

Economy

Overview: A majority of the population still depends on agriculture and livestock for a livelihood, even though most of the nomads and many subsistence farmers were forced into the cities by recurrent droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. Mauritania has extensive deposits of iron ore, which account for almost 50% of total exports. The decline in world demand for this ore, however, has led to cutbacks in production. The nation's coastal waters are among the richest fishing areas in the world, but overexploitation by foreigners threatens this key source of revenue. The country's first deepwater port opened near Nouakchott in 1986. In recent years, drought and economic mismanagement have resulted in a substantial buildup of foreign debt. The government has begun the second stage of an economic reform program in consultation with the World Bank, the IMF, and major donor countries. Short-term growth prospects are gloomy because of the heavy debt service burden, rapid population growth, and vulnerability to climatic conditions.

National product: GDP - purchasing power parity - \$2.4 billion (1993 est.)

National product real growth rate: 5% (1993 est.)

National product per capita: \$1,110 (1994 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 10% (1993)

Unemployment rate: 20% (1991 est.)

Budget:

revenues: \$280 million

expenditures: \$346 million, including capital expenditures of \$61 million (1989 est.)

Exports: \$401 million (f.o.b., 1993 est.)

commodities: iron ore, fish and fish products

partners: Japan 27%, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg

Imports: \$378 million (c.i.f., 1993 est.)

commodities: foodstuffs, consumer goods, petroleum products, capital goods

partners: Algeria 15%, China 6%, US 3%, France, Germany, Spain, Italy

External debt: \$1.9 billion (1992 est.)

Industrial production: growth rate NA%; accounts for almost 30% of GDP

Electricity:

capacity: 110,000 kW

production: 135 million kWh

consumption per capita: 61 kWh (1993)

Industries: fish processing, mining of iron ore and gypsum

Agriculture: accounts for 25% of GDP (including fishing); largely subsistence farming and nomadic cattle and sheep herding except in Senegal river valley; crops - dates, millet, sorghum, root crops; fish products number-one export; large food deficit in years of drought

Economic aid:

recipient: US commitments, including Ex-Im (FY70-89), \$168 million; Western (non-US) countries, ODA and OOF bilateral commitments (1970-89), \$1.3 billion; OPEC bilateral aid (1979-89), \$490 million; Communist countries (1970-89), \$277 million; Arab Development Bank (1991), \$20 million

Currency: 1 ouguiya (UM) = 5 khoums

Exchange rates: ouguiyas (UM) per US\$1 - 125.910 (January 1995), 123.575 (1994), 120.806 (1993), 87.027 (1992), 81.946 (1991), 80.609 (1990)

Fiscal year: calendar year