

THE NEW AETFAT / UNESCO VEGETATION MAP OF AFRICA

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The "maquette" which has been compiled on the same base map as that used for the CCTA/CSA soils map of Africa is now complete. It was originally intended to compile at 1:5 million and print at 1:10 million, but, because of the complexity of detail of some parts of the new map, UNESCO has approved publication at 1:5 million, but on an American Geographical Society projection, which will be used in future for all UNESCO publications at this scale.

The new map covers the whole of Africa, including Madagascar, and shows the distribution of 72 mapping units compared with the 32 of the original AETFAT vegetation map. Most mapping units, inevitably on this scale, are not single physiognomic types, but "physiognomic spectra". The mapping of physiognomic spectra rather than the predominant physiognomic types permits greater precision, since the most widespread physiognomic types are usually derived, and transgress important ecological and floristic boundaries.

In the new map the complexity of the vegetation of East and Southern Africa receives more recognition than in the first map. The Yangambi classification was found to be too inflexible, and, in part, too artificial to satisfactorily accommodate some East and Southern African types. The term "steppe" has been abandoned for tropical and subtropical vegetation and the important category of "shrubland", with several subdivisions, has been adopted.

The colour scheme corresponds as closely as possible to that used for the first map, but the pattern inevitably is more complicated. Nevertheless the way in which the classification is presented, combined with the colour scheme, should make it possible for those whose knowledge of African vegetation is slight to see the major pattern formed by the main regional types without being detracted by local detail which is chiefly of interest to the specialist.

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Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

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