



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Director General

Brussels,
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Steve Karnicki
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Ole Toft
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Dear Sirs,

I am taking this opportunity to write to you in your capacity as Chairs of Baltfish and of the Baltic Sea Advisory Council. The Commission would like to consult you on the measures to take in 2018 in order to promote the recovery of eels.

As you know the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) has advised for more than a decade to cease all fishing and angling on European eels. Moreover on 8 May 2017 ICES issued a warning that this stock is in a critical state and therefore advised that "*... all anthropogenic mortality (e.g. recreational and commercial fishing on all stages, hydropower, pumping stations, and pollution) decreasing production and escapement of silver eels should be reduced to – or kept as close to – zero as possible.*" We have sent you the full ICES advice from 8 May 2017 last year.

Against this background, the Council of Ministers decided in December 2017 that all Member States from the Baltic Sea to the Atlantic Sea Region will implement a 3 months closure of eel marine commercial fisheries. Moreover, in line with the commitments made last December, the Commission launched the evaluation of the eel regulation and published a roadmap. Advisory Councils provided valuable input. We will also launch a public consultation on the draft evaluation report in autumn on which we strongly encourage you to participate. This evaluation will help us identify potential shortcomings in the design and implementation of the eel regulation, with a view to increasing its efficiency and ensure the recovery of the stock.

In the Mediterranean Sea, the Eel Regulation only applies to the EU Member States but the EU discusses with its international partners to promote management measures and ensure a level playing field. The EU and Tunisia are working in order to propose to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) to adopt a management plan during its annual session in October 2018. This plan will be inspired by the EU Regulation.

In light of the very severe advice by ICES and of the fact that this advice has in fact been upheld since 2003, it is likely that ICES will repeat its warning on the state of the eel stock again in 2018. It is with this in mind that the Commission would like to hear the views of your Advisory Council and of your Member State Group on how to best take the recovery of this important stock forward both for commercial as well as recreational activities for 2019, notably in the context of the Council Regulation on 2019 Fishing Opportunities to be adopted this year.

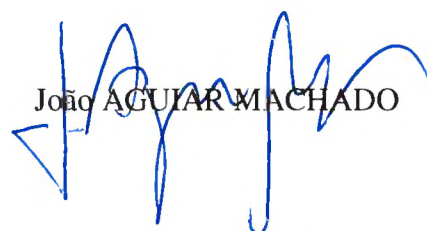
We would also welcome your assessment on how the measures decided in 2017 or other measures you might envisage could affect the fishermen and the recreational anglers engaged in the eel fishery. Moreover, we would welcome any information you could share with us on the number of recreational anglers catching eels and the level of their catches.

The Commission remains deeply committed to taking effective management measures to help improve the situation of this important stock for the sake of the fishermen and their families.

I would appreciate if you could consult your members on this important matter and could send us your position by 28 September 2018.

I very much look forward to our continued cooperation, and invite you to take contact with Ms Pascale Colson (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; +32 2 29 56273) should you have any question on this letter.

Yours sincerely,


João AGUIAR MACHADO