

## Why plant in former fishponds?

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Major denudation of mangroves and beach forests continues in the Philippines. Much of this is due to charcoal production and the conversion of parts of these areas for various uses (fishponds, recreational facilities, etc.) that has lead to degradation or clearing.

A significant trend however has been noted in the utilization of such areas for fish and prawn culture. According to data from the Forest Management Bureau , hundreds of thousands of hectares of ponds which were converted from mangal forest in the mid-80's, have now become idle. From 1985 to 1990, records show that land utilization for fish ponds grew from 425,000 to 755,000 hectares nationwide. This figure remained stable through the next decade, but then saw a dramatic drop to 91,000 hectares in 2005.

The data is consistent with reports from the prawn and fish culture industry that experienced much economic loss in this period due to virus stains that stunted Philippine stock as well as other economic factors that ultimately did not make for a viable enterprise.

Despite major reduction in fishpond activity, much ownership of seaside fishponds remains with families. And due to high costs in re-conversion of the land into other purposes, majority of the unused 654,000 hectares remains in idle or slow regenerative state. In this lies the potential of mangrove and beach forest sanctuaries in private, family-owned seaside properties.