

## Joint Press Release

June 27, 2021

On the occasion of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Informal Consultation on International Cooperation for Conservation and Management of Japanese Eel Stock and Other Relevant Eel Species (Informal Consultation), which took place through communication via email due to the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19),

The Fisheries Agency of Japan, the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea and the Fisheries Agency of Chinese Taipei (hereinafter referred to as “Participants”),

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 18.197 to 18.202, in particular the Decision 18.198, of the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES COP18),

Sharing the view on importance of cooperating together towards the 74<sup>th</sup> meeting of CITES Standing Committee (SC74) 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 2020-2021 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. In April 2020, the total input of eel seeds in Japan getting close to the upper limit, the Fisheries Agency of Japan directed prefectural governments to make the licenses expired to halt the catch of glass eels. 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 take measures for conservation of silver eels in all prefectures as soon as possible. In 2019, the Fisheries Agency of Japan launched a project in order to improve a traceability of Japanese eel from a catch of glass eel through to an input into aquaculture pond as well as a research project with the goal of future development of a Japanese eel population assessment. In March 2020, Japan intended to hold a scientific meeting inviting eel experts from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and Zoological Society of London (ZSL), with attendance of China, Korea, and Chinese Taipei, but canceled it due to COVID-19. In accordance with the amendment of the Fishery Act in December 2020, the government of Japan considerably strengthened the penal provisions in order to prevent poaching by giving great disadvantage to offenders. After December 2023, the penalty for catching glass eels without a fishing permit will be an imprisonment of up to 3 years or a fine of not more than 30 million Japanese yen. In February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, Japan amended the Regulations on Export Approvals for Glass Eels to promote the sustainable use of eel species under international

cooperation. In accordance with the Regulations, before an export approval, the Fisheries Agency of Japan confirms appropriateness of the export of glass eels for conservation and management of eel species, including all international agreements and arrangements that Japan has participated in are complied. In addition, the approval period of export was changed from “May 1st to November 30th” to “year-around” from February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 based on the Regulations.

#### 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 also changed the administrative system for eel aquaculture operation from the “reporting system” to a “permission system.” The relevant legislation that provided a legal background for this change was established on August 27, 2019 and took effect as from August 28, 2020.

In 2018, Korea developed and installed “fishway (pathway or ladders)” 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. These pathways have been in good use ever since. Korea plans to expand the coverage of fish ladders to 40 river basins in the mid-to-long term. Korea will continue this research or initiative in 2021 and remains committed to exploring possible conservation and management options for eels. The medium to long-term plans also include the improvements in relevant systems and designation of specialized research agencies so that eel stock assessments can be undertaken nation-wide, in order to conserve and protect the Japanese eel stock.

#### 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 35 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 hold the 1st scientific meeting on Japanese eel in late 2021; thereafter regularly hold those meetings, in order to share scientific knowledge and experience, as well as 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 2021-2022 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 of the CITES-COP 18;
- to closely cooperate with other international instruments;
- to consider possible establishment of a legally binding framework;
- to further cooperate towards SC74 and COP19;
- to encourage voluntary actions to be taken by the private sector in line with the above-mentioned measures; and
- to take every effort to request China to reinstall in the Informal Consultation and to positively collaborate with other members in conducting relevant activities mentioned above.

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