

4. The Tropics

Distribution

15°-30° around both Tropics (Cancer and Capricorn), USA (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah) + Mexico, South America (Argentina), North and SW Africa (Saharan states, Namibia Botswana, RSA), Arabian peninsula, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Inner Mongolia and Australia inland.

Climate

Deserts and semi-deserts = most arid, the driest areas in the world. Great influence of continentality, e.g. Gobi (hot summer 30-40°C, very cold winter -20°C).

- *Temperature*: >40°C
- *Precipitation*: <250 mm = no rainfall or very little rain
- *Humidity*: <10%

Soils

Sandstones, sand, sand, sand and soils with no or very thin topsoil cover.

Hydrology

- Large water deficiency everywhere, except of Nile r., Huang He r., Rio Grande r.,
- *Ocean currents*: cold Canary c., cold Benguela c., cold California c., cold Humboldt and Falkland c., cold West Australian c.

Fauna and Flora

Desert climate => almost all animal groups, but species adapted to extremely dry areas.

- *Fauna*: snakes, camels, scorpions, gnawers,
- *Flora*: cactuses, thorny (sharp) bushes, drought-resistant bushes, clumps of grass <=> *problems with desertification*

Population and settlements

Concentrated mainly to *coastal areas* (Mediterranean sea) or besides *rivers* (Cairo) or to *oasis*. Deserts are almost without inhabitants (Nomads). Arabic, Hotentot, Nile-Saharan languages, language diversity. *Literacy rate* very low especially in African Saharan states (Egypt 51%, Chad 48%, Mali 26%, Niger 16%), Pakistan 44%. *Life expectancy* in Mali 38 yrs., Afghanistan and Niger 35 yrs., Zimbabwe 34 yrs. Mauritania 44 yrs., Tajikistan and Turkmenistan 44 yrs. *Density* = Namibia 2, Botswana and Mauritania 2,5 but Cairo agglomeration and Ferghana valley are most dense areas.

Agriculture and Industry

Agriculture is underdeveloped in African countries <=> poor or no soil fertility (*nomadic and subsistence agro*). Middle East and Libya – oil countries. Low-tech, primitive industry (post-soviet and oil countries – mid-tech). Least DCs. Without foreign economic aid = mostly no existence. USA, Australia, RSA = exceptions.

Social problems

Malnutrition, high death rate, diseases, problems with women acceptance/equality (Arab world), ...

Keywords:

desertification, sandstone, continentality, low literacy rate, primitive industry