

# Desertification in the Sahel

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- The **Sahel** is the boundary zone in Africa between the **Sahara** to the north and the more fertile region to the south, known as the **Sudan** (not to be confused with the country of the same name)
- Sahel
  - Roughly a 500-km wide band in Sub-Saharan Africa.
    - Includes Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad.
    - Sudan and Ethiopia can also be considered as part of this band.
  - Rainfall is scarce in the northern part of the band, permitting only grazing.
  - Entire region is vulnerable because of the potential for desertification
  - this potential for **desertification** can be increased by climate change and human use
- The Sahel is primarily **savanna** and runs from the Atlantic Ocean to the Horn of Africa, changing from semi-arid grasslands to thorn savanna.
- **Desertification** is the destruction of the biological activity of the land that eventually leads to desert-like conditions
  - 40% of the surface of the earth is either a desert or under desertification.
  - Caused by deforestation, climate change, huge population growth, over-farming, and grazing.

## Using the Sahel

- Local farmers have been herding in the Sahel for thousands of years, **sustainably**.
- By keeping their herds moving, they ensure a food supply for their herds, and a life for themselves, in an area where neither could have existed before.
- They follow traditional herding routes, where food supplies exist. As grazing land becomes scarce, they move on.
- A relatively new problem in Africa, though, is geopolitical.
- Now, when grazing land crosses an imaginary political boundary, nomadic herders must stop, where they used to continue on.
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