

Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

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Location and area

Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), republic in western Africa, bordered on the north by Mali and Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), on the east by Ghana, on the south by the Gulf of Guinea, and on the west by Liberia and Guinea. The country has an area of 322,462 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Large and deep lagoons fringe the eastern half of the coast of the Côte d'Ivoire. Bordering the coast, a zone of dense tropical forests extends about 265 km inland in the east and west and about 100 km in the centre. Beyond this, in the north and centre, lies an extensive savannah. The western part of the country adjacent to the border with Guinea and Liberia is the only area of uplands, with mountain chains in the Odienné and Man regions. Several summits rise to more than 1,500 m.

The principal rivers are the Sassandra, Bandama, and Comoé. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

Côte d'Ivoire has a tropical climate, with generally abundant rainfall. The average annual temperature is 26 C. Average annual rainfall varies from about 1,900 mm in the coastal region to about 1,150 mm in the savannah. The south has two rainy seasons, from March to July and from September to November. In the central areas the rainy seasons are March to May and July to November. In the north there is only one rainy season, from June to October. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

The principal resources of the Côte d'Ivoire are its relatively rich soils, which favour agriculture, and its forests, which contain dense stands of commercially valuable hardwoods. The central band of the Côte d'Ivoire is covered by forest. The production of timber is of major economic importance.

Côte d'Ivoire is one of the world's leading producers of cocoa and coffee. Pineapples and banana exports, mainly to the European Union, are also important. The government actively encouraged the development of oil palm and rubber plantations as a means of diversifying the economy. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

Cole (1973) mentions scattered grass-herb swamps in the Cavalley river valley near the border with Liberia

Kawalec (1976) describes peatforming mangrove-communities (with *Rhizophora* and *Raphia sassandrensis*) developing on fluvial-marine sediments in the Lower Guinea coast.

According to Lassoudière (1976) many swamp valleys can be found in the Ivorian coastal area (cf. Dudal 1980), of which Agneby marsh is the most important one. Agneby marsh covers an area of 120 km² and largely contains peat soils, but also clay soils.

Kivinen & Pakarinen (1981) mention the presence of peatland in Ivory Coast but present no estimates for its area. Bord na Mona (1984/1985) and Shrier (1985), referring to the FAO/UNESCO 1971-1981 Soil Map of the World 1:5,000,000, mention a histosol area resp. “mire area” of 320 km² on recent alluvial deposits along the River Agneby, near Abidjan. Andriessé (1988) uses this figure for the organic soils, whereas Schneider & Schneider (1990), Pfadenhauer et al. (1993), and Lappalainen & Žurek (1996c) use it for the peatland area.

According to Markov et al. (1988) “peatlands” in the delta of the river Agneby occupy some 2,000 km², with peat thicknesses of about 5 – 7 m and peat with 50 – 70 % organic matter. Lappalainen & Žurek (1996c) mention a “peatland” area of 320 km² (WEC 1992).

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 688 km² of histosols exist in Côte d’Ivoire and 6,130 km² of gley soils.

Mire and peatland losses

According to Lassoudière (1976) 30 km² of the 120 km² large Agneby marsh were already in banana cultivation in 1976. Lappalainen & Žurek (1996c) state that 1/3 of the peatland area of Agneby marsh is under cultivation.

Still to be checked:

Portères, R. 1950. Terres organiques tourbeuse de l’ancien delta de l’Agneby (Côte Ivoire) et leur conduite en culture bannanière. *Agronomie Tropicale* **5**:268-291.