

PRESENT LANDUSE PATTERN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
PRAWN CULTURE IN THE WEST COAST OF SRI LANKA

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Recent developments in aquaculture has greatly influenced the present landuse pattern in the Western Coastal areas of Sri Lanka. Areas of grass land, bare land, saltmarshes and mangroves along the coastal belt are considered potential areas for prawn culture. The present study was carried out using aerial photographs, land use maps LANDSAT data and aquaculture development plans together with personal interviews to assess the social impact of developing these lands in aquaculture.

More than 98% of the land in demand for aquaculture belongs to the state and are presently utilized for various purposes by the communities living in the coastal areas. Grass land, bare land and salt marshes support the traditional animal husbandry practices, while mangrove and the lowlying areas serve as nursery grounds for the economically important fish and prawn species. While aquaculture ventures provide employment and are income generating, careful consideration should be given to social aspects in developing prawn culture in coastal area.