

Turkmenistan (Republic of)

Last updated: 31-01-2004

Location and area

Turkmenistan is a republic in Central Asia, bordered on the north by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, on the east by Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, on the south by Afghanistan and Iran, and on the west by the Caspian Sea. Its land area totals 488,100 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Turkmenistan's terrain consists largely of plains, nearly all of which are occupied by the Kara Kum Desert and its oases. Four fifths of the country lies at an elevation of 500 m or less. The Akdzhakaya Depression, located in the north-central part of the country, is the lowest point in the republic at 81 m below sea level. Foothills and mountains rise along the southern and easternmost borders, some of which exceed 3,100 m. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Water

Surface-water in Turkmenistan is scarce. Mountain run-off is slight and quickly dissipates in the desert. Rivers that originate outside the republic constitute the main surface-water features. The Amu Darya, which forms part of the country's border with Uzbekistan, and the Murgab, which originates in Afghanistan, are the two largest permanent rivers. Extensive canal systems provide irrigation and drinking water. The Kara Kum Canal, which diverts water from the Amu Darya to the southern portions of the country, is the longest canal in the former USSR and one of the longest in the world. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

The climate is desert continental, with cold winters and very hot summers. For most of the country the average daily temperature in January ranges from -6° to 5° C, while in July the average temperature is 27° to 32° C. Average annual precipitation ranges from 75 to 400 mm, although two thirds of the country receives 150 mm or less. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

Turkmenistan is largely uninhabited due to desert terrain that covers more than 80 % of the country. Agriculture is a leading sector of Turkmenistan's economy. Turkmenistan's primary crop is cotton (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 358 km² of histosols exist in Turkmenistan and 90,645 km² of gley soils.