NDF WORKSHOP
**WG 8 – Fishes**
**CASE STUDY 2 SUMMARY**
*Anguilla anguilla*
Country – **Sweden**
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# NON DETRIMENT FINDINGS FOR THE EUROPEAN EEL - THE SWEDISH CASE

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Already in the late 19th century there were indications of a decrease in the Baltic eel population. The knowledge of this continuing decline was then brought to a wider audience at an international symposium on eel in 1976. The interest was then mainly focused on the obvious reduction in recruitment to Swedish rivers. The decline in recruitment and stock continued and from about 1980 it accelerated all over continental Europe. This is probably the case in all range states (>40) where *Anguilla anguilla* occurs naturally. There is probably no single cause but several working together. Overfishing, migration obstacles, turbine mortalities, persistent pollutants, fluctuations in ocean currents and a general decrease in accessible growing areas are proposed as causes of the decline. After a long and slow process including bodies like EIFAC, ICES, national agencies, governments and others, and finally the European Commission, the eel has now become red listed as CR (Critically Endangered), not only in Sweden (since 2005) but also internationally since 2008. The European eel is now the subject for a mandatory eel regulation issued by the European Council in 2007 (EC 1100/2007). This regulation will be implemented in July 2009. In 2007 the European eel was listed as an Appendix II species by CITES and trade regulations will come in force in March 2009.

Trade within EU will not be influenced directly by this CITES listing but to be allowed to export to third countries, i.e. outside the EU, or between non EU countries an NDF has to be found, i.e. a scientifically based permit stating that the specimen was legally obtained and that export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species. There are the IUCN Guidelines how and when to formulate a NDF, based on the status, knowledge and threats related to the species in question. However, this concept has not yet been applied to the European eel to its full extent. So far, most work towards the conservation of the species is based on the compilation and analyses of relevant data on the population done by the joint EIFAC/ICES Working Group on Eel.

Detailed data on the population of *Anguilla anguilla* are scarce and most work is based on trends in recruitment and stock and those in turn are based on relative recruitment indices and commercial catch data. When, e.g. the eel was red listed as CR in Sweden in 2005, the criteria of the decline were applied on such relative data and indices. When trying to apply for the IUCN checklist one could conclude that we have quite a good knowledge of the biology of this widespread species, but that it is not that tolerant to human activities. There is also an inadequate control, a lack of effective management, monitoring and protection. As both the species and the eel fisheries are often scattered and that the fisheries are performed on a small

scale by a single fisherman working on his own, the incentives for management and protection are probably quite weak.

Though absolute data are scarce today the EU Regulation demands much more data be collected, not only on biology and trends, but also concerning the fishing efforts, trade and a request for traceability. The European Commission will in 2012 make their first evaluation on the outcome and results of all measures implemented from July 2009 and onwards in all member states, respectively. This improved bank on eel data may then give a better basis for all range states when preparing NDFs, irrespective if on a regional or on a species wide scale. However, with today's knowledge on *Anguilla anguilla* it seems improbable any state could state that an export for consumption or for aquaculture could be done without jeopardising the survival of the species.