31 December 2007 on whether these waters constitute natural habitats for the European eel in accordance with article 3 of the Regulation.

In a Joint Statement published upon approval of the Regulation, the Council and Commission specified that the objective of 40% escapement laid down is understood as an average for the Member States' waters, thus allowing a differentiation of the specific situation of different river basins.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 25 September 2007.