

Somalia (Somali Democratic Republic)

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Location and area

Somalia is a republic in eastern Africa, bordered on the north by the Gulf of Aden, on the east and south by the Indian Ocean, on the south-west by Kenya, on the west by Ethiopia, and on the north-west by Djibouti. The total area is 637,700 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

A narrow coastal plain borders the Gulf of Aden in the north. A series of mountain ranges, with average elevations of between 900 and 2,150 m, dominates the northern part of the country. To the south, the interior consists of a rugged plateau, ranging in elevation from about 500 m to less than 180 m in the extreme south. A wide coastal plain, which has many sand dunes, borders the Indian Ocean.

The country's two major rivers are found on the southern plateau: the Shabeelle in the central area, and the Genale further south. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

The climate of Somalia ranges from tropical to subtropical and from arid to semi-arid desert. Temperatures usually average 28° C, but may be as low as 0° C in the mountain areas and as high as 47° C along the coast. The monsoon winds bring a dry season from September to December and a rainy season from March to May. The average annual rainfall is only about 280 mm. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

Somalia has few natural resources. The grasslands are suitable only for grazing livestock. The fertile land in the Genale and Shabeelle valleys and in some coastal areas is used for crop farming.

Somalia is one of the world's poorest countries. Since the early 1990s its economy has been in a state of collapse because of civil war and its aftermath. The principal occupation in Somalia has traditionally been the raising of livestock. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

According to Markov et al. (1988) hardly any peatlands occur in Somalia. Very small swamps are found along the river Shebeli.

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 229 km² of histosols exist in Somalia and 3,588 km² of gley soils.