CITES listed species and fisheries crime

Glass eels trafficking

Miguel Ángel Pacheco
Guardia Civil
Environmental Protection Service (SEPRONA)
A 17000 kms journey: Eels migrated from Sargasso Sea to spawn areas at European rivers where after been pouched were sending to Hong Kong through Athens to be served as “delicatessen” in East Asian restaurants.

It can not be possible breeding in captivity so it is necessary to fish baby eels for aquaculture
In 2009 *Anguilla anguilla* was listed in Appendix II CITES and Annex B EU Regulation RGTO CE 338/98

Currently situation: **ZERO EXPORT QUOTA** (forbidden export outside EU territory) for live glass eels (specimen sized below 12 cms)

**SPANISH REGULATION:**
Available commercial and/or sport fishing under Licence in País Vasco, Cantabria, Asturias, Murcia, Comunidad Valenciana and Cataluña and **forbidden** fishing in Galicia and Andalucía
CRIMES UNDER INVESTIGATION

- Environmental crime - Illegal fishing
- Smuggling - Illegal export
- Money laundering
- Falsification of documents
- Criminal Group Organization (CGO)

1Spanish Criminal Code: Art 332 – Whoever hunts or fishes endangered species, ..., against the laws or provisions of a general nature that protect species of wild fauna, or who trade or traffics with them ... shall be punished ...
Eels “BUSINESS”: high value mean high profits

Traffickers pay till 325 €/kg to poachers

Chinese Companies pay till 925 €/kg to Spanish traffickers

Chinese Companies win over 5000 €/kg after fed eels for 6 months
From a real example - Op ABAÍA

Per 378 Kgs:
- Outgoings: 186,835 €
- In: 349,650 €
- Profit x 378 kgs ≈ 163,000 €

Benefit for Spanish Organization
- x Kg: 430 €

1 Kg glass eel ≈ 675 Kgs valid adult meet eel

Estimated final profit for Chinese Company x 378 kgs
- 1,890,000 € x 378 kgs

10 Tns smuggled during season 2016/2017 with a profit estimated at 10 million €
General Overview

Modus Operandi: Smuggling from airports as cargo. Customs declaration as other species (ex: *Mugil cephatus*)

- 30 people under arrest
- 2,000 kgs of glass eels seized
- 15 companies envolved
- Routes detected from Spain/Portugal to China
- Cooperation with Portuguese Law Enforcement Agencies (GNR and ASAE)
Modus Operandi (II)

OP BLACK GLASS / LAKE (I) (2015)

Modus Operandi: Smuggling in passengers suitcases as personal luggage

- Difficulties to prove that passengers could have belong to a CGO
- Administrative offence Vs Crime fault
- 19 People under investigation (smuggling, belonging to a criminal network). 8 arrest warrants for Chinese citizen
- 700 kgs of glass eels seized
Mandatory to prove in Court that glass eels at the end of the chain are coming from Spain waters.
THE RELATIONSHIP CHART BETWEEN COUNTRIES
Preliminary Phase

Police work: GPS tracking, wire taps, surveillance

Analysis of fish caches, transport docs, TRACES

Laboratory identification
In Spain:

- 7 house and warehouse searches
- 1,100 kg of glass eels seized
- 5 people under arrest
- 1,000,000 euros in cash
- 5 vehicles (1 truck, 1 van, 3 luxury cars) seized valued over 300,000 euros
- 34 bank accounts blocked and 6 houses and properties seized
- Promissory notes valued over 4,000,000 euros

In Greece:

- 5 house and warehouse searches
- 1,000 kg of glass eels seized
- 9 people under arrest
- 6 vehicles (1 truck)
Money laundering (I)

FAKE INVOICE

MUGIL
(Mugil cephalus)

GLASS EELS

ANGULAS ROSET → EUROFARM → CHINESE HOLDING

CHINESE COMPANY

MONEY

“HAWALA”
SYSTEM: Paying in cash

COMPENSATION / MONEY DOES NOT TRAVEL
"HAWALA", "CHOP" o "FEI-CH’IEN"
Once the shipment arrives at Hong Kong, targets in Spain get money in cash from Chinese cooperators who have businesses in Madrid

Money seized during Operations Suculencias (110,000 €) and Abaía (249,000 €) after being paid by Chinese citizens.
SYSTEM 2: Simulating fish sales

Spanish target send a shipment of mugil (*Mugil cephalus*) to Hong Kong. In return Chinese target pays more than 100% rise of real value

Real invoice
0,15 €/fish

Fake invoice
1,10 €/fish

135.000 esp

161.055 €

20.250 €
INTERPOL
Environmental Security
Project Scale
Guardia Civil
Environmental Protection Service
Environmental Central Unit

mapacheco@guardiacivil.es