

## **AFRICA REVIEW**

### **AN UP-TO-DATE GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUMMARY OF THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

Prepared by : F. Pauwels, P. Van Damme, D. Theeten, C. De Keyser, S. Hoste.

## **BENIN**

1. Official name: People's republic of Benin  
République Populaire du Bénin

### **2. Geography:**

2.1. Situation: Benin is situated between 0°40'E and 3°40'E, 6°N and 12°30'N, in the Gulf of Guinea, West-Africa.

2.2. Total area: 112 622 km<sup>2</sup>.

2.3. Natural regions: a 5 km wide sandy coastal strip is separated from the rest of the country by lagoons. North of these lagoons there are plains, reaching up to 10°N, where the Dassa plateaux divide the country into two hydrographic zones. North of the Dassa plateaux is the Atacara Mountain range with rivers streaming NE to the Niger, while the rivers of the plain discharge in the lagoons or in the sea.

2.4. Climate: hot and moist in the south with two rainy seasons and two dry seasons. Rainfall decreases towards the north. The northern region has one dry season, during which the Harmattan blows, and one rainy season.

### **3. Population:**

3.1. Total population: 4.0 mln (1986), urban population: 35%.

3.2. Population density: 35.9 per km<sup>2</sup>.

3.3. Population growth rate: 2.8% (1986).

3.4. Capital: PORTO NOVO, 144 000 inh. (1981).

Commercial centre: COTONOU, 606 000 inh. (1987).

3.5. Principal languages: Bariba, Dendi, Fon, Mina, Yoruba, French (official),

English.

3.6. Religion: traditional religions, 15% Islam, 15% Catholic.

#### 4. History:

Little is known of the period before the French settlement. Wars among the numerous kings in the South resulted in consecutive enlargement of the defeated kingdoms protected by France. In 1895, France acquired authority in the South and in 1899, after unification with the North, Dahomey became part of French West Africa. Dahomey became independent in August 1960 and changed its name into People's Republic of Benin in 1975.

#### 5. Nature of political system:

Under the 1977 constitution executive power is held by the President, nominated by the "Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin" at a Congress (June 1980) where the National Council of the Revolution instituted a National Revolutionary Assembly (196 members elected by universal adult suffrage). The term of institutions has been increased from to 5 years.

#### 6. Economy:

GDP: agriculture: 48%, industry: 16%, services: 36% (1985).

Employment: agriculture: 70%, industry: 7%, services: 23% (1980).

##### 6.1. Mining:

No mining activities up to 1975. Iron reserves have been localized and petroleum has been found offshore.

##### 6.2. Agriculture:

16% of the total area is arable land or cultivated with permanent crops (1984), of which 2/3 is occupied by subsistence agriculture. Main food products are cassava, sweet potatoes, maize, yam and pulses in the south; in the northern region: sorghum and millet. Oilpalm and coconut produce fats and oil for local consumption and exportation. Small quantities of cotton, tobacco, groundnuts, cocoa and coffee complete the export.

##### 6.3. Livestock:

4% of the total area is permanent pasture (1984). Cattle is kept for social prestige, not for meat production. Besides 700 000 heads of cattle, there are 1 mln sheep, 1 mln goats, some 500 000 pigs and 3-4 mln chickens. Beef for consumption has to be imported.

##### 6.4. Forestry and woodland:

37.5% of the total area (1984). In the northern region there are exploitations of iroko or kambala (*Chlorophora excelsa*), samba and acajou (*Khaya spp.*). In

the south, forests are manmade and consist mostly of teak (*Tectona grandis*). Most of the tropical rainforests are protected in Natural Reserves in order to maintain the game-stock and to control erosion.

#### 6.5. Fishery:

Due to lack of equipment, little seafishing is done. An annual catch of about 25 000 t is made in lakes and rivers.

#### 6.6. Industry:

Recently established textile plants and assembly halls have diversified the industry which was formerly based on the transformation of agricultural products such as palmoil (soap fabrication) and cotton milling. Electrical engineering plants, refineries and textile plants are being constructed.

#### 6.7. Weights, measures and currency:

kg, meter

1 CFA Franc = 100 centimes

1 US \$ = 300.54 CFA Franc (1987)

#### 7. Trade:

Total exports amount to 152 mln US \$ (1985) of which cotton is the most important. Main clients are the EEC, China and Nigeria. Total imports amount to 437 mln US \$ (1985). Main suppliers are the EEC, China, Nigeria and Japan.

#### 8. Miscellaneous:

Literacy: 25%.

World Bank classification: Benin belongs to the low-income economies with a GDP per capita of 260 US \$ (1985).

Membership of international organizations: GATT, ILO, IMF, OAU, UN, WHO, African Development Bank, Arab Bank for Economic Aid in Africa (recipient), Economic Commission for Africa, French Monetary Area, West African Economic Community (observer status), World Bank. Benin is a signatory to the Lomé Convention (EEC-ACP).

Embassy of Benin in Belgium: Observatoriumlaan 5

1080 Brussel

Tel. 02/375.03.17

Belgian Embassy in Benin: Western House 'B', 12th floor 8/10

Broadstreet

P.O. Box 149

Lagos, Nigeria

# **SOUTH AFRICA**

**1. Official name: Republic of South Africa  
Republiek van Suid-Afrika**

## **2. Geography:**

**2.1. Situation: the southern part of Africa, between 22°10'S and 34°50'S.**

**2.2. Total area: 1 221 037 km<sup>2</sup>.**

**2.3. Natural regions: Morphologically it comprises an extensive interior plateau, about 3/4 of its area, and a highly diversified marginal zone. The most prominent relief feature is the Great Escarpment, forming the western, southern and eastern edge of the interior plateau. The west rises over 3000 m on the Natal-Lesotho border. The interior plateau is highest on its margins, but ranges in elevation between 900 m and 1650 m.**

**2.4. Climate: mediterranean in the extreme south, humid subtropical in the extreme southwest, arid to semi-arid in the west, tropical in the north and subtropical highland climate in the highest regions.**

## **3. Population:**

**3.1. Total population: 33 849 000 (1987), urban population: 56%.**

**3.2. Population density: 25.8 per km<sup>2</sup>.**

**3.3. Population growth rate: 2.5% (1980-1985).**

**3.4. Capital: PRETORIA (administrative), 823 000 inh. (1985), CAPE TOWN (legislative), 1 911 000 (1985).**

**3.5. Principal languages: Ndebele, Northern Shoto, Southern Shoto, Swazi, Tswana, Tsanga, Venda, Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans, English (official) and Indian languages.**

**3.6. Religion: christian, muslim, Hindu, traditional African religions.**

## **4. History:**

**When the first European settlement was founded on Table Bay by Dutch and German servants of the East India Company, the indigenous population groups established in South Africa were: Nama and San, west of the Keiriver, and east of it Xhosa, Tamba and Pondo; more north lived the Nguni, the ancestors of the Zulu. The San were gradually exterminated while the Nama migrated to the northwest and most other groups to the east and northeast. After 1657 slaves were imported from West Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, Java and Ceylon.**

The rule of the Dutch East India Company lasted until 1795 when the British temporarily occupied the Cape. A second British occupation in 1806 became permanent. The withdrawal north and east from the Cape of some 10 000 Boers, or farmers, during the decade after 1836 in what is known as the Great Trek, led to the establishment of the Boer republic north and south of the Vaal river. After the Anglo Boer War of 1899 Transvaal and Orange Free State republics became crown colonies. Together with Natal and Cape Colony they formed in 1910 the Union of South Africa. The Union's independence within the British Commonwealth was recognized in 1926. In 1961 the Republic of South Africa was proclaimed outside the Commonwealth. Emancipation efforts of the non-European population were severely stifled. The African National Congress (A.N.C.), created in 1909, was banned in 1960. Discrimination on ethnical criteria, the apartheid, became an official policy together with the creation of artificial homelands for indigenous Africans ("Blacks").

#### 5. Nature of political system:

Presidential republic. The parliament consists of three Houses (House of Assembly, - Representatives and - Delegates). The House of Assembly ("whites") counts 166 members, elected for five years, the House of Representatives ("Coloured") counts 80 members, the House of Delegates (representatives of "Indians") counts 40 members, all directly elected for five years. The majority of the population, the indigenous Africans (or "Blacks") have no representation in parliament. Since 1980 there is also a Presidential Council with 60 members. This council advises the State President on any matter referred by him and on any matter they believe to be of public interest. There are 9 "homelands" created and South Africa considers 4 (Bophutatswana, Venda, Transkei and Ciskei) as independent states, with their own government, legislative body and juridical courts. They are not recognized as such by the international community.

#### 6. Economy:

GDP: agriculture: 5%, industry: 45%, services: 50% (1985).

Employment: agriculture: 17%, industry: 35%, services: 49% (1980).

##### 6.1. Mining:

Over 50 different minerals have been economically extracted. South Africa is the world's leading supplier of gold, platinum, vanadium, chrome, diamond, ferro-chrome and andalusite. It holds the largest-known reserves of manganese, vanadium, platinum, chrome, gold, fluorspar, andalusite and vermiculite. 1981 production figures: diamonds: 9525 mln carats, gold: 656 t, coal: 145-150 mln t, chrome ore: 2.87 mln t, iron ore: over 28 mln t, antimony: 9810 t, copper:

199 425 t, manganese ore: 5 mln t.

## 6.2. Agriculture:

11% of the total area is arable land or cultivated with permanent crops (1984). A variety of crops is produced and marketing is regulated by control boards. The principal field crops are corn, wheat, oats, barley, rye, potatoes, sugar-cane, peanuts, cotton, sunflower, sorghum, vine, citrus fruit and tobacco. Lupines are widely grown as soil improving fodder in the Cape Province, cowpeas are grown as soil improving hay and cash crop in the central High Veld. Sisal and *Phormium tenax* are fibre crops grown in Bantu areas. Deciduous fruit trees are grown in all provinces: apricot, apple, pear, plum, prune, peach and to some minor extent: guava, olive, avocado and papaya, some litchi, mangos and granadilla (*Passiflora edulis*). As tropical fruit pineapples and bananas are grown.

## 6.3. Livestock:

65% of the total area is permanent pasture (1984). Nearly 80% of the total area is used for stock breeding purposes. Wool is the most important pastoral product. About 3/4 of the sheep are meruro sheep and about 4% are karakal sheep. Mohair is produced by the Angora goats who can be raised on land that are inaccessible for sheep. The beef industry of South Africa is based upon Africander cattle, an indigenous breed well adjusted to local conditions. Numerous breeds of cattle are kept on intensive dairy farms: Friesland, Aberdeen, Jersey, Shorthorn, Devon, Red Poll, Brown Swiss, Angus etc. Pig raising is widespread on a small scale.

## 6.4. Forestry and woodland:

3.5% of the total area (1984). Of the original indigenous forests only small remnants remain. Most of the wood and timber comes from plantations. Reforestation with pines, *Eucalyptus grandis*, *Acacia mollissima* (a tanbark wattle) and some poplar used for matchsticks.

## 6.5. Fishery:

South Africa ranks as the first producer of fish and fish products in Africa. Total fish catch (includes tunny, anchovy, pilchard, herring, mackerel, hake and sole) amounted to 600 000 t in 1981 plus marine animals and guano. Fishing is carried out along the coast of south and southwest Africa, the Atlantic side being favored by the cold Benguela current. Seaweed is exported to the Far East and used in production of agar etc.

## 6.6. Industry:

Well developed. The metal industry ranks first: steel, aluminum, pig iron, machinery, automobile assembly, metallic constructions, electrical equipment etc. It is followed by textile, food and beverages, chemicals and paper.

**6.7. Weights, measures and currency:**

kg, meter 1 Rand (Rand) = 100 cents 1 US \$ = 0.4914 Rand (1987)

**7. Trade:**

Total exports amount to 16 523 mln US \$ (1985) of which fuels, minerals and metals represent 39% and manufactures 27%. Total imports amount to 11 469 mln US \$ (1985) of which machinery and transport equipment represent 55%. Main commercial partners are the EEC, the USA and Zimbabwe.

**8. Miscellaneous:**

Literacy: nearly 100% among "white" population, 50% in "black" population.

World Bank classification: South Africa belongs to the upper middle-income economies with a GDP per capita of 2010 US \$ (1985).

Membership of international organizations:

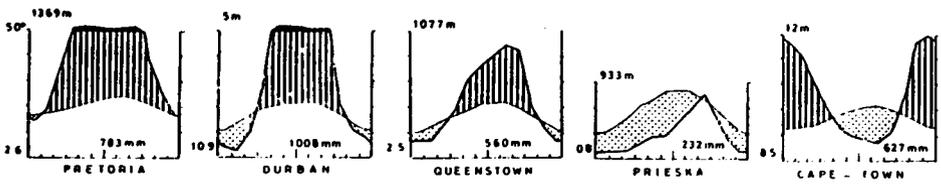
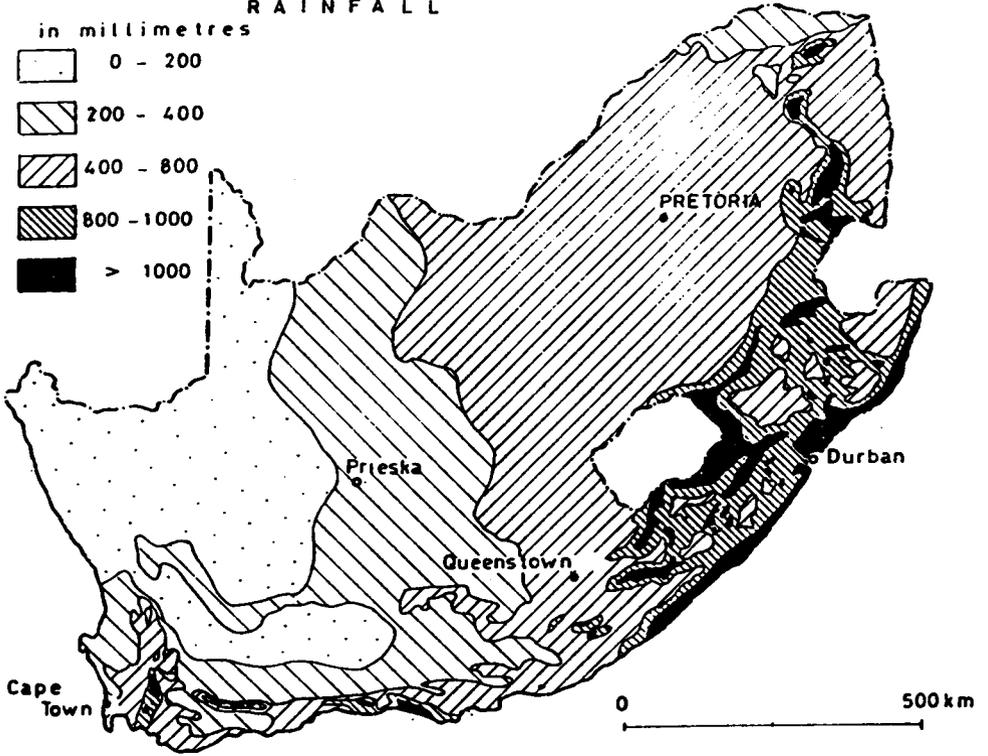
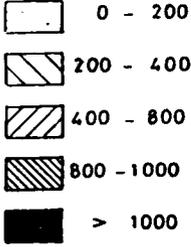
GATT, IMF, UN, WHO, World Bank.

Embassy of South Africa in Belgium: Wetstraat 26/b7  
1040 Brussel  
Tel. 02/230.68.45

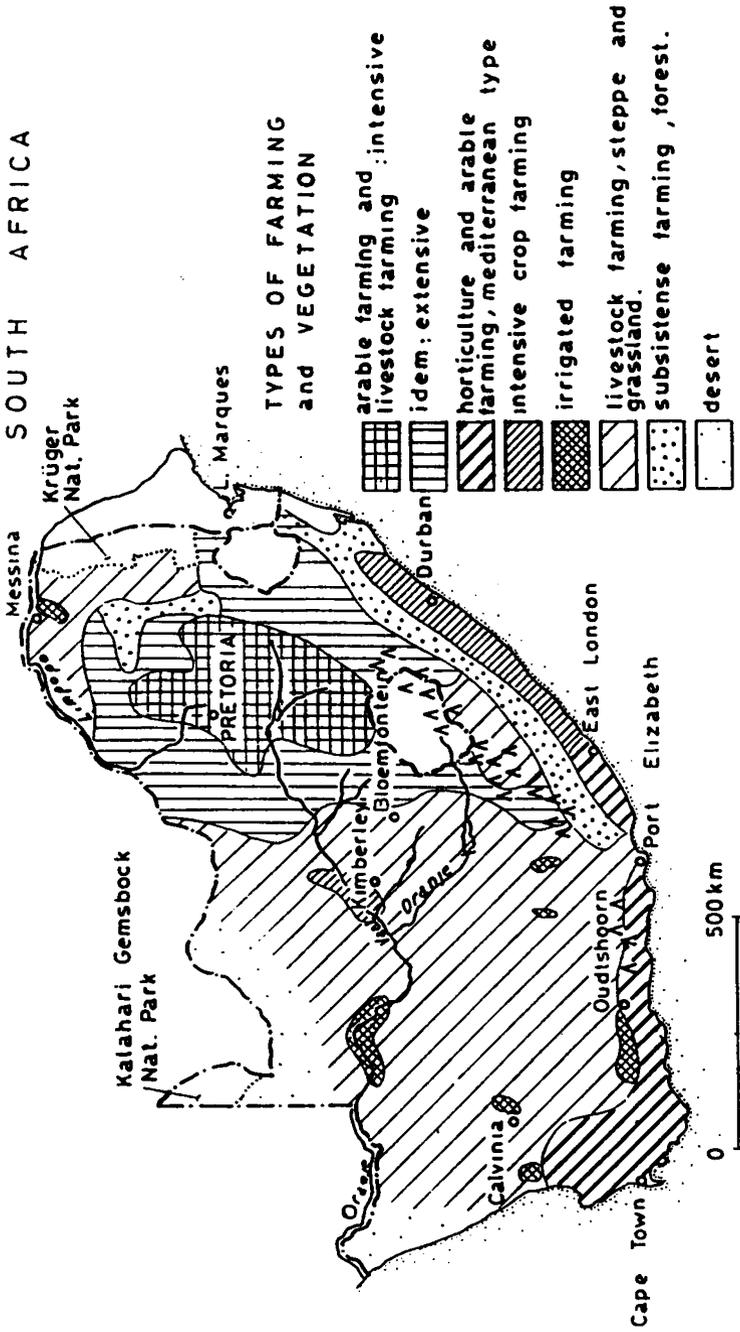
Belgian Embassy in South Africa: 275 Pomona Street  
Muchkreuk  
Pretoria, South Africa  
Cape Town, South Africa

# RAINFALL

in millimetres



# SOUTH AFRICA



BENIN

DISTRICTS

