

Joint Press Release

Tokyo, 19 April 2019

On the occasion of the Twelfth Meeting of the Informal Consultation on International Cooperation for Conservation and Management of Japanese Eel Stock and Other Relevant Eel Species,

Recalling that People's Republic of China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Chinese Taipei are all Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economies;

Recognizing that the 2014 Joint Statement issued at the Seventh Meeting serves as a stepping stone towards further cooperation in the East Asian region,

Recalling every effort towards sustainable use of eel species after 2014 including the limit on eel seeds input into aquaculture ponds and the establishment of the Alliance for Sustainable Eel Aquaculture (ASEA),

Noting the decisions 17.186 to 17.189 of the 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES COP17),

Also noting the recommendation of the Regional Workshop on Japanese eel held in Tokyo, on 20-21 September 2018,

Sharing the view on importance of cooperating together towards the CITES COP 18 and COP19,

Mindful that Participants are willing to cooperate under the Framework of APEC Ocean and Fishery Working Group (OFWG);

Have reaffirmed the following common views:

- (1) Participants have cooperated on the conservation and management measures of Japanese eel stock and other relevant eel species as follows:
 - reviewed input, output and trade statistics of glass eels during the season 2018-2019 and noted input amount of glass eels of Japanese eel into aquaculture ponds in all Participants was lower than the upper limit stated in the 2014 Joint Statement;

- shared information on international and domestic circumstances related to eel species;
 - shared information on the domestic conservation and management measures that each
- Participants have been taken since 2014 joint statement as follows;

Japan:

Catch of glass eels is subject to licenses to be issued by the prefectural governments and duration of fishing season is limited. Catch of adult eels using certain fishing gears is subject to licenses to be issued by the prefectural governments. Variety of additional measures, such as gear restriction, upper limit of harvest for individual and time closure, have been introduced and implemented for catch of both glass and adult eels taking into account unique situation in each Prefecture. In June 2015, the licensing system was introduced to eel aquaculture, under the Inland Water Fishery Promotion Act. The amount of initial input of eel seeds is restricted by eel species and allocated for each individual farmer under this Act. Since 2006, continuous efforts have been made for the purpose of the creation and conservation of a favorable riverine environment, based on the concept of “Nature-oriented river works” representing conservation and regeneration of the environment as habitat, growing and spawning grounds that rivers intrinsically have, which has become a basic idea for management of river.

The number of prefectures which prohibit the catch of silver eel is increasing, bearing in mind the resolution taken by National Federation of Inland Waters Fishing Ground Management Commissions and National Federation of Inland water Fisheries Cooperatives in 2018 to take measures for conservation of silver eels in all prefectures as soon as possible. Further, the Fisheries Agency of Japan will launch a project in 2019 in order to improve a traceability of Japanese eel from a catch of glass eel through to an input into aquaculture pond.

Republic of Korea:

Time closure and size limit of catch were introduced by the government in January 2017 and have been in force since July 2017 for the management of eel stocks. Eel fishery is prohibited from 1 October to 31 March in the following year. And the catch of eels between 15cm and 45cm is prohibited all year long. Korea is also in the process of establishing a legislation to switch eel aquaculture business from a reporting system to a permissive system. Aquaculture Industry Development Act was submitted on 28 December 2016 and is now pending at the National Assembly.

In 2018, Korea developed and installed “fishway (pathway)” for eels in some of the artificial structures such as estuary banks and sea walls which prevent or block the natural migration of eels, in order to provide more favorable environments to eels. Korea will continue this research or initiative in 2019 and remains committed to exploring possible conservation and management options for eels.

Chinese Taipei:

With a view to protect the habitats of eels, Yilan County, the traditional major glass eel harvest region has prohibited the young and adult eel fishing. In addition, it has already prohibited the catch of young and adult eels in 33 rivers of other regions.

With regard to the glass eel fishing, glass eel fishing is only permitted from November to February (The traditional fishing season for glass eel is from October to April). A license system has also been introduced to vessels fishing for glass eel.

As for the export control, export of glass eels is prohibited from November to March.

With regard to the control of eel farming activities, it has promulgated and amended regulations to enhance the control of eel farming activities since November 2014. As per the current regulations, the Fisheries Agency will review and announce the amount of glass eels to be input by fish farmers annually, and each fish farmer is subject to the control and management of license system and individual input limit. The upper limit for glass eel input for Japanese eel is set at 10 metric tons, while the upper limit for other relevant eel species is also set at 10 metric tons.

For stock enhancement, it also releases Japanese and other relevant eels into the wild.

(2) Participants renewed their commitments to make the utmost efforts as follows;

- to further strengthen conservation and management measures of Japanese eel stock and other relevant eel species and closely work together in this regard;
- to promote and collaborate on scientific research on Japanese eel;
- to regularly hold scientific meetings on Japanese eel in order to share knowledge and experience, as well to provide scientific advice for conservation and management measures of the species;
- to restrict initial input of glass eels and eel fries of Japanese eel taken from the wild into aquaculture ponds in 2019-2020 input season up to 80% of that of the 2013-2014 input season;
- to take every possible measure not to increase the amount of initial input of seeds of eel species other than Japanese eels from the level stated in the 2014 Joint Statement;
- to make continued efforts individually and/or jointly to improve traceability and transparency in domestic and international eel trade, taking into consideration of the outcomes on the thirtieth meeting of CITES Animal Committee;
- to closely cooperate with other international instruments;
- to consider possible establishment of a legally binding framework;
- to further cooperate towards CITES-COP18 and COP19;
- to encourage voluntary actions to be taken by the private sector in line with the above-mentioned measures.

Attachment:

- Statistics about catch and input of glass eels and trade of any stages of eels
- Summary table of conservation and management measures for eels