

# **Central African Republic**

**Last updated: 30-01-2004**

## **Location and area**

Central African Republic (CAR) is a landlocked republic in central Africa, bordered on the north by Chad, on the east by Sudan, on the south by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo, and on the west by Cameroon. The CAR has an area of 622,436 km<sup>2</sup>. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Topography**

The CAR is situated on the northern edge of the River Congo basin. Most of the land is a plateau that ranges in elevation from about 600 to 800 m, and which forms the watershed between drainage northward to Lake Chad and southward to the Congo system. Two ranges of hills in the north and northeast rise to maximum heights of about 1,400 m. Most of the country has savannah vegetation. Open grassland is found in the extreme north, and a dense rainforest covers most of the southwest

The country is drained by two major river systems, the Shari (Chari) in the north and the Ubangi in the south. The Shari drains into Lake Chad, and its main tributaries in the CAR are the Logone, Ouham, and Bamingui. The Ubangi is a tributary of the Congo. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Climate**

The climate of the CAR is tropical, being hot and humid. Temperatures vary little and average about 26° C. Tornadoes and floods are common at the onset of the rainy season, which lasts from May to November. Annual rainfall varies from about 1,800 mm in the Ubangi valley to about 750 mm in the semi-arid northeast and east of the country. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Land use**

About 37 % of the CAR was forested in 2000 and the government is attempting to protect the forests from over-exploitation. About 3 % of the total land area is suitable for crops (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

## **Wetlands**

Large areas of swamp forests, inundated throughout the year, exist around the Ndoki river in the southwest of the Central African Republic (Blom 2001).

## **Peatlands**

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 43 km<sup>2</sup> of histosols exist in the CAR and 23,384 km<sup>2</sup> of gley soils.