

17. Africa - Equatorial and Subequatorial zone

Distribution and climate

Equatorial

5° on both sides of equator in Africa, hot, wet, humid all year round (no seasons) rainfall mostly in the afternoons.

- Temperature: 25°-35°C
- Precipitation: 2000-3000 mm, convectional rainfall mainly

Subequatorial

5°-15° on both sides of equator in Africa (large belt around the Congo basin). Distinctive *wet season* and *dry season – drought period*.

- Temperature: >25°C
- Precipitation: 500-2000 mm

Soils and Hydrology

- soils with red colour, deep soil horizon with small humus cover, poor soil fertility
- *Rivers and basins*: Congo basin with Zaire (Congo) r., Niger r., Zambezi r., L. Victoria, L. Tanganyika, L. Malawi
- *Ocean currents*: warm Guinea, warm Equatorial Counter c., Cold Benguela c.

Fauna and Flora

Equatorial

= greatest *biodiversity* on Earth = “Green hell” = *equatorial rainforest* = “lungs of the Earth” => efficient recycling of the air. Negative effects of deforestation.

- Fauna: gorillas, chimpanzees, parrots, lot of insect species everywhere
- Flora: lianes (climbers), orchids, mushrooms (funguses), shade-loving plants

Subequatorial

= *savannas* border with equatorial rainforest and deserts = transition belt between equatorial and subequatorial zone

- Fauna: very diverse = lion, elephant, panther, hippopotamus, rhinoceros, gazelle, African buffalo, giraffe, hyenas => mix of herbivores and carnivores, lot of rodent species everywhere
- Flora: acacia trees, palm, baobab tree

Population and settlements = concentrated to *river estuaries* or to *fertile lowlands* (Lagos, Port Harcourt, Lomé, Accra, Abidjan, Libreville) or to *gulfs and lakes* (Gulf of Guinea, Lake Victoria, Tanganyika, Malawi). Equatorial rainforests are less populated. Tuaregs.

- especially *Bantu* languages, small literacy rate (50-80%), short life expectancy (35-55 yrs.)

Agriculture = agriculture is *mostly underdeveloped* <=> poor soil fertility, e.g. pastoral agriculture (rearing of sheep, dairy and beef cattle), bit of mechanisation ⇔ old, traditional farming methods, bad road conditions. The least efficient countries: Mauritania, Mali, Niger

- growing of *cocoa* (Ivory Coast – world’s largest cocoa producer)
- *palm oil* (Nigeria – world’s largest producer)
- *coffee, peanuts, bananas, pineapples, rubber* (Liberia), *millet* (Cameroon)
- *rice* in flooded lowlands (valleys), *cotton plantations* – modern technologies (Nigeria)

Industry = most countries belong to economically least DCs, Basic industry but also tourism (Kenya, Tanzania). I.e.

- *mining in Copper belt* (DR Congo = mining of copper, cobalt, gold, uranium, silver and diamonds)
- *timber industry* (Ivory Coast) = deforestation of rainforest
- *oil drilling* (Nigeria, Gabon, Congo)

Social problems = *overpopulation* (extreme urbanization) => *negative effects*: crime, prostitution, drugs, corruption, noise, diseases ⇔ low standards of hygiene, low health care, malnutrition (rural areas), civil/political wars

Keywords:

estuary, deforestation, overpopulation, parrot, biodiversity, malnutrition, equatorial rainforest, savanna, wet/dry season, water surplus/deficiency, acacia/baobab tree, commodity, non-ferrous metals, subsistence/nomadic agriculture