



THE NETHERLANDS EEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, NATURE AND FOOD QUALITY

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1. DESCRIPTION OF EEL HABITATS (MANAGEMENT UNITS)

1.1. Eel management units

The management unit for the implementation of the Eel Management Plan is the national territory of the Netherlands, including the coastal waters in the Dutch Exclusive Economic Zone. The scientific justification is provided below. The Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) is the authority that is directly responsible for the eel fisheries management in the entire country.

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Surveillance for compliance for the Minister of LNV is carried out on behalf of the minister by the General Inspection Service (Algemene Inspectiedienst = AID) and the national police service (KLPD).

Inventory of individual river basins

The Netherlands is located in the estuaries of a mix of rivers ending in the North Sea. The country recognises four river basins, all extending beyond the national boundaries:

1. The river **Ems** basin in the North-East is shared with Germany. The drainage area is 18,000km², 2,400km² in the Netherlands.
2. The river **Rhine** basin is shared with Germany, Luxemburg, Switzerland, France, Austria and Liechtenstein. The drainage area is 185,000km², of which 25,000km² is in the Netherlands.
3. The river **Meuse** basin covers Belgium, Luxemburg, France and Germany. The drainage area is 35,000km², of this 8,000km² is in the territory of the Netherlands.
4. The river **Scheldt** basin in the Southwest shared with Belgium and France. The drainage area is 22,000km², with 1,860km² being in the Netherlands.

Scientific justification for designating the Netherlands as one administrative unit

- Mixing of different water basins

The country of the Netherlands is situated in the joint delta and estuarine area of four major rivers. All rivers are intertwined and confluent. Downstream, the Rhine and Meuse in fact have a complete anastomosis. Outlets of the Meuse have been redirected through former outlets of the Scheldt. The fourth river is the river Ems, the edge of whose basin downstream is in the far northeast of the Netherlands. The mouth of the river Ems in the Waddensea is quite close to the original northern outlets of the Rhine. In view of the above, sharp boundaries between river basins in the Netherlands for managing eel impacts appear neither practical nor appropriate, as long as management cannot yet be dealt with at an international level.

- International dimension of river basins

All four river basins have an international dimension. Despite the long collaboration between range states, the coordination for eel management plans is still rudimentary, since to date the

appropriate management bodies have been tailored to water quality rather than managing human impacts on eel.

1.2. Maps

The management unit for the implementation of the Eel Management Plan is the national territory of the Netherlands, including the coastal waters in the Dutch exclusive economic zone. This will be the case until the collaboration with the adjacent nations to establish management by river basin has been completed. Figure 1.2.1. depicts the national territory and the four different river basins that cover the national territory by colours. The Rhine covers the largest area in the central part of the country and is subdivided in the map in four parts: blue, yellow, red and purple. The Meuse (turquoise) is the second largest river and covers a large part of south and southeastern Netherlands. The river Ems (brown) touches the edge of the country in the northeastern part of the country, and the river Scheldt (olive green) coming from Belgium only the Southwestern province of Zeeland.

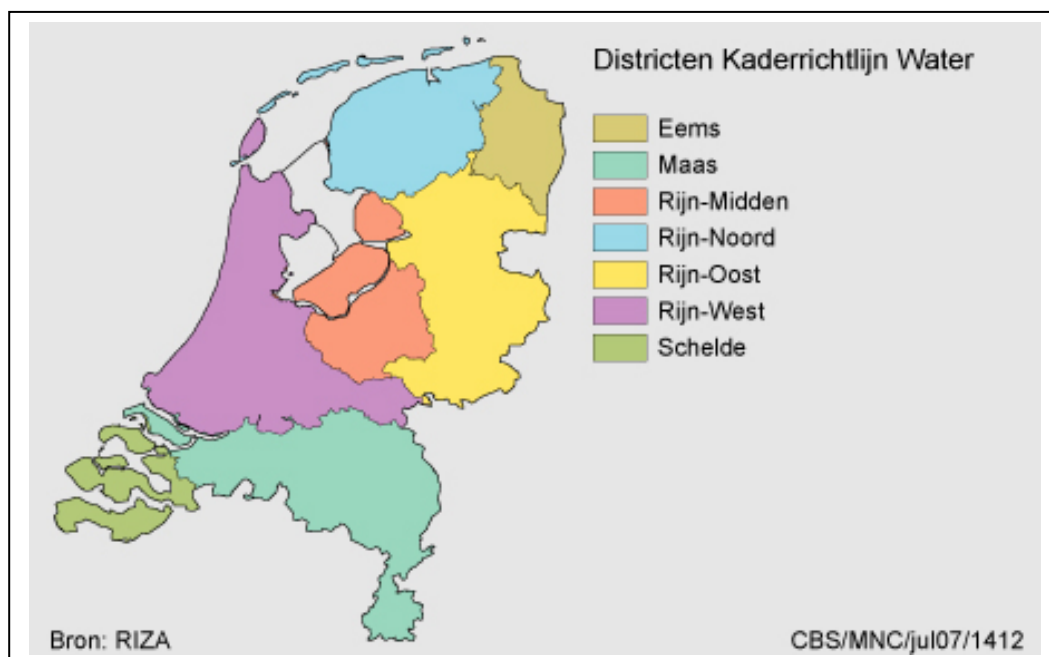


Figure 1.2.1. The geographical extent of the Eel Management Unit, the country of The Netherlands, depicted in the four main river basins.

1. **Ems** in the North East = brown,
2. **Meuse** in the South/Southeast = turquoise
3. **Rhine** in the North, Central & West, = subdivided in blue, yellow, red and purple
4. **Scheldt** in the Southwest = olive green

Maps that illustrate the four river basins covering the EMU in the Netherlands

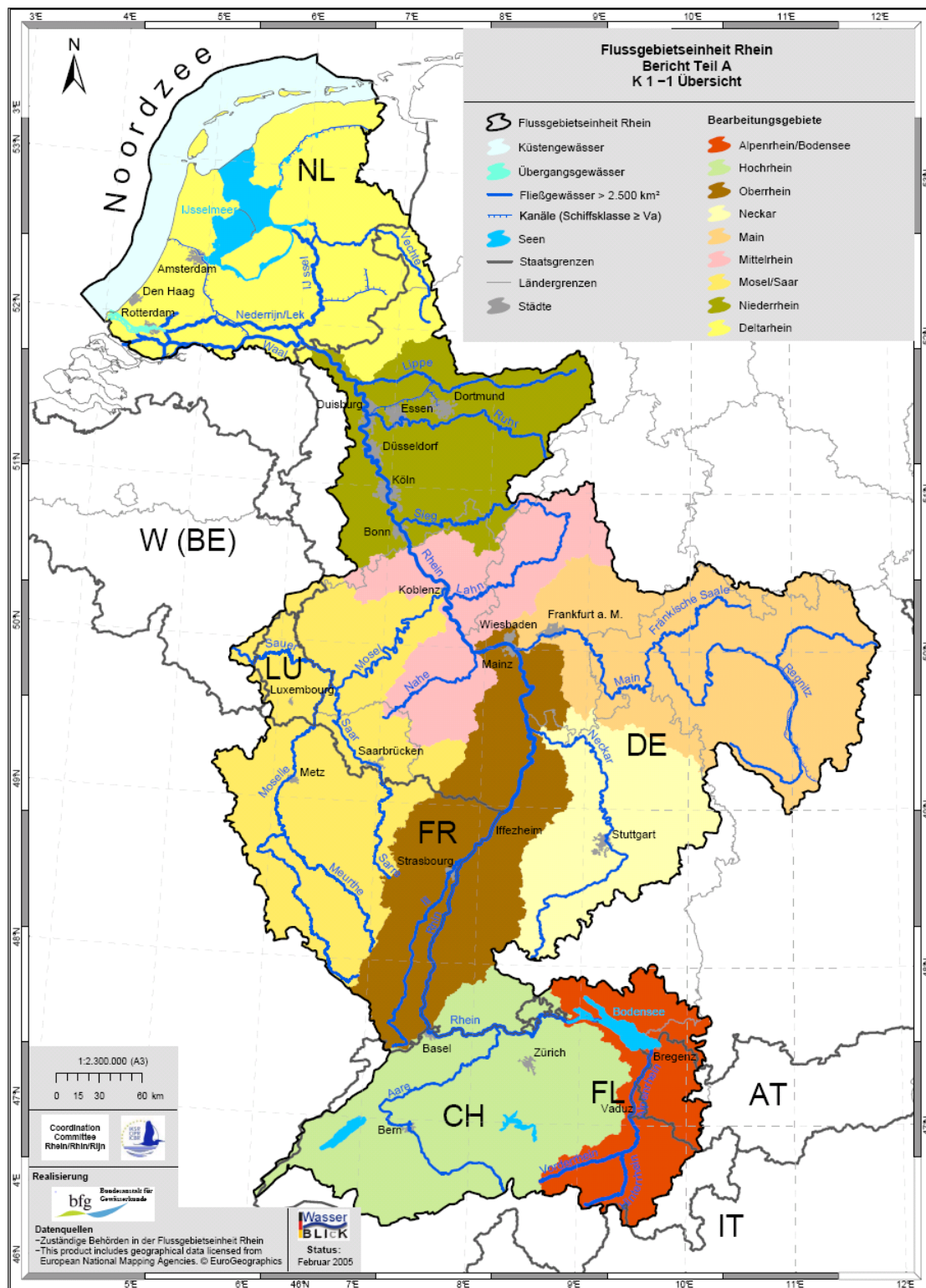


Figure 1.2.2. The Rhine river basin. Source: International Rhine Commission, www.iksr.org

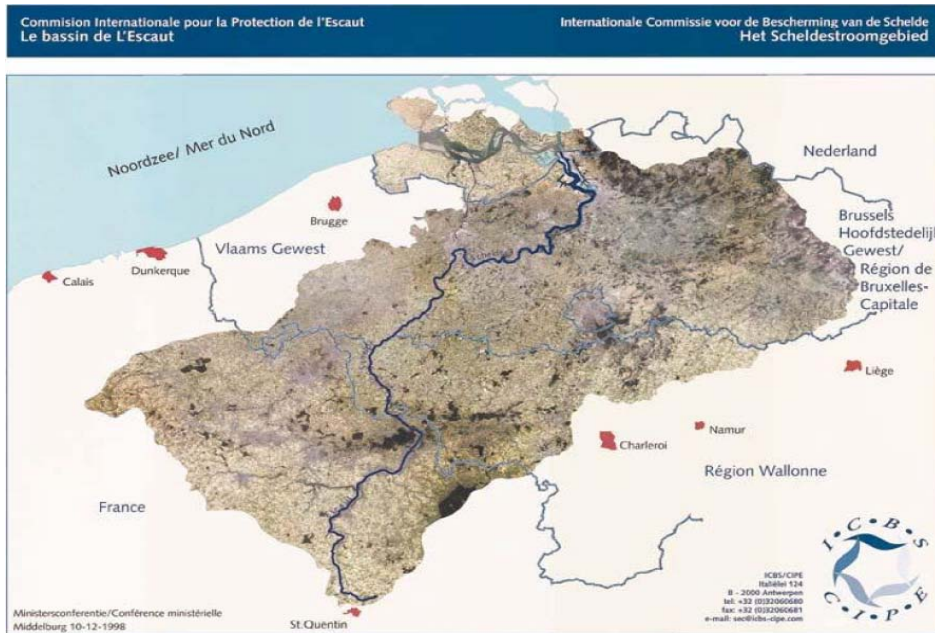


Figure 1.2.3. Scheldt River basin. Source: Scheldt Commission www.isc-cie.com



Figure 1.2.4.: The Meuse river basin. Source: International Meuse Commission, www.meuse-maas.be



Figure 1.2.5. The Ems river basin. Source: International Ems Commission, www.ems-eems.nl

Maps with the surface areas of the various eel habitat types in the Netherlands



Figure 1.2.6b. Biotope of the eel in the Netherlands, including in blue the type **water-lines** (*i.e.* streams, rivers, canals, etc.). The total length is about 10,000km. The biotope types M3, M30, M6, M10 and M7 (WFD-codes) contribute 88% of the total (Kroese et al., 2008).

The total number of physical obstacles for migrating eel is depicted in figure 1.2.7. This situation, dating from 2001, is used as a reference point in time for indicating the rate of reduction of their numbers over time as a contribution to improved eel habitat.

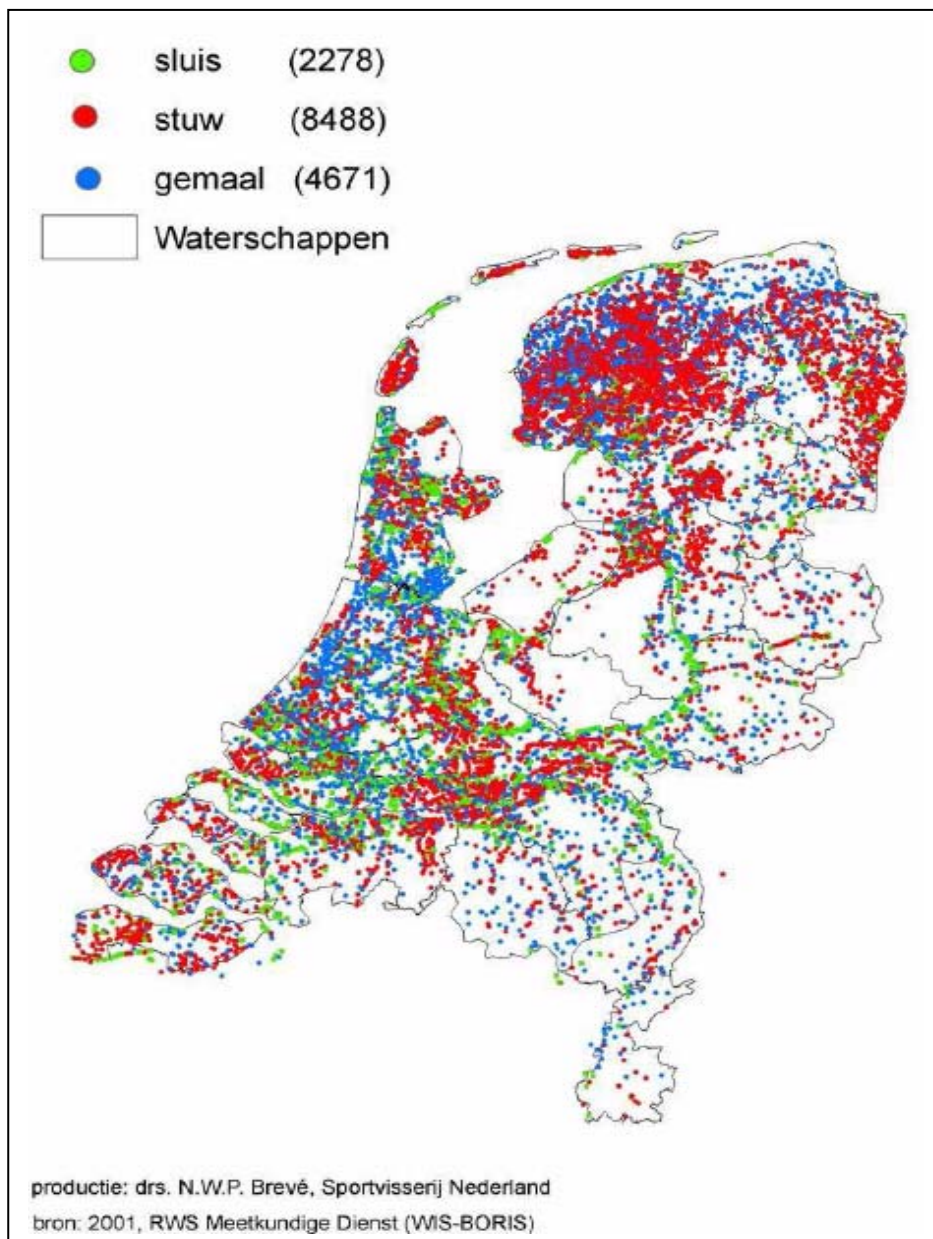


Figure 1.2.7. All identified physical obstacles for moving eel in the Netherlands. More than 13.000 absolute barriers are identified, in the form of 4671 pump stations (blue) and 8488 barriers/dams (red), many situated in small ditches. Green (locks) dots are not completely barring but may still form obstacles for passing eels. (Vriese et al., 2008).

Coastal and transitional waters

Coastal and transitional waters in the Dutch exclusive economic zone will also be managed under the Eel Management Unit. Measures directed at eel fisheries will equally apply to the fresh water zone as well as to the coastal and transitional waters (for example Wadden Sea, Estuaries in the South-West of the Netherlands) where commercial and/or recreational eel fishery is carried out. Direct measures for eel fisheries management in coastal and transitional waters will be managed within the EMU.

2. FOR EACH RIVER BASIN:

2.1. State whether river basins covered by the management plan are entirely in the national territory of the Netherlands

The Netherlands is located in the estuarine area of four different rivers that end in the North Sea. Four river basins are recognised as covering the Netherlands. All of the river basins in the Netherlands extend beyond the national boundaries. For reasons given in section 1), the Netherlands will provide one national eel management plan.

Meanwhile, discussion to integrate national eel management plans within international river basins management plans has started. The Ministry of LNV actively participates in the respective international committees for each of the four river basins:

International Ems Commission, www.ems-eems.nl

International Rhine Commission, www.iksr.org

International Scheldt Commission, www.isc-cie.com

International Meuse Commission, www.meuse-maas.be

The international river commissions have existed for a long time, the Rhine Commission being the oldest, dating from 1950. The commissions were originally installed by nations to jointly combat pollution levels (phenols, salt level, etc). Work was subsequently extended to water quality in generic terms, but it remained directed at the abiotic rather than biotic components of the river. Although this is of great relevance to the habitat quality of *inter alia* eel, the commissions have therefore never been directed at accommodating associated issues like fisheries management. This justifies this EMP to cover the Dutch national territories of each of the four river basins (see section 1).

The most advanced on this subject is the International Rhine Commission, where coordination of eel management plans has started in the form of information exchange and workplans. A joint historical distribution map by all Rhine range states for eel is currently in preparation, and an overview of all priority barriers for the entire Rhine river basin. Parties to the Rhine Commission will screen the EC Water Framework Directive on relevance for the EC Eel Directive in terms of restoration of habitats and improvement of water quality. The Rhine Commission will also produce a strategy for the coordination of its member states in terms of eel management plans, aiming at further integrating the respective eel management plans. The other three commissions are still in an early phase of coordinating their work on management to support eels or other fish.

2.2. The status quo of the eel population in the Dutch EMU

The present situation of the eel population in the Dutch territorial eel management unit is provided here in trends. Absolute densities have never been reliably estimated, due to the complexity of the eel distribution. New catch per unit effort (CPUE) series for eel were started in 1992, operated under national authority by the national research institute IMARES (formerly the RIVO fisheries institute).

In the Netherlands, eel fishing is concentrated in the following areas:

- The Waddensea (bordering the **river basins of Rhine and Ems**);

- Lake IJsselmeer (**Rhine basin**);
- two main rivers **Rhine and Meuse**;
- Zeeland province in the Southwest, where the rivers Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt flow into the North Sea (**basins of Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt**);
- remaining waters, 1340 km² of lakes, smaller rivers and canals (**all basins**).

There are four data series that contribute to the understanding of eel abundance and trends in abundance in The Netherlands:

- 1 The annual survey for glass eel in Den Oever has taken place since 1939. This location is in the middle of the Rhine estuary, indicator of the eel density in the river Rhine basin. Figure 2.2.1 shows the resulting time trend, both in terms of a moving average (grey area) and an annual index.
- 2 Surveys in the “IJsselmeer and Markermeer”, by far the largest water bodies in the Netherlands, with 100% coverage since 1992.
- 3 The “big rivers” survey, conducted since 1992, see figure 2.2.2.
- 4 Coastal waters survey. All coastal waters are sampled annually since the late 1960s. The survey is known as the Dutch Young Fish Survey, figure 2.2.3.

The yellow eel surveys are not representative for the whole River Basin Districts or the country, especially since the smaller water bodies (canals, polders, regional lakes) are not surveyed; these waters cover nearly 25 % of the total water surface, but probably constitute the preferred eel habitat. The main Rivers surveys are probably reasonably representative for the rivers. But Lake IJsselmeer and the main Rivers differ substantially, so it is not yet clear how the two should be weighted, and how the uncovered waters relate.

There are no routine surveys for silver eel in the Netherlands. In 2004-2007, the German states Nordrhein–Westfalen and Rheinland–Pfalz, and the Netherlands jointly conducted a silver eel tagging study in the Rhine, in order to (1) quantify the female part of the whole downstream migrating Rhine silver eel population independently from fisheries, and (2) determine the relevance of the different migration routes of these female migrants in the Lower Rhine, the mortalities during downstream migration and the escapement to the sea.

The length and consistency of the combined experimental time-series, which are all independent of fisheries, make them useful indicators of the eel population status. In particular the prolonged low numbers of glass eel indicate that the eel population is at an historic low.

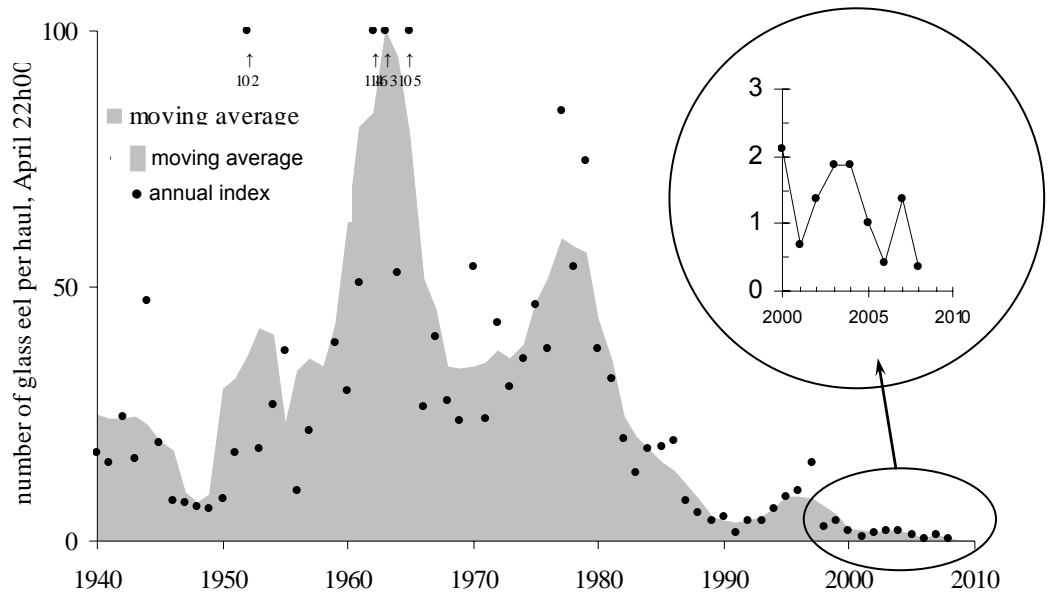


Figure 2.2.1. Time trend in glass eel surveys. The y-axis denotes the number of glass eels per haul at a set location over more than 60 years. Source: Dekker et al., 2008.

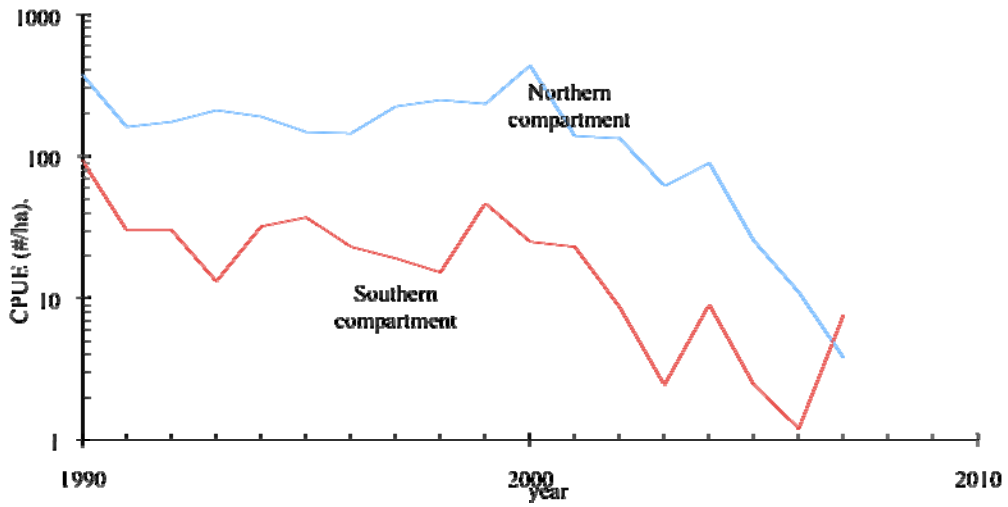


Figure 2.2.2. CPUE in two main water bodies, IJsselmeer and Markermeer, since 1990, presented as raw data per year. The downward trend is marked. All survey information from monitoring is site-specific (Dekker, 2008a).

It is generally acknowledged in the scientific community in the Netherlands that local eel densities are not necessarily representative of the eel abundance. The index of the glass eel survey (figure 2.2.1) should therefore be attributed more value than the other trends as indicator of eel abundance, at least in the Rhine.

Monitoring and registration intensity determines accuracy of population assessments and the impact of management measures. In addition, mark-recapture experiments have contributed to the present understanding of eel abundance in the Netherlands in Meuse and Rhine. Hundreds of silver eels were marked and recaptured down the stream. Enough numbers/recaptures can provide mortality estimates. A more reliable method is telemetry tagging, detecting individuals when passing detection stations.

In summary, while the available information does not allow a reliable estimate of the eel population status, the CPUE-indices and glass eel surveys confirm the existing circumstantial evidence that the current eel status is extremely low. The same conclusion can be drawn from current escapement levels, which are about a factor 10-15 lower than the estimated pre-1980 levels (see section 5.1).

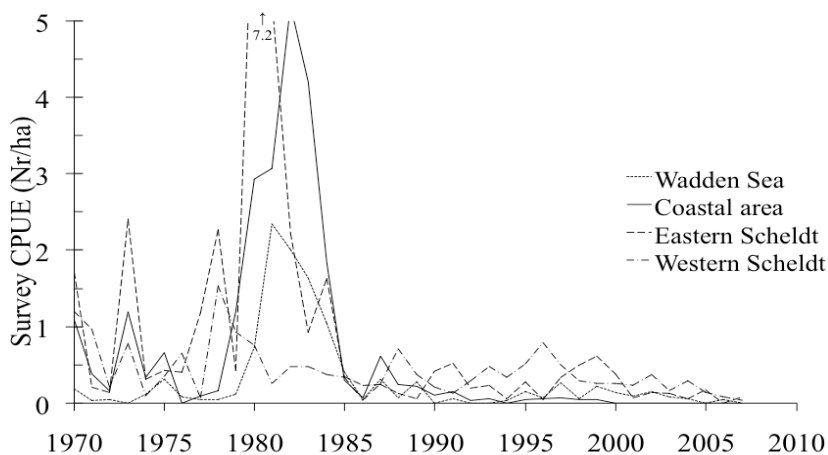


Figure 2.2.3. CPUE-series for eel in the Dutch Young Fish Surveys. Note that this survey is not dedicated to eel alone but to all young fish (Dekker et al. 2008).

2.3. Description of the eel fishery in each river basin

- A quantitative and qualitative description of the eel fishing units

Table 2.3.1 provides annual catches of professional eel fishery in 2004. Estimates are provided by river basin anticipating the collaboration for eel management by river catchment areas. There is no catch of glass eel in The Netherlands because the legal minimum size for eel fishery in the Netherlands is 28 cm.

Yellow eel		Rhine	Meuse	Scheldt	Ems	TOTAL
coastal		37	75		3	115
IJsselmeer		240				240
Large rivers		46	4			50
Other inland waters		222	4		9	235
Total		545	83		12	640
Silver eel						
coastal						
IJsselmeer		40				40
Large rivers		91	9			100
Other inland waters		133	2		5	140
Total		264	11		5	280
TOTAL EEL						
	total # of companies					
coastal	70	37	75		3	115
IJsselmeer	70 *	280				280
Large rivers	23	137	13			150
Other inland waters	58	555	6		14	375
Total	237	809	94		17	920

Table 2.3.1. Total estimated landings (tonnes) of professional eel fisheries in The Netherlands, per river catchment. This table is a rearrangement from Dekker, 2008. [* see text below]

Fishing units

Fishery in the water bodies of “IJsselmeer and Markermeer” is operated as an open access fishery, while the other fishing areas are categorised according to individual licence holders, based on spatial distribution of waters (territorial fisheries).

Table 2.3.1 lists the number of fishing companies with an eel fishing license, by fishing area. For marine waters and Lake IJsselmeer, a vessel register is kept, but for the other waters no central vessel registration is required because the vessels are very small. Registration of the number of gears owned or employed is available for Lake IJsselmeer, but lacking for other fishing areas. For Lake IJsselmeer, a maximum number of gears per company is enforced by authentic tags attached to individual gears, but the actual use is often much lower, *inter alia* since restrictions apply to the combinations of types of fishing gears.

Table 2.3.2. presents estimates of the numbers of gear-types and fishing units that are permitted/used in The Netherlands in 2007. Estimates are partly based on information, and partly extrapolated from this information. In the column “other inland waters”, there is no information for some 40% of the fishing units. Fishing effort can only be partly quantified, because some of the gear-types are not registered.

	IJsselmeer Markermeer	rivers	coastal waters, professionals	other inland waters	coastal waters, recreational	Total
Gear						
large fykes	1,579	155	-	+		> 1,734
cage fykes		163	574	+		> 737
shooting fykes	3193	2,433	273	+		> 9,052
small fykes		51		+		> 2,007
pots&traps	7415	551	+	+		> 7,966
longlines	11		+	+		+
electric scooping nets		+	-	+		+
other "eel-gear"				+		+
# of fishing units	70	28	48	around 100	978	around 1228
Area surface (ha)	169,150	20,867	354,959	134,966	354,959	679,942

Table 2.3.2. Gear-types used in the eel fisheries in the Netherlands, with estimates of the numbers used for each gear type.

Fishing effort

Current total fishing effort is not recorded, since in most of the country fishing capacity is not known. In areas where fishing capacity is known, no record has been kept of the actual usage of fishing gears. Consequently, no exact information is available on fishing effort. For Lake IJsselmeer, an estimate of the number of gears actually used is available for the years 1970-1988. In the mid 1980s, the number of fykes was capped, and reduced by 40 % in 1989 (see Dekker, 2008a). In 1992, the number of eel boxes was counted, and capped. Subsequently, the caps have been further reduced in several steps, the latest being a buy-out in 2006. Since the number of companies decreased at the same time, the nominal fishing effort per company has not reduced at the same rate, and underutilisation of the nominal effort probably still exists. The effort in the longline fishery is restricted by the number of licenses.

Quantitative description of the recreational fishing in inland waters

Note: The catch of recreational fishers discussed in this section is defined as the eel catch that is taken home, excluding eels that are returned to the water.

There are two determining factors in estimates of recreational eel fishing: the total number of fishermen and the total number of eel taken. The latter is dependent on the fishing frequency, which greatly varies amongst the fishermen. For mortality estimates from recreational fishermen, a derivative factor of interest would be the survival rate of those eel that are returned. The number of fishermen and the number of eel they take have been estimated in interview surveys in 2002, 2004 and 2006. In addition, an internet survey in 2007 was carried out by the fisheries institute IMARES.

Recreational catches of eel are not systematically recorded, and the order of magnitude is not well known. Surveys amongst fishermen about angler licensing in 2003 indicated that 350,000 out of 913,000 male anglers fish for eels; 57,500 of them take eels back home, in an average annual

quantity of 18 specimens, approx. 1 kg per capita per annum. The number of female anglers is much lower, but not exactly reported. Additionally, some 1000 individuals are licensed (by the minister of LNV) for recreational fishing in coastal waters on mixed species, including eel. This fishery makes use of professional gear such as fykes. In coastal communities the issuance of these licenses is considered as an historical right. Assuming 50 fishing days per year, and a daily catch of 0.5 kg per fyke, their catch will be in the order of 25 tonnes.

Snigglings is a form of angling especially targeted at eel. It is usually practiced at night, in the period spring-autumn.

Sea angling is becoming more popular in the Netherlands, and a survey was commissioned in 2006 amongst 30,000 households to investigate the intensity, frequency, participation, catches and expenses of sea angling (Vriese *et al.*, 2008). Less than 10% of the sea anglers lands eels. The data yield an estimate of 50-250 tonnes of landed eels per annum.

	Individual catch kg/year	# of individuals	Total catch tonnes/year
Recreational (small fykes)	25	1000	25
Snigglers [†]	2.650	3,773	10
Anglers inland	0.15	47,000-193,000	7.5-29
Anglers at sea	0.1-0.5	505,000	50-252
Totals		557,000-703,000	93-317

[†] translation: sniggle=peur.

Table 2.3.3. Breakdown of landed eels (eels taken home) by recreational fishing and the type of fisherman. Data from Vriese *et al.* (2008), Dekker *et al.* (2008) and guessed “estimates”.

A preliminary breakdown of catches by the type of fishers is given in Table 2.3.3. The total quantity of eels taken home has recently been analysed (Vriese *et al.*, 2008), by applying a range of correction factors on the available catch information. The authors arrive at an order of magnitude of 200-400t per annum, stating that circumstantial evidence indicates that the true figure may be rather closer to 200 tonnes.

2.4. Estimates of the potential downstream escapement in the absence of human factors and relationship with recent levels

Potential escapement levels

Human impacts on eels are centuries old, both in form of fisheries and of the human adaptations to waterways. Therefore, actual data on escapement levels in the absence of human factors do not exist.

Based on catch data from Lake IJssel fisheries, and samples of eels collected from the Lake IJssel fish auctions, Dekker *et al.* (2008) calculated the potential escapement of silver eel from this lake to be 3080 tonnes.

Subsequently, the potential escapement of silver eel from the Netherlands was estimated in a study by Klein Breitelers (2008). This analysis is based on historic fishery data (method Article 2, sub 5a of EC 1100/2007) and based on the potential production area for eel (method Article 2, sub 5b of EC 1100/2007).

The eel catch from fisheries is considered as the minimum estimate of the biological production. By this way the potential production for different water bodies is calculated:

- 10-16 kg/ha for small water bodies and canals
- 19-25 kg/ha for lakes
- 4 kg/ha for coastal waters
- 25 kg/ha for flowing waters.

The production area is given in Dekker (2007). The assessment included some major implications of human impact, namely the building of coastal dams and reclaiming land out of the Zuiderzee (Lake IJsselmeer), which was first closed from the Waddensea in 1932. In the original situation the eel production would have been lower because of the saline water conditions. Given the potential biases in both directions, the estimates for the total escapement without human impact are provided as 10,000-15,000 tonnes of silver eels. These are minimum estimates and the actual volumes may be twice as high (Klein Breiteler, 2008). The aspired escapement of silver eel would then become 40% of this, *i.e.* 4000-6,000 tonnes. In Annex 1 the full analysis of the potential downstream escapement from the Netherlands in the absence of anthropogenic mortalities is given.

However, following the publication of these reports a debate has started on the assumptions and used methods on which the above calculated escapement rate is based. An independent commission has reviewed this, and published a report “streefbeeld aal” (Eijsackers *et al.*, 2009). The commission concludes that the calculated escapement targets done by Dekker and Klein Breiteler are based on scientifically acceptable methods, but that these methods are less suitable for the calculation of a reference level without human impact. Furthermore, effects of factors like density-dependent growth and mortality, eutrofication and cormorants, have not been taken into account sufficiently. The commission therefore states that an exact escapement target can not be defined for the Netherlands because of a lack of available data, the high variation in eel numbers, and the large amount of factors that influence the eel numbers. Indicative, the commission argues that the aspired escapement of silver eel lies within the range of 2600-8100 MT, and most probably lower than the previously calculated rate of 4000-6000 tonnes.

Current escapement levels

The current escapement level from Lake IJssel is estimated at 11 ton (Dekker *et al.* 2008).

The current escapement level for the Netherlands was estimated using a combination of different methods: (1) calculation on the basis of a reference level, estimated trends and human induced mortality factors, (2) mark recapture studies, in recent years complemented in the form of telemetry, and (3) modelling exercises to back-calculate the original population size with estimates of current densities and mortality rate.

The available area for eel production has substantially changed in the 20th century, since with the building of dams and dykes in many places in the Netherlands, the fresh water area, and therefore the area available for eel production, increased dramatically, while at the same time the barriers for eels reaching those areas decreased. The estimation method is a combination of the processes in Article 2.5 of EC Regulation 1100/2007. Descriptions of the method are presented in Klein Breiteler (2008). While the expected precision of the estimates seems limited, the order of magnitude of the actual values is expected to be not entirely out of scale.

While recognising the high levels of uncertainty, the scientific authorities estimate the current escapement levels to be 400 tonnes of silver eel. Of this, about 200 tonnes originates from neighbouring countries, mostly from the Rhine basin, and 200 tonnes is produced in the Dutch national waters (Klein Breiteler, 2008).

Further details are given in Annex 1.

2.5. Conditions of the eel habitats and mortality sources other than fishing

Scale of eel habitat

On the basis of a GIS-analysis, the surface and length of habitat-types for eel have been estimated (Kroese *et al.*, 2008). Eel is found in all water categories (coastal, transitional, river, lakes as well as man-made water bodies). According to the Netherlands typology of water bodies developed for the WFD, the most likely river types for eel in the Netherlands are considered to be R5, R6, R7, R8 and R16. Rivers are both important as habitat and as migration corridors. The scale of the habitats can be measured using the M-categories that are the stagnant water bodies. The largest areas of eel-habitats are M21, M14, M27, M32 and M20, comprising 2575km² (88%) in total. Of the man-made waterways, types M3, M30, M6, M10 and M7 form 8800km (88%) of the total length which are both important habitats and migration routes. The coastal water types K1, K2 and K3 apply for eel, as does the transitional category O2.

Reduced tidal movements

The intensively regulated water systems in the Netherlands have resulted in major changes in the tidal systems in rivers and estuaries. This particularly took place in the 20th century, but already long before that have the Dutch been reclaiming land and building dams to regulate water, with serious impacts on freshwater fish populations including eel. Tidal effects on the edge of salt/fresh water have disappeared, due to redirected waterways, dams and barriers. The influx of glass eel is dependent on tidal currents in order to migrate up rivers, so this has serious consequences for local accumulations of glass eels in coastal zones (Dekker & van Willigen, 2000).

Barriers

The Netherlands is a densely populated country, with an intensive use of the natural resources. Situated in the joint delta of four different river basins, the country is extremely rich in waterways providing potential habitats for eel. The intensive use of the country has generated enormous numbers of barriers for eel migration, as can be seen in figure 2.5.1, which is both an update of figure 1.2.7 and at the same time a selection relevant for eel. It provides an overview of the available eel habitat, migration routes and physical barriers. The study (Buijse *et al.* 2008) concluded that of the 2700 identified barriers, 1800 are of particular importance for the migration of eels. The map shows within which time period certain barriers will be solved (red dots before 2010; purple dots before 2015; orange dots after 2015; black dots still to be planned). The green dots indicate that the barrier has been removed, or that a fish migration device has been installed.

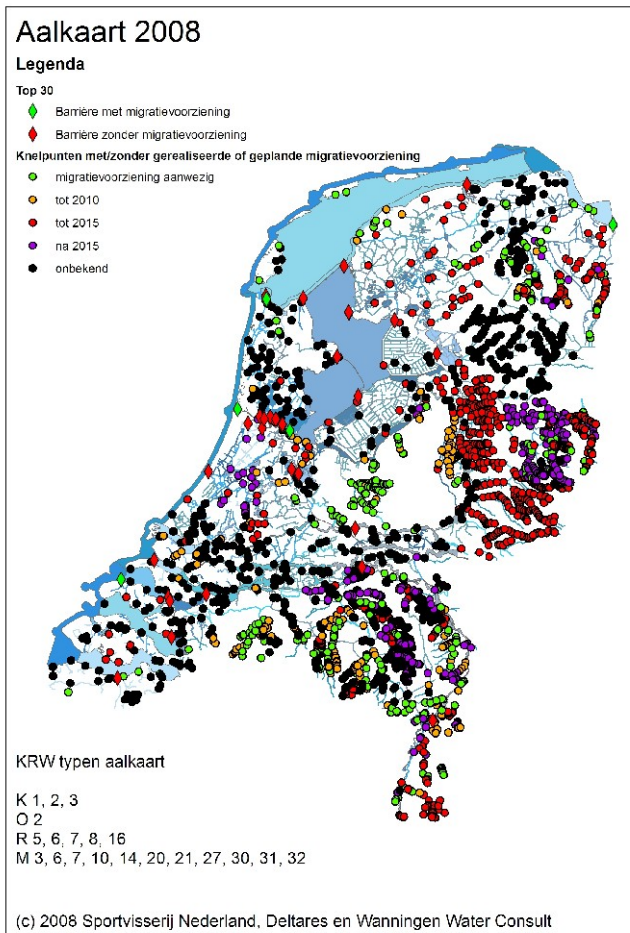


Figure 2.5.1. Barriers for eel migration in the Netherlands, and planned solutions (Buijse et al. 2008). Some 40 locations are considered most important, because they give access to large inland water areas. Near 255 barriers a migration facility is already in place. The planning foresees 136 new facilities by 2010, 538 by 2015, 239 by 2027. For 608 it is yet unclear whether migration needs to be and will be improved.

Hydropower stations

There are six hydropower stations in the Dutch part of the river basins of the Rhine and Meuse, three of which are a factor ten larger than the others, see table 2.5.1. This concerns the stations in Lith, Linne and Amerongen, which are all situated in the main stream of the river. All of these stations have been equipped with fish passes in order to allow for upstream migration.

river	location	company	registered power	annual production	year of first use
Meuse	Lith	Nuon	14.0 MW	44 Gwh	1990
Meuse	Linne	Essent	11.5 MW	35 Gwh	1989
Lower Rhine	Amerongen	Nuon	10.0 MW	24 Gwh	1988
Lower Rhine	Hagestein	Nuon	1.8 MW	3 Gwh	1958
Overijsselse Vecht	de Haandrik	Essent	0.2 MW	0.3 GWh	1988
Roer	Roermond	Nuon	0.25 MW	0.1 GWh	2000

Table 2.5.1. Main hydropower stations in the Netherlands.

The silver eel mortality and injury level due to hydropower stations has been monitored in the river Meuse. A recent telemetry study of migrating silver eel indicated a mortality range of 16-34% in two hydropower stations in the Meuse that are set in series, almost half of the total mortality that was observed in the study (Winter & Jansen, 2006). It is estimated that the mortality caused by each power station located in the Rhine is in the order of 18% (Vriese et al. 2008).

Pumping stations

There is no quantitative information on the effects on other obstacles like pumping stations that are used for water management, but it has recently been recognised as an important mortality factor. They can form effective barriers for any eel entering or leaving certain water bodies. The number of pump stations in The Netherlands (4671) is enormous, with a high density in the western low level part of the country, see figure 1.2.7. Limited information is only available for single site data in different types of stations, but a general feature appears that particularly large eels will have low survival rates. For the smaller pumps, there is little chance that any eel will pass through undamaged. Gathering information of eel survival in pumping stations has been identified as an important short term research subject.

Pollution and the proportion of eel affected by contaminants, pathogens and parasites.

Annually a study is conducted on a large set of contaminants in Dutch yellow eel. The most recent published results (Hoogenboom et al, 2007) show the occurrence of dioxins and dioxin-like Polychlorinated Biphenyls (dlPCBs). The catch locations formed a strong factor in the level of pollution. Particularly samples from downstream locations in the lowland rivers, e.g. Meuse, Rhine and Waal, showed the highest contamination. Hoogenboom measured the level of contamination by length class. It showed a correlation between length and dioxin levels.

Another study indicated that the reproduction capacity of the silver eels can be impaired by swim bladder parasites, EVEX-virus and PCBs, suggesting that contaminated eels contribute less to the recruitment of the species (van den Thillart, 2005).

Little is known about the effect of pathogens and parasites in the eel populations. Non-native parasites, particularly the swim-bladder parasite *Anguillicola crassus*, has become widespread in eels. It is estimated that after the initial outbreak in the late 1980s the rate of infected eels has stabilised, fluctuating between 40 and 60%. It is difficult to estimate quantitative effects to the eel survival rates (Dekker, 2004), but research is leading to an increased understanding.

Cormorants

Cormorants form a natural mortality factor and do not form an anthropogenic mortality factor. Nevertheless the increase in the numbers of cormorants has given rise to concerns amongst fishermen and is sometimes considered to be caused by human impact in the landscape. It was estimated that in the period 1995-2000 the number of eels consumed by cormorants was around 1% of the total catch by fishermen (Van Rijn & van Eerden, 2002).

Other factors

When water levels are low, there is an assumed increase of eel mortality by human induced factors such as propellers of vessels and cooling water from power stations resulting in high water temperatures. There are no quantitative data for these factors, but they are likely to occur in the summer when little migration of silver eel takes place.

Summary of factors

In table 2.4.1 the effect of the different factors on eel mortality is indicated. The factors appearing as major contributors to pre-escapement mortality are professional fisheries and water pumps and hydropower stations (Dekker, 2007).

	mortality silver eel (tonnes)	mortality yellow eel (tonnes)
<i>mortality factor</i>		
Migration barriers	No data available	No data available
Hydropower stations	15.5	3.5
Water pumps/pump stations	15-65*	27-83*
Fisheries – professional	280	640
Fisheries - recreational	0	240-400
Complexity of factors	17	No data available
dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs	No data available	No data available
Cormorants	0	50

* depends on fisheries mortality

Table 2.4.1. Estimated mortality attributed to different factors (Vriese et al., 2008). Estimates are considered to be the best available, despite being recognised as being very rough and requiring more accuracy in the future.

3. RESTOCKING

3.1. Quantitative and qualitative description of restocking carried out in the past, per river basin

Glass eel and young yellow eel have been used for re-stocking inland waters since time immemorial, mostly by local action of stakeholders. Since World War II, the Organisation for the Improvement of Inland Fisheries (OVV) has organised a re-stocking programme, importing glass eels from France and England, and buying yellow eel from commercial fishermen who were fishing in the downstream rivers and in the Waddensea. Domestic supplies declined in the 1970s. In recent years the global availability of glass eel sharply declined. Because of this and the associated price increase, the re-stocking of glass eel has become very small in recent years. Data on re-stocking quantities are listed in table 3.1.1. Average weight of the young yellow eel amounts to approx. 33 grams (Dekker, 2008a).

DECADE	1940		1950		1960		1970		1980		1990		2000	
Year	Glass eel	young yellow eel	glass eel	young yellow eel	glass eel	young yellow eel	glass eel	young yellow eel	glass eel	young yellow eel	glass eel	young yellow eel	glass eel	young yellow eel
0			5.1	1.6	21.1	0.4	19.0	0.2	24.8	1.0	6.1	0.0	2.8	1.0
1			10.2	1.3	21.0	0.6	17.0	0.3	22.3	0.7	1.9	0.0	0.9	0.1
2			16.9	1.2	19.8	0.4	16.1	0.4	17.2	0.7	3.5	0.0	1.6	0.1
3			21.9	0.8	23.2	0.1	13.6	0.5	14.1	0.7	3.8	0.2	1.6	0.1
4			10.5	0.7	20.0	0.3	24.4	0.5	16.6	0.7	6.2	0.0	0.3	0.1
5			16.5	0.9	22.5	0.5	14.4	0.5	11.8	0.8	4.8	0.0	0.1	0
6	7.3		23.1	0.7	8.9	1.1	18.0	0.5	10.5	0.7	1.8	0.2	0.582	0
7	7.6	1.6	19.0	0.8	6.9	1.2	25.8	0.6	7.9	0.4	2.3	0.4	0.216	0
8	1.9	2.0	16.9	0.8	17.0	1.0	27.7	0.8	8.4	0.3	2.5	0.6	0	0.230
9	10.5	1.4	20.1	0.7	2.7	0.0	30.6	0.8	6.8	0.1	2.9	1.2		

Table 3.1.1. Re-stocking of glass eel and young yellow eel in the Netherlands (millions). Columns depict the decades, rows the years in those decades. Conversion from weight into numbers implied the assumption of 3000 glass eels per kg, resp. 30 young yellow eels per kg. As examples: In the year 2003 there were 1,600,000 glass eels released and 100,000 young yellow eels; in 2008 people released 230,000 young yellow eels (Dekker, 2008b).

Location	Water	Year	Supplier	numbers
Friesland	Polderwateren het Grootslag en De Vier Noorderkoggen	2006	Various	10,000 (trianniel)
Utrecht	Wateren rond Nijkerk	2007	AquaFarm	30,000
Gelderland	Veluwemeer	2007	FPZ Harderwijk	20,000 (2,000 tags)

Table 3.1.2. Restocking locations in 2006 and 2007. These eels all originate from aquaculture.

3.2. Quantitative and qualitative description of restocking in the future eel management plan

Restocking will be one of the management measures of the Dutch eel management plan. Restocking has never been applied in a structured approach, nor has evaluation taken place in the past. The effects of restocking will only be noticeable after a considerable number of years.

A group of stakeholders recently established an independent foundation, *Future for Eel*, with the purpose to take the necessary concrete steps towards stabilization and recovery of the eel population in the Netherlands. This foundation is a partnership of eel fishery, eel aquaculture, eel processing and eel traders, under the umbrella of the Dutch Fish Production Board (www.futureforeel.nl).

The basis for restocking of eel in the Netherlands will be the protocol in figure 3.2.1. More than twenty habitat factors have been identified. Of these, a number could be generally applied, while others are specific for certain locations. Most of the location specific measures have insufficient scientific basis to be used, but this does not imply that they are not considered important. The most influential abiotic factors in Dutch waters are acidity (pH=4 – 9) and oxygen content (always > 3mg/l, often > 5mg/l).

It is generally accepted that the current human induced mortality cannot be entirely compensated by restocking. Restocking in the Netherlands would therefore be only one amongst more measures that are intended to contribute to the improved escapement of silver eel or as compensation of human induced mortality.

One can distinguish between measures with effects at a national level and those with effects at a local level. Klein Breiteler (2008) assesses the main factors that are to be considered in the restocking policy in the Netherlands.

The protocol has been recently assessed according to a list of ecological considerations:

- 25 different environmental factors, the majority being pertinent at a local level;
- Inter-specific interactions (the effect of restocking eel on other species);
- Quality of restocking animals and of the restocking procedure;
- Carrying capacity and existing density of the area to be restocked;
- Genetic and pathogenic considerations;
- Effect of restocking on the ecosystem.

In addition, there are considerations related to fisheries and other socio-economic factors, and the limitations to the implementation. For implementation, one needs to take account of:

- The availability of restocking material;
- Transport opportunities and limitations;
- Institutional support;
- Financial support;
- Ownership.

Finally, there are risks and uncertainties associated with many of the aforementioned factors. The restocking protocol addresses all the factors and, with the necessary evaluation processes, aims at the best possible decisions.

To summarize, the Netherlands will use restocking as a management measure. To minimize the ecological risks associated with restocking, the above mentioned protocol will be the basis of all restocking programmes. Restocking is coordinated by the foundation “future for eel”. This foundation collects financial contributions from private companies. The ministry of LNV intends to co-fund the

restocking programmes of the foundation through a yearly subsidiary of €300,000 from the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). Together with private contributions it is estimated that an annual budget of €500,000 - €800,000 will be available for restocking. Given an estimated glass eel price of €500/kg, it will be possible to purchase 1000-1600 kg glass eels. It is expected that the actual figure will be lower since not only glass eel will be restocked, but also pre-grown eel from aquaculture less than 20cm of length. Furthermore, EFF funding for restocking purposes can only be made available after the Dutch eel management plan has been accepted by the European Commission.

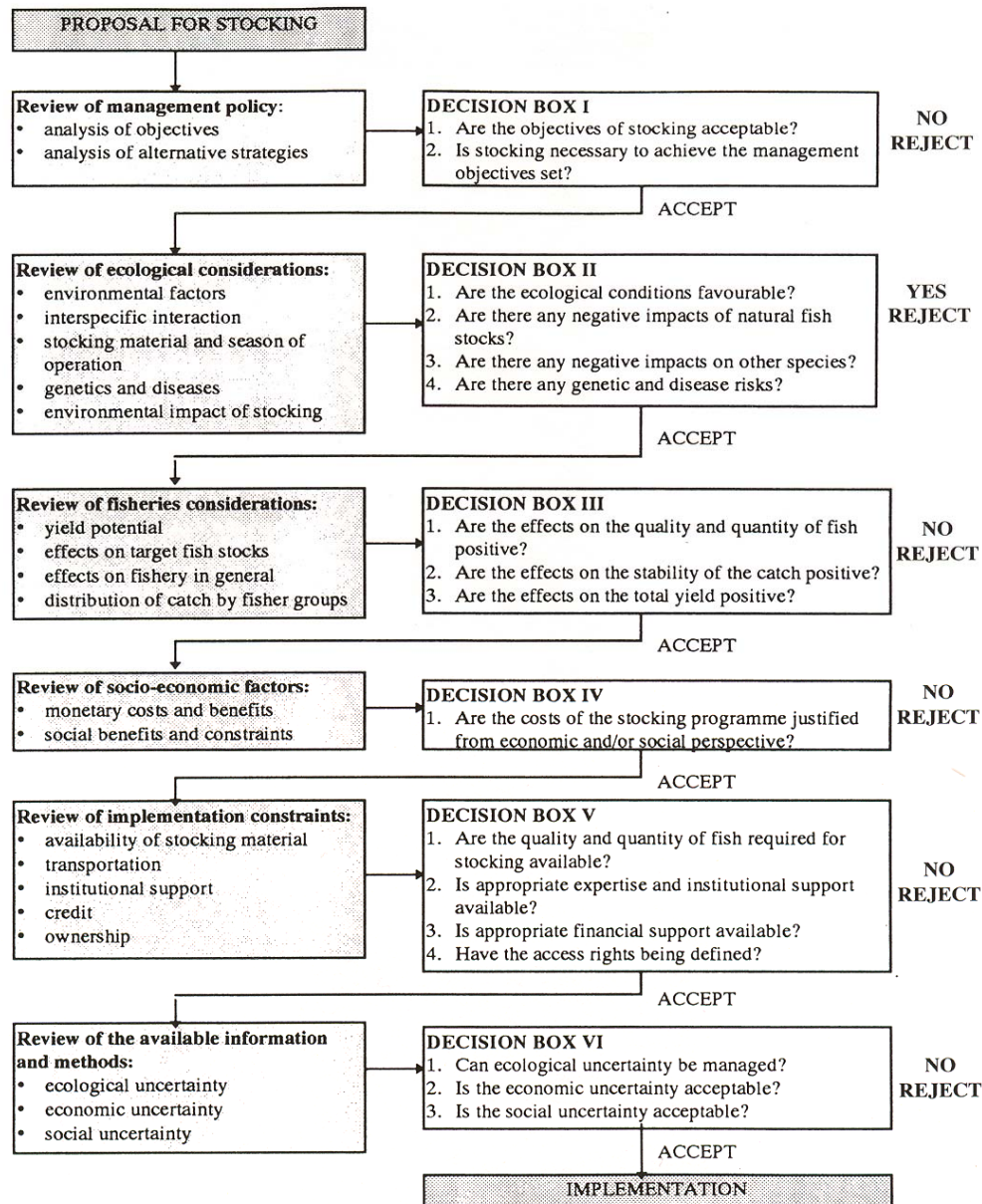


Figure 2. Scheme for planning stocking programmes. The review boxes on the left illustrate the different levels of data collection and processing, and the decision boxes on the right show the respective decision levels with some relevant question. Stocking should be rejected if any answers to the questions are unacceptable (adapted from EIFAC 1994).

Figure 3.2.1. A protocol for restocking by Cowx from 1999, as provided in Klein Breitelers (2008). The author emphasises the importance of evaluation of restocking proposals and of results.

3.3. Identify the geographical areas for restocking and choice of locations

The geographical areas to be restocked will be identified according to the protocol described in 3.2, and this will be coordinated by the foundation *Future For Eel* from 2009 onwards. The protocol distinguishes between habitat factors with a local application and those of a general nature, and these will have to be assessed and evaluated. Consequently, no exact geographical areas for restocking have been identified yet.

- *Explanation of the choice of restocking locations to contribute to 40% escapement target.*
Quantitative estimate of the contribution of restocking towards the 40% escapement target.

A quantitative estimate of the contribution of a suite of measures to improve escapement is provided in Klein Breiteler (2008). According to this report restocking with glass eels will result in 100 ton of silver eel escapement in 2027. This figure is based on an available budget of €300,000 per year. If additional funding from private parties (see 3.2) will become available, the figure could double.

- *Quantification of surface area to be restocked*

The assessment according to the protocol that is described in 3.2 should also clarify the surface areas for restocking. It is expected that *Future For Eel* will identify the surface areas from 2009 onwards, once the Eel Management Plan for the Netherlands has been accepted by the European Commission. Given the estimated available budget for purchase of glass eels, and the preferred restocking density of 250 glass eels per hectare (Klein Breiteler, 2008), a potential area of 10,000-16,000 ha can be restocked with glass eels.

3.4. Estimate of eels <20cm needed for restocking

See also sections 3.3 and 3.4. The foundation *Future For Eel* is intended to coordinate the necessary activities for *inter alia* restocking from 2009 onwards, including the estimation of eels <20cm needed for restocking.

3.5. Percentage of caught eels < 12cm to be used for restocking in The Netherlands

There will be no restocking of wild caught eels <12 cm, because no eels <12cm are caught in the Netherlands. The legal minimum size for eel fishery in the Netherlands is 28 cm. Therefore this percentage is zero (0%).

3.6. Description of system to ensure that by 2013, 60% of wild caught eels < 12 cm are used for restocking

Not applicable, since no eels <12cm are caught.

4. MONITORING

4.1. Monitoring the actual and future escapement

Monitoring of actual escapement has started in recent years. Mark recapture experiments and telemetry with radio tags have been the two techniques for estimating downstream mortality, assisting in the estimation of escapement rates of silver eels. Telemetry is considered to be the more reliable and promising technique.

Telemetry studies in recent years have shown causes of human induced mortality of silver eels downstream (Winter and Jansen, 2006). The estimations are expert judgements of attributing the category “unknown” to any of the other categories.

	2002 (n=121)		2004 (n=105)	
	Observed (%)	estimated (%)	observed (%)	estimated (%)
Successful passage to sea	37	>37	31	>31
Professional fisheries	15	21-25	13	19-22
Recreational fisheries	1	1	2	3
HPS*	9	16-26	21	25-34
- direct	9	9	21	21
- indirect	-	7-17	-	4-13
“unknown”	38	11-25	35	10-22

* hydropower station

Table 4.1.1. Observed and estimated mortality ratios of silver eels, results from radio telemetry studies. These indicate (see top row) that 30-40% of the marked silver eels were successful in escaping into the sea. Two factors seem major contributors to the pre-escapement mortality: professional fisheries and hydropower stations (Dekker, 2007).

EC Regulation 1100/2007 has the objective that 40% of the escapement in natural conditions is successful. According to Article 2.5.sub a, any most appropriate year pre-dating 1980 may be taken as a reference year. Note that in table 4.1.1 the successful escapement rate (37% and 31%) denotes the escapement of the current level of silver eel. Since the current population size of silver eels is estimated at less than 1% of the natural population or any pre-1980 level, it is generally assumed that accordingly the escapement rate is very low as well.

Unfortunately, telemetry studies are too expensive and require expertise that is currently non-existent to be applied at a large scale in either time or space. Therefore, an individual-based model will be developed and applied that takes account of both temporal and spatial and variations. It is generally acknowledged that the distribution of eel differs greatly among waterbodies, as are the eel catches. The model will take account of management that is specific for locations/regions and the appropriate sustainability criteria. This research work has been started in 2008 and will continue into 2009. One of the key activities will be a pilot project on eel monitoring in a selected

area. At the end of 2009 the results will be statistically analysed, and a nation wide eel monitoring programme will be established. The Netherlands will inform the European Commission on the proposed eel monitoring programme as soon as the research works have been completed.

Price monitoring and reporting system for eels < 12 cm

It is forbidden to catch eels less than 28 cm, so there is no glass eel fishery in the Netherlands. Therefore, there is no need to establish a system for the monitoring of glass eel prices in the Netherlands.

4.3. Sampling system for catch and effort data

Data of eelcatches and stockassessments of eel are only available within the framework of a stock monitoring programme in State controlled waters. Starting in 1993, the fish assemblage in the main rivers and linked waters has been monitored. This has been done by means of logbook registration of commercial catch and by-catch, in a restricted number of fyke nets (four large fyke nets or two pairs of summer fyke nets per location), mostly on a weekly basis. See section 2.2 of this report for a full description of CPUE-recordings. For eel, the numbers of yellow eels and silver eels caught are recorded. Results show that the quality of the data is not enough to generate a particular trend over the years, and the year-to-year variation is considerable. There is no formal application of these data in eel fisheries management, but the results have frequently been quoted in the debate on the status of the eel stock. This monitoring programme is operated under the governmental responsibility for monitoring state-managed waters, and is executed by the public research institute IMARES.

Eelstock assesments are conducted annually for Lake IJsselmeer and for the main streams of the rivers Rhine, Meuse and IJssel. These assesments are conducted under governmental responsibility. The stock-surveys give representative data of the eel abundance and trends in abundance in the indicated large waterbodies. Information on eel abundance in the remaining (smaller) waterbodies are at this stage not yet available.

In addition it is compulsory for all commercial fisheries within Lake IJsselmeer to land all caughtfish (including eels) at specific designated auctions. Consequently, data on eel landings are available. Such a system is not in place for eel fishery elsewhere.

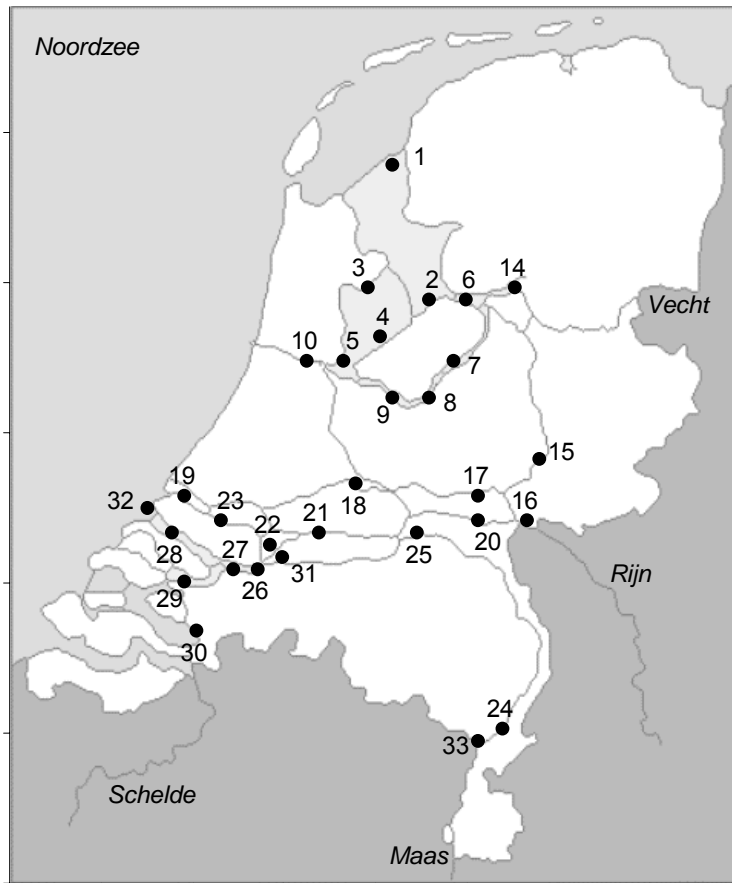


Figure 4.3.1. Sampling sites for the 4-fyke monitor programme of commercial catches and by-catch (Dekker, 2008a).

To summarize, information on eelstocks and eelcatches are at this stage only available from specific waters (mainly the large waterbodies), a centralized sampling system for all eel catches and effort in all waters is currently not yet available. An inventory of the existing experimental projects on monitoring of catches was carried out in 2008, in combination with a future monitoring programme that is intended as an integral component of this eel management plan (see 4.1). It is clear that a paper logbook as is being used in marine fisheries is not practical for the small-scale inland eel fishery. Therefore in 2009 it will be investigated if a PDA-based catch registration system can be developed. The set-up of an overall sampling system of eel catch and eel fishery effort with regard to the requirements of the European Data Collection Regulation (EC 1639/2001) will be tested in a specific pilot in 2009, and will only be available from 2010 onwards. The Netherlands will inform the Commission as soon as the research works have been completed.

4.4. Description of measures to:

b. Identify the origin and traceability of all live eels imported and exported outside the Community area

In the articles 7 and 8 of the national regulation “Uitvoeringsregeling visserij”, which is based on the 1963 Fishery Law, is regulated that an administration of every supply or storage of more than 5kg of eel, and its origin, should be kept by suppliers and professional buyers of eel.

In article 2.1.5 and 2.1.6 of the national regulation “Regeling aquacultuur” it is obliged that aquaculture production businesses and authorised processing establishments keep a record of all movements of aquaculture animals. This in accordance with article 8 of Directive nr. 2006/88/EC.

Also, article 18 of Regulation (EC) nr. 178/2002 (General Food Law) obliges the traceability of food-producing animals at all stages of production, processing and distribution. By virtue of article 113a of the regulation “Regeling preventie, bestrijding en monitoring van besmettelijke dierziekten en zöonosen en TSE’s” it is prohibited to violate article 18 of the regulation.

From March 2009 onwards the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) will be listed on Appendix II of the CITES Agreement and the Annex B of the basic CITES regulation (EC 338/97). Any exports from the Community will have to be consistent with article 5 of EC 338/97. For all species listed on Annex B, including eel, this means that:

- In and export outside the Community area will only be permitted with a permit
- Trade in eel will only be possible if the legal origin of the eel can be determined.

The Netherlands will adapt the national legislation in order to accommodate these requirements. Accordingly, the Netherlands will comply to the requirements of article 12 of the European Eel Regulation.

c. Determine whether eel harvested and exported outside the Community area were caught in consistency with Community conservation measures.

Under CITES regulation export outside the Community area can only take place if a “non detriment finding’ can be made. At this moment the Scientific Review Group of CITES is discussing if, given the present state of the eel stock, such a non detriment finding can be issued. Even if it is decided that such a finding can be issued, EC 1100/2007 requires that all eel fishery takes place according to approved eel management plans, or that the Member State reduces its eel fishing effort or catch with 50%. In that way all eel fishery from 1 July 2009, is consistent with Community conservation measures.

d. Determine whether eel harvested in any relevant RFMO and imported into the Netherlands was caught according to the regulation of that RFMO

In previous years, the Netherlands has imported glass eels from South-Western Europe (France, Spain and Portugal) and the UK. These countries are within the European Community. There are no relevant RFMOs with non-EC member states that export European eel to the Community.

5. MEASURES

5.1. Description of all measures to reach the 40% escapement objective

In section 2.4 the potential and current silver eel escapement levels are indicated. It was argued that no exact escapement level can be calculated.

The Netherlands will implement the following measures:

- Reduction of eel mortality at pumping stations and other water works
- Reduction of eel mortality at hydro-electric stations
- The establishment of fishery-free zones in areas that are important for eel migration
- Release of eel caught at sea and at inland waters by anglers
- Ban on recreational fishery in coastal areas using professional gear
- The transportation and release of silver eel at sea
- Stop the issue of licences for eel snigglers by the minister of LNV
- Restocking of glass eel and pre-grown eel from aquaculture
- Research into the artificial propagation of eel.

Besides these measures it is expected that other policies related to the improvement of the environment, such as the reduction of negative impact of animal manure and the water Frame Work Directive, will have a beneficial impact on the water quality, and thus on the eel population. Water quality has particular consequences for reducing the mortality of yellow eel. Lack of oxygen and the poisonous ammonia are major potential factors, in combination with the lack of opportunities for eel to migrate to other areas when such local incidences may occur. Due to the long life cycle of the eel, diminishing occurrence of these indices will have a big influence of the number for yellow eel that eventually mature into silver eels (see also paragraph 5.2).

Furthermore, measures that have been taken in the recent past will also contribute to an increased escapement of silver eels. Most important in this respect are:

- The reduction of the total fishery effort in lake IJsselmeer in 2006, resulting in a decrease of eel fishing gear with 55%
- The year round opening of the sluice gate at the Brouwersdam in 2005, resulting in an 80% increase of silver eel escapement

Although the exact effect of above measures can not be quantified, overall there will be a positive effect on the number of silver eel that can escape.

In the following the measures are described more into detail.

1). Reduction of eel mortality at pumping stations and other water works.

In figure 2.5.1 barriers for eel migration in the Netherlands and planned solutions are indicated. The implementation of the Water Framework Directive includes a programme for the improvement of fish migration (including eel). Approximately €200 million has been reserved for this programme. Besides, as part of the regular renovations also a number of barriers will be resolved. It is therefore expected that of the 1800 most important migration barriers, half will be resolved

before 2015 and the remaining before 2027. Within the process of drafting of the next generation of river basin management plans (under the Water Framework Directive), it will be decided if planned renovations need to be re-prioritised if new information on eel habitat and migration becomes available.



Figure 5.1.1. Examples of recent measures that improve the habitat conditions for eel.

2). Reduction of eel mortality at hydro-electric stations

The installation of a migration passage is compulsory for new hydropower stations. Existing hydropower plants can be categorized into large (>10 MW) or small (<2 MW), see table 2.5.1. All the six hydropower stations have been equipped with a fish pass for upstream migration. Early 2009 one of the three large hydropower stations will have installed an experimental fish passage device for down stream migration (location Linne). For the other two large hydropower stations (Lith and Amerongen), measures will have to be taken in order to reduce (down stream) eel mortality with at least 35%. One of the management options is to change the turbine management. Adaptation of the turbine management may also include halting the turbines in a certain period. The minister of LNV will sign an agreement with the operators of these two large hydropower stations in order to formalise the measures (early 2009). Of the three small hydropower stations, the one at the Roer has been equipped with a fish passage for downstream migration. The one at the Vecht is situated in a small river with subsequent small catchment area. The one at Hagenstein has a capacity of only 1,8 MW. Therefore the impact on the overall eel population of these two small hydropower stations is considered low.

3). The establishment of fishery-free zones in areas that are important for eel migration

This measure will be particularly effective on those locations that are known as important migration routes/points. Currently, a research project is undertaken in order to identify the most critical areas for eel migration. These include areas along the coast, and inland areas near large barriers that have been equipped with fish passages. From 2010 onwards, a number of these important migration zones will be assigned as no-fishing zones for eel fisheries in the regulation “uitvoeringsregeling Visserij”, which is based on the 1963 Fishery Law.

4). Release of eel caught at sea by anglers.

Anglers that catch eel in coastal and marine waters will be obliged to release the eel alive in the same water as from July 1, 2009. This obligation will be regulated in the regulation “Uitvoeringsregeling Visserij”.

5). Ban on recreational fishery in coastal areas using professional gear.

By virtue of article 36 of the regulation “Uitvoeringsregeling Visserij” a licence can be obtained from the Minister of LNV to fish with maximum 2 fykes and 100 m of gill nets in the coastal waters of the Wadden Sea, Eems/Dollard, and Ooster/westerschelde. From 2011 these licences will not be issued anymore.

6). Transport and release of silver eel.

Commercial fishermen will annually catch, transport over migration barriers (and other obstacles), and release 157 MT silver eel into the sea. In order to enhance the chance that silver eel will reach the spawning area, out of the 157 MT, 50 MT has to be selected, clean female silver eel caught in areas that are known to be relatively free from contaminants like dioxines and PCB's. This measure will be accompanied by a plan of action which stipulates the conditions on which the catching, transporting, releasing and selection of silver eel takes place. Control and enforcement measures are also included in the plan (see chapter 6). The Ministry of LNV will provide financial assistance from EFF sources (under Article 37a) for a maximum of €700,000 per year. This facility will only be established after the Eel Management Plan has been approved by the Commission.

The figure of 157 MT is based on the following. In the period September and October approximately 200 MT of silver eel are caught by commercial fishery (Hoefnagel & Dekker, 2005). The mortality caused by hydro-electric turbines, pumps and predation is estimated at 20%. Therefore the amount of silver eel that can escape is approximately 160 MT. This amount is now actively caught and released into the sea.

This measure is aimed to be temporarily. It is the intention to shift to decentralised, local eel management, carried out within the framework of the Fish Management Committee's (VBC's). In these Committees, fishermen, anglers and water managers define and implement local fisheries management. In order to manage eel stocks on this level, more information is needed on the local eel situation of the stocks, the local catch and effort etc. A research programme has been started in order to collect these data. It is expected that at least 2 to 3 years will be required before local eel management can be established. When that situation arises, the Netherlands will adapt their eel management plan accordingly, for approval by the European Commission.

7). Stop the issue of licences for eel snigglers

The Minister of LNV currently issues approximately 75 licenses for the snigglings of eel at state owned inland water bodies. The annual renewal of these licenses will be discontinued. Although the real effect of this measure in terms of extra silver eel escapement is limited, the public signal is considered to be substantial.

Besides the following additional (voluntary) measures will be taken.

8). Restocking of glass eel and pre-grown eel from aquaculture.

Details of this management measure are given in chapter 3 on restocking.

9). Voluntary ban on eel landing by anglers

In the summer of 2008, the national organisation of anglers (Sportvisserij Nederland) has announced a voluntary ban on eel landing from 2009 onwards for owners of fishing licences, issued by the organisation. According to this decision, no eel should be landed, though catch-and-return remains allowed. The area for which the organisation issues fishing licences covers about 90% of the Dutch inland waters.

Even though the restriction is voluntary, its enforcement will take place in accordance with the 1963 Fishery law. This because by virtue of article 21 of the 1963 Fishery Law, it is prohibited to fish without a fishing right or a licence, issued by the owner of the fishing right. This also includes fishing in violation of a fishing licence, issued by Sportvisserij Nederland.

10). Research into the artificial propagation of eel

Since a number of years the Ministry of LNV subsidizes research at the University of Leiden aimed at the artificial propagation of the eel. If a reliable technique could be developed for the mass production of glass eels, at least the aquaculture of eel would no longer be dependent on wild caught glass eels. This will reduce the pressure on the wild stock. So far the research work has resulted in a better understanding of the biological mechanism of maturation of silver eel. It was found that a continued period of swimming is an essential stimulus for maturation of the gonads. By simulation of the natural migration in “swim tunnels” spawning of male and female eels could be induced. Unfortunately, few of the obtained eggs hatched and the glass eels died within a couple of days. In 2009 the research work will be continued in the form of an European research project.

5.2. Time table of implementation

In the following table the year of implementation of the eel measures is indicated.

No	Measure	Year
1	Pumping stations/barriers	Present-2027
2	Hydroelectric plants	2009
3	Fishery-free zones	2010
4	Sea angling	2009
5	Recreational fishery	2011
6	Transport and release of silver eel	2009
7	sniggling	2009
8	restocking	2009
9	Angling inland waters	2009
10	Research artificial propagation	On-going

5.3. Time table of effect of the measures

Klein Breteler (2008) analysed the effectiveness of different potential eel measures. Based on this report the following table was composed, indicating the effect (silver eel escapement in ton/year) on the short term (2012), medium term (2027) and long term (2050).

No	Measure	2012	2027	2050
1	Pumping stations/barriers	265	1342	3843
2	Hydro-electric stations	11	41	122
3	Fishery-free zones	110	550	1650
4,5,9	Angling & recreational	100	500	1500
6	Transport of silver eel	157	>157*)	>157*)
7	Snigging	5	25	75
8	Restocking	0	100	100
	Total	769	2517**)	7447**

**) This is the minimum amount. Escapement of 157 tonnes/ year will result in more glass eel in the next following years. No calculations are available to quantify this effect.*

***) Minimum total amount. No data are available from the additional amount of glass eel, resulting from the annually release of silver eel.*

Above effects are based on a number of assumptions (Klein Breteler, 2008), creating a certain uncertainty as regarded to their effect. On the other hand, as mentioned in 5.1 there are also measures already taken, that will directly or indirectly increase the number of silver eel escapement. For example, improvements in water quality are expected to result in additional silver eel escapement of 317 ton in 2012, 1586 tons in 2027, and 4759 tons in 2050. If these figures are included in the above table the escapement levels will be considerably higher.

5.4. Measures in coastal waters

Where relevant the measures indicated in section 5.1 and 5.2 will be applicable in coastal and transitional waters as well. This concerns the Fishery-free zones (no. 3), sea angling (no.4), recreational fishery (no.5). Fisheries outside these waters within the Dutch EEZ are estimated to have very low eel catches (<1 tonne), because of the large mesh size used and the low eel density at sea.

6. CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT

To enable control and enforcement of the measures, described in this eel management plan, the following measures will be regulated in the national regulation "Uitvoeringsregeling visserij":

- the establishment of fishery-free zones in areas that are important for eel migration, from 2010 onwards (measure 3);
- the obligation for anglers that catch eel in coastal and marine waters to release the eel alive in the same water as from July 1, 2009 (measure 4);
- the obligation for commercial fishermen to annually release 157 ton of silver eel caught at inland waters into sea. Of this 157 ton, at least 50 ton is clean (relatively free of contaminants, pathogens and parasites) female silver eel caught in selected non polluted inland waters. An integrated part of this measure is the obligation for the commercial fishermen to draw up a plan of action, which guarantees a correct realization of the measure. This plan stipulates the conditions under which the catching, transporting and releasing of the eel takes place and it provides for rules on how the 50 MT of clean, female silver eel is selected. The plan will also contain a chapter on control and enforcement. If the plan of action is not submitted and approved before July 1, 2009, a fishing ban will be promulgated for the months September and October. A temporarily fishing ban is also a measure which is taken in case of non compliance with the plan of action.

The above measures in the regulation "Uitvoeringsregeling visserij" will be based on article 3a of the 1963 Fishery Law. Violation of article 3a and regulations based on that article is an economic offence by virtue of articles 1 and 2 of the Law on economic offences (Wet op de economische delicten).

Besides this, the Minister of LNV will stop the annual renewal of licences for the snigging of eel at state owned inland water bodies (measure 7). Also, the national organisation of anglers (Sportvisserij Nederland) has decided that licences issued by owners of fishing rights, associated to this organisation, only allow the fishing of eel by anglers if they immediately return the eel to the water (voluntary measure 9). By virtue of article 21 of the 1963 Fishery Law, it is prohibited to fish without a fishing right or a licence, issued by the owner of the fishing right. This applies to both publicly and privately owned waters. Violation of this article is a crime by virtue of article 56 of the 1963 Fishery Law.

The responsible authority in the national government for enforcement of the 1963 Fishery Law is the Minister of LNV. Control for compliance is carried out by the General Inspection Service of the Ministry of LNV (AID: Algemene Inspectiedienst).

As stated in Chapter 4.4.1, under a, of this Eel Management Plan, an administration of every supply or storage of eel, and its origin, should be kept by suppliers and professional buyers of eel, by virtue of the articles 7 and 8 of the regulation "Uitvoeringsregeling visserij". In article 2.1.5 and 2.1.6 of the regulation "Regeling aquacultuur" it is obliged that aquaculture production businesses and authorised processing establishments keep a record of all movements of aquaculture animals. Also, article 18 of Regulation (EC) nr. 178/2002 (General Food Law) obliges the traceability of food-producing animals at all stages of production, processing and distribution. By this, the catch of eel can be traced.

7. Modification of Eel Management Plans

A large number of measures that are relevant for this eel management plan are currently being put in place and are envisaged to be further implemented from 2009 onwards. Modification of this Eel Management Plan in the Netherlands is expected to have generated sufficient results to make subsequent adaptations. In particular this can be expected from legal arrangements, re-arrangements of the management responsibilities, and coordination with the adjacent Member States to agree on management plans on the basis of the different river basins that cover the territory of the Netherlands.

A constant stream of new data is expected to become available, since many of the above measures that have been taking or are planned will be closely monitored. For example, future results of the reduction of fishing pressure and other eel mortality factors will feed into options for revising the EMP, irrespective of the procedural matters that will be measures meant for reduction be developed over time.

The work on the recovery of the eel stocks is to be intensified from 2009 onwards. Research projects exist on eel production potential and on intended measures, with associated risks, costs, efficiency and public support. There is ongoing work monitoring and registration. A model is being designed to assess the potential effects of decentralised management. In addition, further research to harmonise the work on reducing the migration barriers is in progress. All this work is expected to further modify the eel management plan as appropriate and desired.

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Annex 1. Targets and current escapement of silver eel in the Netherlands

1. Production in similar waters

An overview of available data on eel catch yields and biomass was provided by Tesch (1999). The table below summarises the data for streams, lakes and coastal waters in the temperate zones. (tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3)

Table 1 Eel yields and biomass in European streams, 1951-1988 (Tesch, 1999). Averages calculated on basis of minimum and maximum values in the range

Locatie	Year	Eel kg/ha(/year)		Type of water /fish species
		Range	Average	
Yields				
Baltic, Oder	1961-'63	32-60	46	river, bream zone
Baltic, various small	1958-'64	8-38	21	streams 2-20 m wide
North Sea, Ems/Weser/Elbe	1954-'63	3-12	7	Bream and perch zone
North Sea, Elbe tidal zone	1956-'63	25-50	38	Bream zone
North Sea, Weser	ca. 1960	8-46	21	Red mullet, trout zone
North Sea,: Rhine Moezel/Lahn	1951-'61	4-9	7	
Biomass				
Denmark, Jutland	1950		75	Streams 1 m wide beek
Denmark	1971-'88		163	0,2-13 st/m ²
Ireland	1988		52	Streams 4-22 m wide
England	?	36-328	182	
Averages				
Yields		13-36	25	
Biomass			118	

Table 2 Eel yields and biomass in European lakes, 1949-1966/1996 (Tesch, 1999). Averages calculated on basis of minimum and maximum values in the range

Location	Year	Eel kg/ha(/year)		Type of water /fish species
		Range	Average	
Yields				
Lough Neagh (N-Ierland)	-1966	20	20	Whitefish
Schleswig-Holstein, average.	1954-'64	3-16	9	Bream
Schleswig-Holstein, average	1949-'64	4-8	6	Roach
Niedersachsen	1957-'62	2-5	3	BR-SB en S-Z type
Schwerin & Berlijn	1949-'63	1-5	2	BR, S, SB
Mecklenburg, Conventer See	1954-'61	29-45	37	
IJsselmeer	1954-'62	10	10	
Biomass				
Schotland, Lochs	1990-'96	220-250	235	
Averages				
Gemiddelde vangst		10-16	13	

*) Salm = salmoniden, BR = bream, SB = pike (perche), S = pike, Z = tench

Table 2 Eel yields and biomass in European coastal waters, 1947-1978 (Tesch, 1999). Averages calculated on basis of minimum and maximum values in the range

Location	Year	Eel Yields kg/ha/jr		Type of water salinity
		Range	Average	
Yields				
Baltic, various waters	1947-'65	1-7	4	Haf, rivermouth, coast
Biomass				
Denmark	1958		150	S = 2-20 ‰
German Bight	1978		3	20-50 m diep

Yields vary widely as shown. It should be noted however that these figures are catch yields, and not the actual biological production of mature silver eels. During periods of subsequent years, yields probably do not exceed the actual production of mature silver eels (see box below)

Box 3-1 *Why is eel production special?*

Simulation models (*Eenvoudig rekenmodel Aalbeheer*, Dekker et al., 2008) show that the highest production of mature silver eel (expressed in kg/eel) is achieved in the absence of anthropogenic mortality and that total yields at whatever fishing intensity are always lower than the quantities produced.

The models do not take into account density related processes. In classic fishery studies growth and mortality are generally considered density related. In situations where food supplies are finite and limited, growth falls when density (number/ha) and biomass (kg/ha) reach threshold levels or the limit of the system's carrying capacity. This happens with many fresh water species. With fish grown in ponds for instance (monocultures mostly) and also with eels farmed in ponds (Klein Breteler et al., 1990) It may, in theory, also be influenced by intra-specific competition between species. This means that with increasing biomass, growth decreases and net biological production (biomass increase per unit of time) shows an optimum curve. Highest production therefore is not achieved at highest densities but at optimum densities. Classic fishery studies say that this provides room for fisheries. In fisheries an increase in net biological production (and harvest or catch) may be achieved by a decrease of biomass resulting from fishing activities.

This is different with eels. First, because fisheries studies deal with kg of fish meat, not with kg of oldest year classes, the subject of this chapter. Another factor is that eels at the end of their growing stage in fresh or coastal waters migrate to the sea as mature silver eels. The fish themselves cause a thinning out of mass which is why growth need not stagnate. Also when densities become too high sex ratios shift This happened in former times when glass eel was still abundant and this still occurs in easily accessible waters near the coast. This implies that the number of male eels maturing is greater than the number of females. Males are smaller than females and they mature earlier. In this way year, class fluctuations can be counterbalanced without growth slowing down. And, finally, a proportion of eels in high densities moves on, upstream or to coastal waters. In times of abundance the marginal habitats are used. With mechanisms such as these, depending on available local densities and biomass, eels optimise their own production at local population levels.

These mechanisms in terms of quality are well-known but scientific foundations in terms of quantity are still lacking. Models are now being developed (see question 8). In theory it remains possible that in former times, when eel stocks were still safe, production was not optimal in places as a result of density related processes. In practice, this would also have happened locally. It is known that substantial densities of glass eel could be found in small

rivers around the Gulf of Biscay or in the then embanked local polder waters where eel had been introduced. But given the eel's flexibility in making use of biomass at population levels it is thought unlikely that this played a significant role at national level in the Netherlands with its many possibilities in its coastal areas and extensive hinterland of its major rivers.

Often, eel that have escaped from fishery are counted as biologically produced. This alone makes the estimates in the tables not very reliable. The ratio between silver eel and brown or yellow eel in the waters and fisheries referred to is not clear either. Brown or yellow eel included in the yields might, had they not been caught, have matured into silver eel which is another factor that might lead to underestimating real production. The tables should therefore be seen as minimum estimates of eel production in waters geographically similar to Dutch waters in the period 1950-1970.

Eel production in streams was 25 kg/ha, in lakes 13 kg/ha and in coastal waters 4 kg/ha. The latter figures are based on a single study.

2 Production in Dutch waters around 1950

Van Drimmelen (1952, 1953) described fisheries yields in polder waters and larger water bodies in 1948-1953. Polder waters supported pike, larger bodies of water pike or pike perch (see figures 3.1 and 3.2 and tables 3.3 and 3.4).

The author describes fair to high mortality rates in polder waters in the winter of 1946/47 (except in section 6). Larger water bodies (sections 11 and 12 are describes as 'bogs with many narrow water courses' and sections 16 and 17 as 'pools connected to polder ditches.' The figures and tables show that production was substantially higher in some waters. These outliers are not taken into account in some of the averages. The cause of these peaks in production is not known but these are waters stocked with elvers and glass eel to a smaller or larger degree (figures 3.3 and 3.4). This may have affected yields provided the eels were given time to mature. Nothing is known about these waters before 1948. Presumably not much stocking had taken place during the war. Only eel introduced after the war may have affected production. With average growth rates of 3 to 4 cm this might go some way to explain the ca. 25 cm eel in 1946-'47 in figure 3.3 and 3.4. Waters at the time were stocked with eel when natural recruitment was thought to be low (after migration bottlenecks).

In a workshop on 13-5-2008 where Van Drimmelen's data were presented, participants found it odd that polders had lower eel production than the larger bodies of water. (Enclosure 1). This may be explained by lower migration (migration obstacles) The winter mortality rates mentioned earlier might also have played a role. Stocking waters to increase production is therefore only of importance here as it helps estimate production potential.

Workshop participants also said that eutrophication at the time might have had a positive effect on production and yields which would imply that the targets are set too high. But Van Raaphorst & De Jonge (2004) and Lindeboom et al. (2007) show that eutrophication in the Netherlands began in the 1950s via the River Rhine but cannot have had much effect until the 1960s and cannot therefore have affected fisheries yields studied by Van Drimmelen (1953). Local pollution of waters with organic substances may have affected yields but not on a national scale.

It was also mentioned that the bream caught from those waters may have had a positive effect on eel production but the quantities caught are not known. Many waters supported species of pike and tench, and there was not therefore much bream. But traditionally bream was a predominant species and the question of whether they had any effect on eel may well be asked. Tesch affirms this but does not provide sound arguments. Lammens et al. (1985) demonstrate this but water management authorities had created exceptional circumstances with invasions

of smelt. In practical pond research, Klein Breteler et al. (1990) demonstrated that bream did not affect eel stocks. It is assumed that locally this may have been the case but not on a large scale, not to an extent that is relevant here.

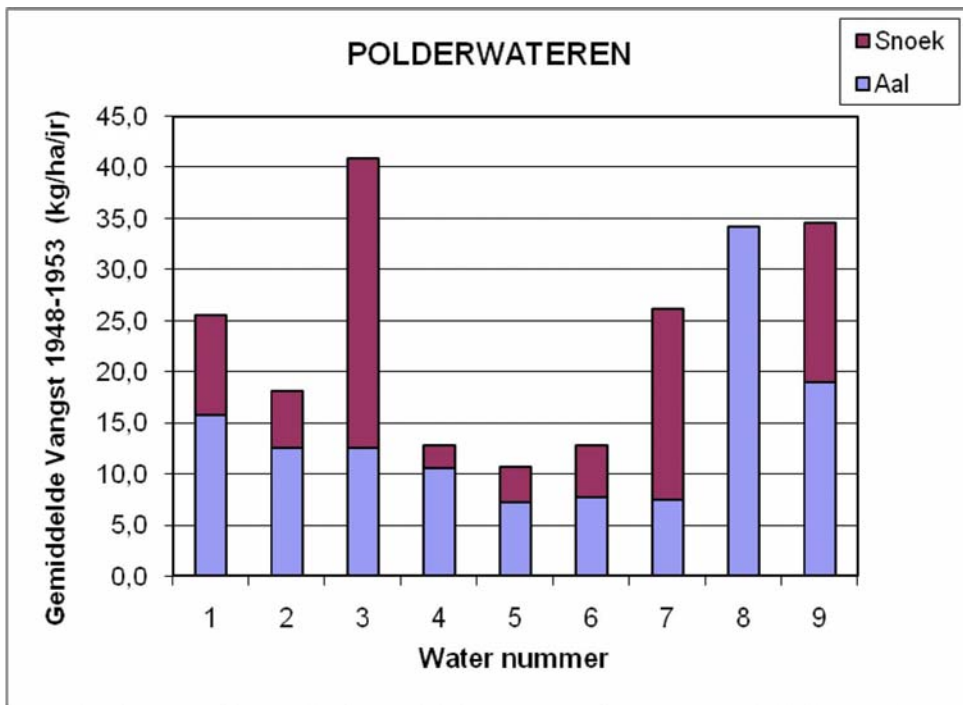


Figure 1 Average annual yields of eel and pike in 9 polder waters 1948-1953 (kg/ha) (Van Drimmelen 1953)

Larger bodies of water pike perch, pike, eel

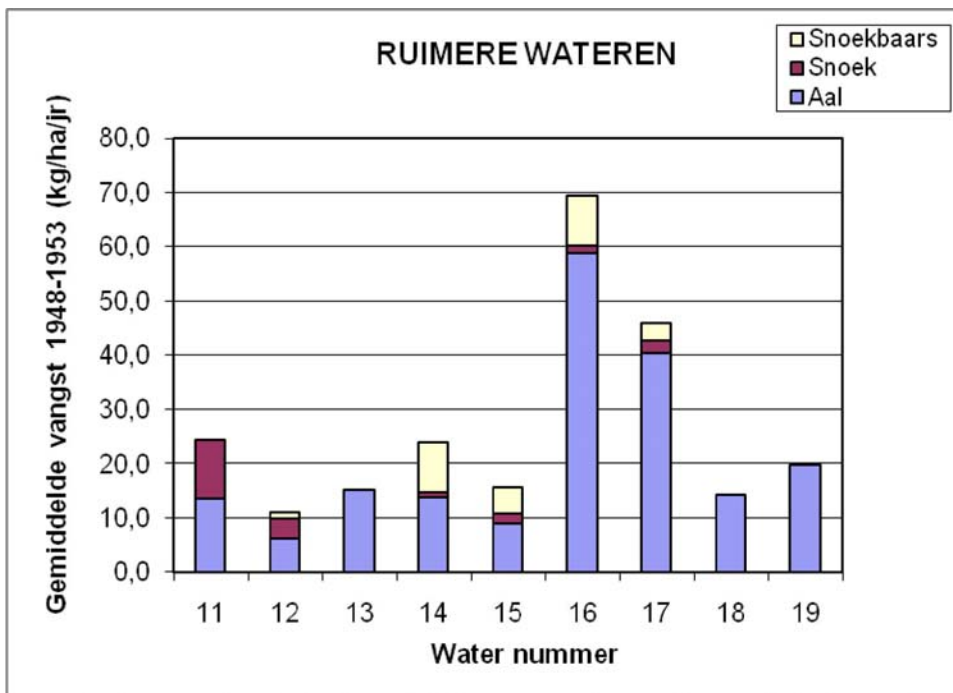


Figure 2 Average annual yields of eel and pike in 9 larger bodies of waters 1948-1953 (kg/ha) (Van Drimmelen 1953)

Table 3 Eel yields (kg/ha) in Dutch polder waters 1948-1953

(Van Drimmelen 1953)

WaterNr	1948/'49	1949/'50	1950/'51	1951/'52	1952/'53	Averages	st.dev
1	14,5	15,5	12,0	19,5	17,5	15,8	2,9
2	6,5	13,0	17,5	16,0	10,0	12,6	4,5
3	12,5	14,5	11,0	15,5	9,5	12,6	2,5
4	2,5	7,0	8,5	18,0	17,0	10,6	6,7
5	9,0	3,0	5,0	10,0	9,5	7,3	3,1
6	4,0	4,5	6,5	10,5	13,0	7,7	3,9
7	1,0	11,5	2,0	1,5	21,5	7,5	9,0
8	21,5	34,5	52,0	37,0	26,0	34,2	11,8
9	21,5	19,5	21,5	17,0	15,5	19,0	2,7
Averages	10,3	13,7	15,1	16,1	15,5	14,1	
SD	7,7	9,5	15	9,6	5,7		9,8
Averages (outliers not included)						11,6	6,0

Table 4 Eel yields (kg/ha) in larger bodies of water

WaterNr	1948/'49	1949/'50	1950/'51	1951/'52	1952/'53	Averages	st.dev
11	13,5	16,0	13,5	10,0	15,5	13,7	2,4
12	7,5	6,0	7,0	6,0	5,0	6,3	1,0
13	10,5	13,0	12,5	18,5	21,0	15,1	4,4
14	12,0	11,5	14,0	14,0	18,0	13,9	2,6
15	6,5	7,0	8,5	12,0	10,5	8,9	2,3
16	61,5	74,5	47,5	43,0	67,5	58,8	13,3
17	37,0	43,0	40,5	39,0	42,5	40,4	2,5
18	24,0	8,5	6,0	14,0	18,5	14,2	7,3
19	9,0	27,5	20,5	17,5	24,5	19,8	7,1
Averages	20,2	23,0	18,9	19,3	24,8	21,2	
SD	18	23	15	13	19		17,2
Averages (outliers not included)						13,1	5,8

It can be concluded that eel potential in Dutch polder waters in the mid-20th century stood at 14 kg/ha, possibly much more and in larger bodies of water at least 20 kg/ha. This is higher than the average values Tesch (1999) gave for lakes in temperate zones (see 3.1). It may illustrate higher exploitation of Dutch waters at the time, in which case it might come closer to biological production.

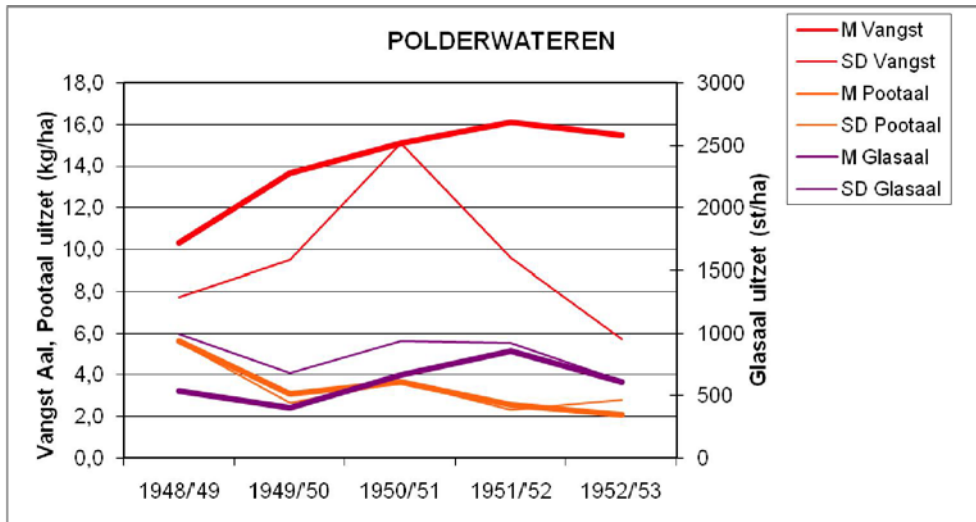


Figure 3-3 Eel yields and stocking of eel in polder waters 1948-1953 (Van Drimmelen 1953).

Vangst: Yield

Pootaal: Elvers

Glasaal: Glass eel

M: Mean

SD: Standard Deviation

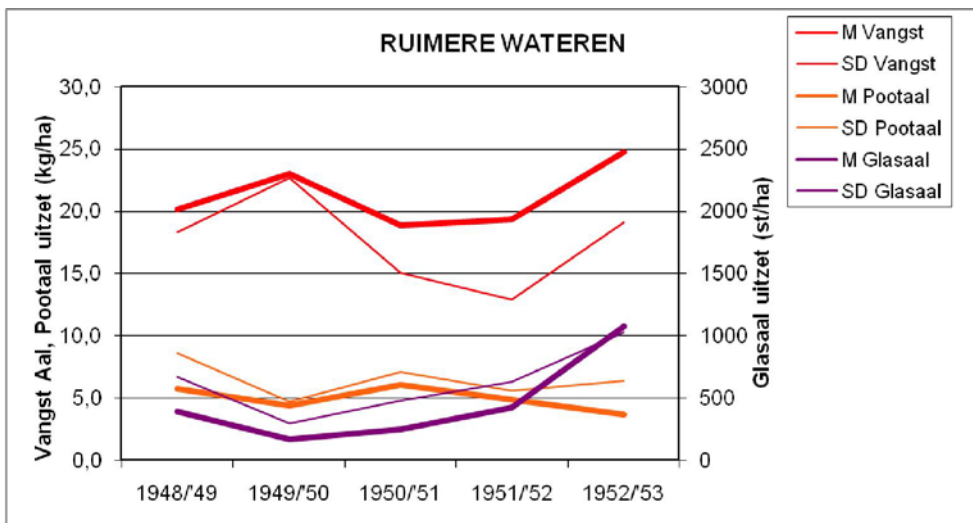


Figure 3-4 Eel yields and stocking of eel in larger bodies of water 1948-1953 (Van Drimmelen (1953).

Vangst: Yield

Pootaal: Elvers

Glasaal: Glass eel

M: Mean

SD: Standard Deviation

3 Dutch targets for mature silver eel migration

The Dutch targets for mature silver eel migration are based on yields and the available production area (table 3.5) to determine these targets a workshop was held on 13 May 2008, to which the Eel Sounding Board Group had also been invited. The workshop produced a number of comments and conclusions (see enclosure 1, 9.1.2). Yields were seen as minimum estimates of real biological production (see 3.1 and Box 3.1) . On the basis of the data in 3.1 and 3.2 production targets in streams and channels might be set at 10-16 kg/ha and for lakes 19/25 kg/ha (Van Drimmelen 1953). For coastal waters targets are set at 4 kg/ha and for running water 25(13-36) kg/ha (Tesch, 1999 and see 3.1).

The production area (“habitat for the eel”) is given in Dekker (2007). Freshwater lakes in Zeeland are however treated as coastal waters. This has been done to ensure that targets fit in as closely as possible with the situation in the middle of the 20th century. The IJsselmeerpolders were not included in the eel habitat calculations (see 2.1) and are no longer included in the eel regulation. Partly for this reason an estimate has been made of the situation before the closing of the Zuiderzee (now IJsselmeer) (Table 3.5). This area was then coastal water and had a lower level of production.

Table 5 Fishery yield on the basis of Tesch (1000) and Van Drimmelen (1053) in the Netherlands in the mid-20th century *The IJsselmeer is also compared with the former Zuiderzee (see text)*

	Area (ha)	Fisheries yield (kg/ha/year)			Fisheries yield (ton/year)		
		average	from	to	average	from	to
Situation with drained IJsselmeer							
Ditches and channels	67515	14	10	16	945	675	1080
Lakes	214887	21	19	25	4513	4083	5372
Rivers	20867	25	13	36	522	271	751
Coastal waters	377673	4	1	7	1511	378	2644
Comparison of drained IJsselmeer with Zuiderzee							
Zuiderzee	327000	4			1308		
IJsselmeer after closure	327000	21			6867		
Draining	145000	0			0		
IJsselmeer now	182000	21			3822		
Total with Zuiderzee	680942				4976		
Total with IJsselmeer now	680942				7490	5407	9847

The calculation would then result in a total fisheries yield in the Netherlands, including part of the drained IJsselmeer, of an average of approximately 7,500 tonnes of eel (Table 3.5). If the Zuiderzee situation is included, than the amount is 5,000 tonnes of eel. In streams and rivers it must be assumed that eel production from other States has to be added. That has not been allowed for here. In addition it must be assumed that in the mid-20th century some eel was not caught and some had not developed into mature silver eels and were caught as yellow eels, which resulted in loss of yield. It is not known how large a proportion of the yield this was.

Probably in many polders relatively more silver eels or yellow eels were caught than in larger systems. Furthermore, this was before hydroelectric power plants, and there were fewer pumping stations, but the effect on the eel at the time is unknown. On the basis of the above considerations, a conservative estimate of the total yield of silver eel without anthropogenic influence and including part of the drained IJsselmeer would amount here to 15,000 tonnes for the Netherlands. If this is based on the former Zuiderzee, instead of the partly drained IJsselmeer, then the estimate would amount to approximately 10,000 tonnes. These estimates must be considered as a minimum. Because of the lack of information on yields in coastal waters, the difficulty of fishing them and the relatively large area of coastal water in the Netherlands, both of the above estimates could be easily doubled.

From an ecological point of view that would imply that the coastal waters of the Netherlands are equally important for the production of eel as inland waters. In the present situation this would not be a true reflection of practice, but we do know that in the mid-20th century there were large numbers of elvers in the waters of Zeeland, Zuid Holland and the Wadden Sea and these were harvested. The target percentage migration for silver eel in the eel regulation is 40% of the original migration without anthropogenic influence. On the basis of the above estimates this would amount to 4,000 – 6,000 tonnes for the Netherlands.

4 *Estimate of current migration*

The current migration of silver eels can be estimated in several ways:

1. Based on direct measurement or counts
2. By calculation on the basis of the reference situation, the trend and the anthropogenic mortality of silver eel
3. By calculation based on mark-recapture studies
4. By calculation using models based on actual stocks of glass or yellow eels, and the mortality rate up to and including maturity

Combinations of the second and third methods have been used below in respect of the IJsselmeer, where relatively numerous data are available, and analyses based on applying the fourth method have also been used. In the Netherlands there is no measuring system available, or probably even possible, which could be used to apply the first method. The fourth method, in addition to adequate monitoring, required the development of adequate population dynamic models, which are already available for the IJsselmeer and are otherwise currently being processed and will be available in the second phase of the current project. With all methods except the first it is also necessary in principle to take account of the spatial distribution of the eel over the various habitats (including coastal waters and upstream areas). Where data was available these factors have been taken into account below.

We note here in advance that the estimates given below are surrounded by great uncertainty. Much of the available information comes from fisheries data and as such applies specifically to the eels which do not escape or migrate to sea.

A global estimate of the migration of silver eels for the whole of the Netherlands can be calculated using the second method. However, it is no more than an estimate of the scale of migration. The reference situation is described in section 3.3. The European trend in catches of yellow and silver eels can be derived from the best described European multi-year datasets, which originate from the yellow eel fisheries in the IJsselmeer (to 2001) and fisheries in Sweden (to 2007). These show a decrease to 25% of the 1960 level (Dekker, 2003) which has since dropped to 15% (Dekker, press release). That can be applied to the Dutch target for migration (the reference situation), taking account of the different production figures for each habitat as given in Table 3.5. This results in an estimated production of 1169 tonnes of yellow and silver eel, which must be doubled, as in section 3.3: thus in total around 2300 tonnes per year. Next the production loss for all manner of anthropogenic mortality factors must be deducted. Vriese et al. (2008) estimated that loss at 1250-1550 tonnes per year. Of the difference between production and production loss due to anthropogenic factors (750-1050 tonnes) a proportion will also actually migrate as silver eels. The remainder represents the increase in the biomass of yellow eel, which has not (yet) migrated. Because the longitudinal distribution of the eel is not known on the scale of the Netherlands, all we can estimate here is the order of magnitude of the actual current migration of silver eels from the Netherlands, based on the catch distribution as recorded in Dekker (2008). That would be 30% of 750-1050 tonnes and thus an estimated 225-315 tonnes of silver eel.

In principle it is possible, using mark-recapture studies (3rd method) to arrive at an estimate of silver eel migration independently of the above considerations. However this does not cover the whole of the Netherlands. The studies were carried out in recent years in relation to the Rhine population and the Meuse population, in which there is also an influx of eels originating from other countries (upstream areas).

Mark-recapture estimates are available of the entire downstream-migrating Rhine population of female eels (larger than 50 cm), which passes the Lek, Nieuwe Merwede and Beneden Merwede areas and the Afsluitdijk (Klein Breteler et al., 2007). Including the IJsselmeer part of the Rhine stock, the total biomass of these was 600-1000 tonnes in 2004 and 2005. Because there were no recaptures at all in the IJsselmeer, the estimate is very much open to debate. The estimate for those years excluding the IJsselmeer (and IJssel) is 366-730 tonnes. The estimates were made using coloured marks, but there is doubt about how recognisable the marks are, and how long they last. These estimates must therefore be regarded as maximum estimates. In 2006 a different marking method was used (Floy tag) which did not have this problem (Vriese et al., 2007). The female eel population > 50 cm that migrated via the Waal (Nieuwe Merwede and Beneden Merwede) was then estimated at 398 tonnes. Based on these studies an annual migration in the order of around 400 tonnes of female silver eel > 50 cm along Nieuwe Merwede, lower Merwede and Lek was taken as the best estimate of the Rhine population. Here it must be noted that beyond (seawards of) these locations there are still substantial fisheries which can reduce the cited quantity of silver eel. A maximum estimate of that influence, based on known silver eel catches in the Rhine (Dekker et al., 2008), is 90 tonnes. This reduces the order of magnitude to 310 tonnes. These eels originate partly from the Netherlands and partly from other countries (mainly Germany). Telemetry studies clearly show that at least half of such female silver eels released in Cologne reach Xanten (near the Dutch border) in the same year. In theory this could indicate 1) a passage of $2 \times 400 = 800$ tonnes of such eels by Cologne, and a production of 0 tonnes at the Dutch end of the Rhine, or 2) a negligible migration by Cologne, (and by the Dutch border) and a production of 400 tonnes at the Dutch end of the Rhine, or 3) a combination of these scenarios. If a quantity of 400 tonnes was supposed to have been produced in Dutch waters (here estimated as being in the order of 100 km² of Rhine branches (according to Dekker, 2008), this would imply a higher production in recent years in this Rhine section of the great rivers than in the historical situation. This does not seem likely. The alternative of a production of 800 tonnes in Germany and the absence or temporary standstill of the migration of 400 tonnes in Germany is also fairly unlikely, for the same reasons.

The production in the Dutch section of the Rhine is derived, as above, from the estimated historical situation, (25 kg/ha/year in rivers; See Table 3.5) and the European trend in catches of yellow and silver eels, which shows a decline to 15% of the 1980 level. For a water surface in the order of 100 km² of the Rhine branches (according to Dekker, 2008) this means 10000 x 25 x 0.15/1000 = 37.5 tonnes of silver eels. Minimum and maximum estimates of the quantity of silver eel entering the Netherlands from Germany via the Rhine are therefore 0 and (400 – 37) tonnes = 363 tonnes of female silver eels respectively; both of which are considered unlikely here. The actual quantity entering from Germany will be somewhere in between, and is more likely to be in the order of 300 tonnes, in view of the limited opportunities for production in the Rhine branches. Telemetric studies show that around 11% of the ‘German’ eels, migrate through the IJsselmeer. This would result in a quantity of no more than 0.11 x 300 = 33 tonnes. As the same research also shows that 10% of the silver eel coming out of the IJssel also passes the Afsluitdijk, this would imply a migration via the Afsluitdijk of 3.3 tonnes of ‘German’ eels. It would also mean that the entire silver eel catch in the IJsselmeer is based on catching “German” eels. The total silver eel production of the IJsselmeer itself would then, through the premature catch of yellow eels, be estimated at zero. And the total migration from the IJsselmeer would then be estimated at 3 tonnes, in round figures. This estimate of the migration from the IJsselmeer is thus based on the maximum estimate of the ‘German’ silver eel.

The IJsselmeer produces a catch of 40 tonnes of silver eel (Dekker et al., 2008). Based on the minimum estimate of German silver eel, this would imply that that catch of 40 tonnes of silver eel in the IJsselmeer is the IJsselmeer’s “home-grown” production. However, there seems no reason to assume that the fisheries mortality figure of 90%, taken from the telemetry study, should not apply to such ‘home-grown’ silver eel. Migration via the Afsluitdijk would then be estimated at around 4 tonnes. This is in the same order of magnitude as the maximum estimate and the estimates made by Dekker (Table 5.10, see 5.3).

A mark-recapture estimate was also made of female silver eel in the Maas (Winter et al, 2007). This was also carried out with female silver eel marked with transponders. The migrating population was estimated near Linne and near Lith/Alphen. Assuming a comparable weight per fish to the Rhine silver eel, the biomass at Lith was estimated at 76-115 tonnes. At Linne the biomass was smaller by a factor of 2.5. The difference is explained by the influx (immigration) from tributaries (in the case of the Rhine this was far less significant in the Dutch section). The Meuse therefore yields in the order of 100 tonnes of silver eel. With the existing data it is not easy to estimate what proportion of these eels originate from other countries. But considering the significantly lower estimate of the Meuse population in Linne (compared with Lith), and estimates made by the Belgian researcher Verbiest (verbal comments), the quantity is presumed to be small.

Pilot projects which have been running in the Rijnlands Boezem and the Veluwe Randmeren since 2007, have also produced migratory data on silver eel (Spierts & Caldenhoven, 2008). Using the mark-recapture method it was estimated that around 140,000 and 35,000 female silver eel migrated from the Rijnlands Boezem and Veluwe Randmeren respectively. That would suggest that more migrate from Rijnland than the production level according to the target.

Based on the above information the following conclusions can be drawn. The total current migration of silver eel from the Netherlands, as far as this can be extrapolated from the target and trend, and based on native Dutch production, is in the order of 225 to 315 tonnes. This refers to both males and females.

Mark-recapture estimates of the currently migrating female eel populations of the Rhine and Meuse lead to migration estimates of 300 and 100 tonnes respectively. Of these a proportion originate from other countries, mainly from the Rhine, and the quantity is estimated here as being in the order of 300 tonnes. This still refers just to females. It is not possible to determine from existing data how many male silver eels are produced in these river basins. They will largely have originated in the lower-lying polder areas in the Netherlands, where a proportion of professional fishing is concentrated (Tien & Dekker, 2005). A supplementary migration of silver eel from the Scheldt and Eems of male eels from the more isolated polder areas which belong to the Rhine basin (Friesland, Noord-Holland) of an estimated total of 100 tonnes (order of magnitude) is not inconceivable, but cannot be further corroborated by the existing data. Given the annual catch of 140 tonnes of silver eel in the “other” inland waters (Dekker et al., 2008) and the relatively effective fishing which can be achieved there, that is considered here to be a maximum estimate. Based on the river basins, a total quantity of $300 + 100 - 300 + 100 = 200$ tonnes of migrating silver eel from native Dutch production can be calculated in this way. This is of the same order of magnitude as the estimate using the target and the trend. Moreover, there is a non-Dutch proportion of (in the magnitude of) 300 tonnes, mainly from the Rhine, which migrates into the Netherlands, and of which (also in the magnitude of) 100 tonnes are caught in the Netherlands, and 200 tonnes migrate. The total estimated migration from the Netherlands thus comes to 400 tonnes.