

## Shrimp aquaculture

# Mangroves make way

**The Tanzanian government has given the nod to the Rufiji Delta shrimp project**

**T**he Tanzanian government has decided to give the green signal to the proposed large-scale shrimp farm venture in the Rufiji Delta. According to information reaching the Mangrove Action Project (MAP) from a correspondent in Tanzania some time ago, "The government here is in favour of the Rufiji Delta prawn project though most of the NGOs and some government conservation organizations and even the Fisheries Department are against it. This is in addition to several villagers in Rufiji Delta who do not want this project. In any case, the whole project has moved beyond scientific facts to politics. Official approval may be announced any time."

That approval was finally announced recently and many industry spokespersons from near and far seem to be speaking of this event as if it were a major victory for the aquaculture industry. Yoshi Hirono, a shrimp farming consultant and general manager of the African Fishing Company's shrimp farming project in Tanzania, reported, "On 19 November, the cabinet of the Tanzanian government met and unanimously voted to support the Integrated Prawn Project without any conditions except the monitoring program organized by the environmental gurus. The Integrated Prawn Project was approved to develop 6,000 hectares of ponds and a hatchery on Bwejuu Island, as described in the Environmental Impact Assessment."

"We did what it took to convey to the relevant ministries that sustainable prawn aquaculture could be undertaken in Tanzania," he continued. "The Government of Tanzania was set back by malicious critics from environmental organizations and some NGOs. In spite of strong opposition from the donor

countries against our project, the government made a historical but wise and gutsy decision."

Supposedly, all that remains flow for final approval is an 'official' letter of the decision to approve the project by the cabinet from the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism before proceeding with further surveys and investigations.

Those opposed to this project are by no means resigned to just let things happen as industry wants. According to Paul Nnyiti of the Wildlife and Conservation Society of Tanzania, there is still much more that can be done: "The way I see it, we may end up appealing to the world to help put out facts on the destructiveness of the project in order for the government to change its present stand on this huge project. Alternatively, we have to work with the Director of Forests, who is in charge of mangroves, to prohibit the project."

#### Networking tour

One of the regions that a team from MAP plans to visit during a proposed networking tour of East Africa next February is the Rufiji Delta. MAP will then be able to report in more detail about these developments and the counter-strategies that are being proposed by the local NGOs and communities living in the region. 📍

This piece is based on the website of the Mangrove Action Project