

Tajikistan (Republic of) (Tadzhikistan)

Last updated: 31-01-2004

Location and area

Tajikistan is a republic in Central Asia, bordered on the north by Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, on the east by China, on the south by Afghanistan, and on the west by Uzbekistan. The total area is 143,100 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Mountains occupy 93 per cent of Tajikistan's territory, and almost half of the republic lies at an elevation of 3,000 m or higher. Its eastern part includes the bulk of the high Pamirs region, including several mountain ranges. In the northeast is Ismail Samani Peak, which at 7,498 m is the highest mountain in the Pamirs and also in the former USSR. Only about 7 % of the republic's land area is arable because of the mountainous terrain. Large glaciers feed numerous swift-flowing streams, endowing the region with substantial hydroelectric potential. Lowland areas are confined to the Fergana Valley in the republic's extreme north, and to the lower reaches of tributaries of the River Amu Darya in the republic's southeast. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Water

The major rivers are the Syr Darya, which flows through the Fergana Valley; the Zeravshan, located in the north-east; and Kofarnihon, Vakhsh, and Panj, tributaries of the Amu Darya that together drain more than three quarters of the republic's territory. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

The climate is extremely continental, with much variation in climatic conditions. Temperatures can reach highs of 48° C and lows of -63° C. Great contrasts in temperature exist between alpine and lowland areas. While the average daily temperature in July is greater than 31° C in the valleys, it is less than 10° C in the mountains. Precipitation is meagre overall, although mountains in the west receive an average of more than 1,600 mm per year. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

The principal crop is cotton, which is grown on irrigated lands in the far north and southeast. Grain, primarily wheat, is grown extensively on non-irrigated lands. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

According to Dokturowsky (1938), "Moore" in the Pamiro-Alaya range are rare and poorly developed.

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) no histosols exist in Tajikistan and 3,166 km² of gley soils.