



Climate Zones of Africa

Africa has climate zones ranging from very dry to very wet and from very hot to cool. One of Africa's problems in feeding its growing population is that much of the land is too dry in the deserts and steppe for more than subsistence agriculture. Crops in the desert are grown only on oases where underground springs can be tapped for irrigation. The steppe is suitable only for grazing herds that can subsist on sparse grasses. The Savanna is Africa's largest climate zone. It is a vast grassland interspersed with clumps of trees and woodlands. However, the rainfall is seasonal, with long dry periods that make the Savanna unsuitable for growing a wide variety of crops without irrigation. The hot and humid climate of the tropical rainforests supports dense undergrowth and large trees, but the soil is poor and subject to erosion. The most productive regions are the highlands and the Mediterranean climate zone. The highlands are cool because of their elevation and have sufficient rainfall to support mixed agriculture. The Mediterranean regions are along the coasts of North Africa and South Africa. There the climate is mild and rainfall abundant. Fruits, vegetables, and grains are grown in the farms in the Mediterranean climate zone. Unfortunately for Africa, the highlands and Mediterranean climate zone make up only a small part of its area.

MAP: Question 1

Which appears to be the largest climate zone in Africa?

Question 2

What does the nature of the climate zones mean for agricultural productivity in Africa?

Question 3

How can Africans overcome the limitations of the climate zones to improve their agricultural productivity?