

# Japan, neighbors agree to moves to protect eels

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In this June 13, 2014 file photo, a menu of eel dish is displayed at an eel specialized restaurant in Tokyo. Japan has agreed to cut purchases of eel fry from neighboring East Asian countries by 20 percent as part of moves to protect the endangered species. The agriculture ministry reported the agreement with China, South Korea and Taiwan, reached Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2014 at the end of a meeting on conservation measures for eels. It calls for reducing eel hauls by 20 percent for one year, beginning in November. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko, File)

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The agriculture ministry said the agreement with China, South Korea and Taiwan, reached Wednesday, calls for reducing eel hauls by 20 percent for one year, beginning in November.

The countries also agreed to take other measures to try to save the species and limit eel catches, including setting up an organization to coordinate management of the industry.

The Japanese eel is a popular summertime delicacy, served roasted with a sweet and savory sauce over rice. It was put on the international conservation "red list" earlier this year, indicating it faces a very [high risk](#) of extinction due to overfishing.

Efforts to farm eels have made slow progress due to their complicated migratory patterns. Unlike salmon, which migrate inland to spawn but spend their lives at sea, eels are spawned in remote areas of the ocean and then migrate inland, only returning to the sea to reproduce. Japanese eel farmers buy most of the elvers they raise from the three other countries involved in the talks.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, various factors are hurting the species, including barriers along waterways, pollution and changes in ocean conditions.

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