

Mali (Republic of)

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Location and area

Mali is a landlocked republic in western Africa, bordered on the northeast by Algeria, on the east by Niger, on the south by Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea, and on the west by Senegal, and Mauritania. The area of the country is 1,240,192 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Most of Mali consists of low plains broken occasionally by rocky hills. In the southeast the Hombori Mountains rise to 1,155 m, and in the southwest the Bamouk and Manding Mountains are separated by an area of sandy lowlands north and northwest of the River Niger, which cuts an arc across Mali. The northern third of the country lies within the Sahara. In the west is a part of the Sahel, a semi-arid transitional zone between the savannah areas of the south and the Sahara desert to the north. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

The climate of the parts of Mali outside the Sahara is hot and dry with average temperatures ranging from about 24° to 32° C in the south, and higher in the north. Annual rainfall declines from about 1,400 mm in the south to some 1,100 mm at Bamako and less than 125 mm in the north. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

Mali is a predominantly agricultural country. The most valuable resource is the River Niger, of which the water is used for irrigation. Prolonged droughts badly affect livestock herds and food production, and desertification is a major environmental problem. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Wetlands

In Central Mali, the river Niger is joined by its tributary, the River Bani and forms a vast inland delta (77,700 km²), known as the Niger Inner Delta, which consists of a maze of channels, swamps, and shallow lakes. The soil of the Inner Delta area is generally sandy. (www.africanfront.com/water_sheds/water_sheds2/water_sheds4.php)

According to Howard-Williams & Thompson (1985) the Niger Inner Delta covers 20,000 km² in the wet season and 3,900 km² in the dry season. According to Markov et al. (1988) up to 40,000 km² of "peatlands" are located along the rivers Bani and Niger and around lakes.

Peatlands

In 2002 underground subterranean peat seams, resulting from former lakes, were burning under desert sand in the Timbuktu region (Clarke 2003, Svensen et al. 2003).

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) no histosols exist in Mali and 44,564 km² of gley soils.

Still to be checked :

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