## Hydrology of Yemen

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## INTRODUCTION

- Location and General Topography
- Yemen is located on the south of the Arabian Peninsula, between latitude 12 and 20 north and longitude 41 and 54east, with a total area estimated at 555000 km2 excluding the Empty Quarter. Apart from the mainland it includes more than 112 islands, the largest of which are Sogatra in the Arabian Sea to the Far East of the country with total area of 3650 km2 and Kamaran in the Red Sea



## **YEMEN:** Basic Information

- Area:
- Cultivated area:
- Population:
  - Rural
  - Urban
  - Growth rate
- Rainfall:

555,000 km<sup>2</sup> 1,200,000 ha 22,1 million 75% 25% 3.5 % / year 50 mm - 800 mm /year average 200 mm / year

## **Socio-economic features**

- Population
- The total population is around 22.1 million (MPD, 2004), of which 74.4 % is rural. The average population density is about 31 inhabitants/km2, but in the western part of the country the density can reach up to 300 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> (lbb province) while in the three eastern provinces of the country the density is less than 5 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>.

## Socio-economic features

 The largest part of the population lives in the Yemen Mountain area in the western part of the country, where rainfall is still significant, although not high in many locations. The hostile environment of the desert and eastern upland areas is reflected by low population density.

# Concentration of population in Yemen



NWRA-Yemen 2005



## **Socio-economic features**

- Agriculture and economy
- Agriculture contributes 25% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Yemen, employs 60% of the population, and provides livelihood for rural residents who constitute about 76% of the total population. Agriculture is characterised by low and uncertain crop yields due to drought, insufficient and erratic rainfall, declining soil productivity due to soil erosion and poor crop management practices, and crop losses due to damage by insects and diseases, and malnutrition resulting from inadequate supply of feed (Figure ).



## **Socio-economic features**

 Cultivated land has expanded from 1.21 thousand hectares in 1990 to 1.28 thousand hectares in 1999, an increase of14% of land for cereals crops, vegetables, fruit, cash crops and animal food.

# Agriculture and food security

- The contribution of the agriculture sector in realizing food security in Yemen is clarified in the following percentage of production vis-à-vis population needs:
- 100% from thin sorghum consumption.
- 7% from wheat consumption.
- 100% from millet consumption.
- 42 from barley consumption.
- 100% from vegetable consumption.
- 89% from fruit consumption.
- 99% from white meat consumption.
- 68% from red meat consumption.



Source: MPD, 2001

## Land resources

 Yemen is among the oldest countries in the world where land and water resources practices have been developed. Terraces erection, rainwater harvesting and dam irrigation techniques were developed since many countries ware trackless waste.

## Land resources

## • Soils

• The country's soils are generally sandy to silty and loamy in the coastal plains, silty to loamy and clay loamy in the mountainous area, and low in nitrogen, phosphorus, and organic matter, In many areas, shallow soils limit the amount of water available for rainfed crops. Soil erosion caused by runoff and/or winds is often serious. Sand and dust storms, which generally blast across the lowlands and highlands, promote soil erosion (ISNAR, 1993).



- Yemen is characterized by varieties of environmental zones. The predominant distinction has given by Bamatraf A. M., 1994 as follows:
- The Coastal Region
- The Mountainous Region
- Eastern plateau

### • The Coastal Region:

This region includes the low coastal plains facing the Red Sea, the Gulf Aden and the Arabian Sea. Its is makes a coastal strip extending to the Omani border in the east towards the southwest to Bab al Mandab, and north wards to the Saudi border. It starches over an area 2000km long and 20-60km wide, with an altitude ranges 0-500m a. m. l. Many seasonally flowing wadis dissect the region. An arid sub-tropical climate dominates the region with average annual rainfall in the range of 50-300 mm. The climate becomes semi-arid subtropical in areas adjacent to the foothills of the western escarpment.

### • The Mountainous Region:

This region includes the most complicated landscapes of the country. It is very irregular and dissected topography, with elevation varies from 500m at the foothills of its western and southern escarpments up to 3700m in the western peaks, then down to 1200m at its north-eastern escarpment. Due to this extreme physiographic diversity, differences in slope and location relative to the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and AI Rub al-Khali, rainfall varies considerably within the region, with annual averages ranging from less than 300 mm to more than 1000mm. This region is divided into three main catchments, the western slopping towards the Red Sea, the southern towards the Gulf of Aden and the north-eastern towards the empty quarter (AI Rub al-Khali). The climate is characteristic of the semi-arid tropics, with limited areas of dry temperate intermountain plains at altitudes above 2000m.

## • Eastern plateau:

This region is bordered by the mountains zone to the west, the southern coastal plains to the south and the empty quarter to the north. It covers vast expanses of sand desert and dissected plateau with elevation ranging from 500m on its northern and southern sides, to about 2400m on its western side. The average rainfall in this region is generally below 200mm, an arid sub-tropical climate dominates its major agricultural lands.

Map 2.3.1: Agroecological zones



## **Agro-climatic systems**

- A classification proposed by UNESCO (1979) can be used. It is based on the ratio between average annual precipitations (P) and annual reference evaporation (E), and in principle marks five different classes:
- - hyper-arid P/E < 0.03
- - arid 0.03 < P/E < 0.25
- - semi-arid 0.25 < P/E < 0.5
- - subhumid 0.5 < P/E < 0.75
- - semi humid P/E > 0.75
- Figure shows the results of this classification. In terms of aridity, the climate in Yemen is shown to vary from hyper-arid (deserts, most of the plateaux, parts of the coastal plains) to subhumid (scattered wetter zones on the Western and Southern Slopes), with perhaps even humid sites on a very small scale in Ibb. Table 2 shows the Physiographic Regions of Yemen

![](_page_22_Figure_0.jpeg)

### Physiographic Regions of Yemen

Physiographic unit	Approx. area (km2)	% of Total of Land	Major Geological Formation	Predominant Great soil Types	Ecological Zones/Vegetation
Coastal Plain (Tihama)	20,300	3.9	Quaternary alluvial deposits.	Torrifluvents, Torripsamments; Ustifluvents, ustipsamments, Ustipsamments, salortheds.	Arid tropical desert; sand dune vegetation of the Red Sea; Acacia spp.
Southern Uplands	12,000	2.3	Tertiary and quaternary volcanics.	Ustifluvents; ustiorthents; torriorthents;rock outcrop.	Semi-arid subtropical mountains; Acacia spp., Juniperus spp., Euphorbia scrub.
Highlands slopes	45,500	8.6	Tertiary and quaternary volcanics; sedimentary rocks; quaternary alluvial deposits.	Rock outcrop; ustiorthents.	Arid to semi arid temperate mountains, Acaciaspp., juniperus
					spp., .
Midland slopes	39,200	7.4	Tertiary and quaternary volcanics; Precambrian shield; sedimentary rock.	Rock outcrop; <i>ustiorthents; torripsamments</i> ; calcareous loamy and sand plains.	Arid subtropical mountains; Acacia spp., weed rich vegetation.
Eastern and Northeastern Desert plateau.	250,200	47.4	Quaternary alluvial deposits; sand sheets and dunes; calcareous sedimental rocky; sand plains.	<i>Torriorthents, torrifuvents;</i> <i>torripsamments</i> , calcareous loamy and sandy plains.	Arid subtropical desert; sand dune vegetation; absent vegetation except for grasses after rainfall.
Coastal and foothills	55,000	10.4	Hills, sand dunes and sheets; grace and sandy to loamy plains	Deep to shallow calcareous sandy to loamy; saline in coastal area; light yellowish in eastern part.	Arid tropical; desert and semi desert vegetation absent by sea-saline grasses; vegetation on hills; water cockles in
					wadi.
Middle Montane highland.	84,500	16.0	Volcanic rock basement in the western part, and calcareous rocky plains in the eastern part; sandy to loamy sedimental complex in wadi.	Sandy to loamy in the western part, and calcareous to loamy in the eastern part.	Arid subtropical; vegetation nearly absent, except some in wadi and on soil and rocky plains.
High Montane.	21,000	4.0	Hills, volcanic rocky plains in the west and calcareous rock in the east; sandy loam in wadi.	Sandy to loamy in the west, and calcareous sandy to loamy in the east.	Arid subtropical; vegetation nearly absent; some trees;
					grasses after rainfall.

## Land use and cover

 Agricultural land consisting of arable land and land under permanent crops forms about 3% (of which about 450,000 ha of mountain terraces is rainfed, 650,000 ha of relatively flatland in the inter-mountain region). Irrigated lands occupy some 489, 000 ha distributed as 98,000 ha spate irrigation, 28,000 ha spring irrigation and 363,000 ha well irrigation.

![](_page_25_Figure_0.jpeg)

# Main Geographical region in Yemen

- The Coastal Plains:
- The Plains are located in the west and southwest and are flat to slightly sloping with maximum elevations of only a few hundred meters above sea level. They have a hot climate with generally low to very low rainfall (< 50mm/year). Nevertheless, the Plains contain important agricultural zones, due to the numerous wadis that drain the adjoining mountainous and hilly hinterland.

# Main Geographical region in Yemen

- The Yemen Mountain Massif:
- This massif constitutes a high zone of very irregular and dissected topography, with elevations ranging from a few hundred meters to 3 760 m above sea level. Accordingly, the climate varies from hot at lower elevations to cool at the highest altitudes. The western and southern slopes are the steepest and enjoy moderate to rather high rainfall, on average 300-500 mm/year, but in some places even more than 1000 mm/year. The eastern slopes show a comparatively smoother topography and average rainfall decreases rapidly from west to east.

# Main Geographical region in Yemen

- The Eastern Plateau Region:
- This region covers the eastern half of the country. Elevations decrease from 1 200 - 1 800 m at the major watershed lines to 900 m on the northern desert border and to sea level on the coast. The climate in general is hot and dry, with average annual rainfall below 100 mm, except in the higher parts. Nevertheless, floods following rare rainfall may be devastating.

## Main Geographical region in Yemen

- The Desert:
- Between the Yemen Mountain Massif and the Eastern Plateau lies the Ramlat As Sabatayn, a sand desert. Rainfall and vegetation are nearly absent, except along its margins where rivers bring water from adjacent mountain and upland zones. In the north lies the Rub Al Khali desert, which extends far into Saudi Arabia and is approximately 500 000 km2 in area. This sand desert is one of the most desolate parts of the world.

## Main Geographical region in Yemen

• The Islands:

The most important of all the islands is Soqatra, where more exuberant flora and fauna can be found than in any other region in Yemen.

![](_page_31_Figure_0.jpeg)

- Land degradation
- Flooding
- Firewood

## • Land degradation

- Due to the physiographic characteristics of the country, most of the arable lands are located within watersheds entities. The accelerating degradation of watershed basins of Yemen has serious economic, ecological, environmental and social implications
- Erosion from the steep basins has resulted in talus fans with coarse gravel and silt along the foothills and gently sloping areas of fine silt along the alluvial plains below the outfalls of wadis in the coastal and interior plains.

- Flooding
- Flooding occurs during monsoon season leading to loss of productive agricultural lands along the wadis, increasing sedimentation and significant widening of down stream wadi bed.

### • Firewood

- The natural vegetation of acacia scrub in the foothills has been degraded by the search for firewood. Natural forests have almost diapered due overcutting for construction, fuelwood, and fodder.
- Currently, there is no innovatory of national forest resources. In addition, there is no detailed data on desertification (e. g. location and extension of sand dunes, movement, and patterns) trends in the degradation of terraces (e.g. ownership, size, impact and magnitude of soil erosion).

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![](_page_37_Figure_0.jpeg)

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#### **Potential evapotranspiration**

كمية البخر - نتح الكامنة

![](_page_43_Figure_2.jpeg)

### P/PET during growing period

### نسبة كمية التساقط الى كمية البخر -نتح الكامنة خلال فترة النمو

![](_page_44_Figure_2.jpeg)

#### P/PET during growing period with water harvesting in yemen

نسبة كمية التساقط الى كمية البخر - نتح خلال فترة النمو بحصاد المياه في الجمهورية اليمنية

400000 600000 800000 1000000 1400000 1200000 220000 200000 2000000 2000000 Saldah 1800000 Al Ghaydah 1800000 Say un Hajah Arabian Sea Ma<sup>\*</sup>rib Sayhut Sah'a Red Sea Al Hudaydah Al Mukalla Dhamar Ataq 160000 1600000 Al Bayda ibb Legend Taizz > 1.00 P/PET Gulf of Aden 0.75-1.00 P/PET LahjZinJibar N 0.50-0.75 P/PET No growing period 1400000 1400000 Agricultural Research Authority, **Renewable Natural Resources** 80 160 240 Kilometers **Research Center** ANIA 80 0 **GIS and Remote Sensing Section** 1000000 1200000 400000 600000 800000 1400000

![](_page_46_Figure_0.jpeg)

#### **Potential evapotranspiration**

كمية البخر - نتح الكامنة

![](_page_47_Figure_2.jpeg)

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#### **Potential evapotranspiration**

كمية البخر - نتح الكامنة

![](_page_49_Figure_2.jpeg)

### Soil moisture regime in yemen

النظام الرطوبي للتربة في الجمهورية اليمنية

![](_page_50_Figure_2.jpeg)

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### الأحواض والمساقط المائية في الجمهورية اليمنية

### **Drainage Basins & Watersheds of Yemen**

![](_page_52_Figure_2.jpeg)

### Soil moisture regime in yemen

النظام الرطوبي للتربة في الجمهورية اليمنية

![](_page_53_Figure_2.jpeg)

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### الأحواض والمساقط المائية في الجمهورية اليمنية

### **Drainage Basins & Watersheds of Yemen**

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Major Farming Systems Zones Map of Yemen

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