

Side event 9

Saving the European eel: best practices

Mediterranean Recovery Action (MedReAct)

The Fisheries Secretariat (FishSec)

In 2024, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is set to agree on long-term management measures for the critically endangered European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) in the region. With this in mind, MedReAct and FishSec, two organizations committed to the recovery of European eel populations in the Mediterranean and beyond, would like to take this opportunity to highlight the challenges that need to be addressed, new research that may inform future management and best practice examples.

Mediterranean Recovery Action is a non-profit organization dedicated to the recovery of fish stocks and vulnerable marine habitats and species of the Mediterranean Sea. The Fisheries Secretariat (FishSec) is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of marine ecosystem services, with a focus on sustainable fisheries, and has a long track record of advocating for the recovery of European eel. Together, they have been following the GFCM work on the management of European eel in the Mediterranean region since 2021, but also engage at the European Union level and in the Baltic region.

According to the most recent advice published by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea there is no sign of improvement in the population status of European eel and “when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be zero catches in all habitats in 2024. This applies to both recreational and commercial catches and includes catches of glass eels for restocking and aquaculture”.

The GFCM has been a trailblazer in recent years, at the forefront of European Union measures to support the recovery of European eel, and these efforts are set to continue.

Draft agenda
22 February 2024
12.00–14.00

12.00 Opening

12.15 Why the management of European eel in the Mediterranean is important to us and to the recovery of eel – Domitilla Senni, Director, MedReAct

- An overview of MedReAct and FishSec work on European eel in the Mediterranean and the EU, and the importance of the GFCM's future management measures

12.30 The evolving story of catadromy in the European eel – Caroline Durif, Principal Research Scientist, Institute of Marine Research, Norway

- Recent work on alternative life strategies of European eel involving shifting between fresh, brackish and saltwater, as well as reflecting on the Norwegian strategy to close all fishing for European eel

12.50 Sustainable management of the European eel stock in the Mediterranean Sea: case of the Kingdom of Morocco – Ms Zakia Driouich Sebbata, Secretary General of the Ministry of Maritime Fisheries, Morocco

- Best practice management for a long-term recovery of the eel population in the region and lessons learnt at national level

13.10 Baltic and European Union eel recovery from an ecosystem-perspective – Niki Sporrang, Senior Policy Officer and Eel Project Manager, FishSec

- An overview of eel management plans in four Baltic countries, an update on the European Union-wide implementation of the temporary eel fishing closures and other European Union processes

13.25 Q&A session

13.35 Final conclusion and remarks

At the end of the programmed event there is an opportunity to have something to eat and drink, talk to the speakers and look at the informational materials provided.

This event will be held in English and French.

Notes on the speakers

Caroline Durif, PhD, Principal Research Scientist, Institute of Marine Research, Norway

Caroline Durif is a natural scientist with a long-standing interest in eel, focusing on ecology, life history and migration. She is currently Co-Chair of the Joint EIFAAC/ICES/GFCM Working Group on Eels.

Zakia Driouich Sebbata, Secretary General of the Ministry of Maritime Fisheries, Morocco

Zakia Driouich Sebbata was appointed as Secretary General in 2013. Prior to this, she held several positions of responsibility, including director of fishing industries in 2005, before taking charge of the fisheries and aquaculture department in 2008. Ms Driouich has a career spanning more than 30 years; among her most notable achievements is the implementation and management of the sectoral strategy for the development of the fishing sector in Morocco “Halieutis”. She led negotiations relating to fishing agreements linking Morocco to the European Union, Japan and the Russian Federation, among others. Her name is associated with major moments of transformation in the fishing sector in Morocco. Ms Driouich has also held several positions in regional or international fishing bodies, in particular, she held the second and first Vice-Presidency of International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas.

Domitilla Senni, Executive Director, MedReAct Foundation

Niki Sporrong, Senior Policy Officer and European Eel Project Manager, FishSec

Niki is a biologist by training and holds a second degree in journalism. She has been working with the environmental aspects of fisheries management and wider marine policy since 1997, initially for the World Wide Fund for Nature in Sweden and internationally, later for the Institute for European Environmental Policy in London and as the Director of FishSec from 2004–2014. Over this period, she worked on a wide range of fisheries issues, including the management of Baltic fish stocks and of European eel.