

## MAURITANIA



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### General

Mauritania - officially the Islamic Republic of Mauritania - is located in the Maghreb Region of Western Africa. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the West, Western Sahara in the North, Algeria in the Northeast, Mali in the East and Southeast, and Senegal in the Southwest. The country has an area of 104 Mha (million hectares) with in 2020 a population of 4.6 million, or 0.04 persons per ha (Wikipedia and United Nations, 2019).

### Climate and geography

The climate is characterized by extremes in temperature and by meager and irregular rainfall. Annual temperature variations are small, although diurnal variations can be extreme. The harmattan, a hot, dry and often dust-laden wind, blows from the Sahara throughout the long dry season and is the prevailing wind, except along the narrow coastal strip, which is influenced by oceanic winds. Most rain falls during the short rainy season from July to September. Average annual rainfall varies from 500 to 600 mm in the far South to less than 100 mm in the northern two-thirds of the country (source: Wikipedia).

### Existing polders

Van Wetten *et al.* (1990) describe a very simple polder system in the Lake Rkiz area (Figure 1). Small dikes have been built. Water can enter the area during high river flow in the Senegal River and is then kept in the area. When the water has been infiltrated Sorghum is planted.

At Google Earth several polder type of landscapes at the Mauritania side of the Senegal River can be identified. However, It is difficult to determine whether it indeed are polders.

### Proposed polders

At request of the Senegal River Basin Development Authority, under the title *Fight against weed pests in the Senegal River Delta*, the *Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland* (2010) invited proposals for the construction of 8 polders along the Senegal River. These polders would include 63 km of polder dikes, about 60 km of drains, about 8 pumping stations and at least 8 inlet structures. Four of these polders would be constructed at the Mauritania side of the river and four at the Senegal side. The polders are located close to the towns of Rosso and Richard Toll along existing agriculture fields. Another important aspect of the project would be the clearance of the Typha – a type of reet - and the preparation of the land in the new polders. The project proposed the creation of polders where the Typha cannot grow: a sustainable solution as it would mean that existing Typha would only have to be cleared once at the start of the project. The polders would have to create new agricultural ground in which rice and other agricultural products such as vegetables can be grown. In the framework of this programme Royal HaskoningDHV, has produced a master plan to develop the Senegal River Delta and designs for the eight polders with a total area between 3000 and 4000 ha as a pilot project. An artist impression is shown in Figure 2.

General characteristics of existing and proposed polders in Mauritania are shown in Table I.

### References

- Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland, 2010. *Fight against weed pests in the Senegal River Delta*. <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-regelingen/projecten/fight-against-weed-pests-senegal-river-delta>
- Royal HaskoningDHV, 2013. *Tackle typha in Senegal River Delta. Polders along Senegal River*. Amersfoort, the Netherlands.

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Wetten, J. van, Cheikhnaould Mbaré, M. Binsbergen and T. van Spanje, 1990. *Zones humides du Sud de la Mauritanie.* Research Institute for Nature Management (RIN). Texel, the Netherlands (in French).

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Lelystad, December 2020

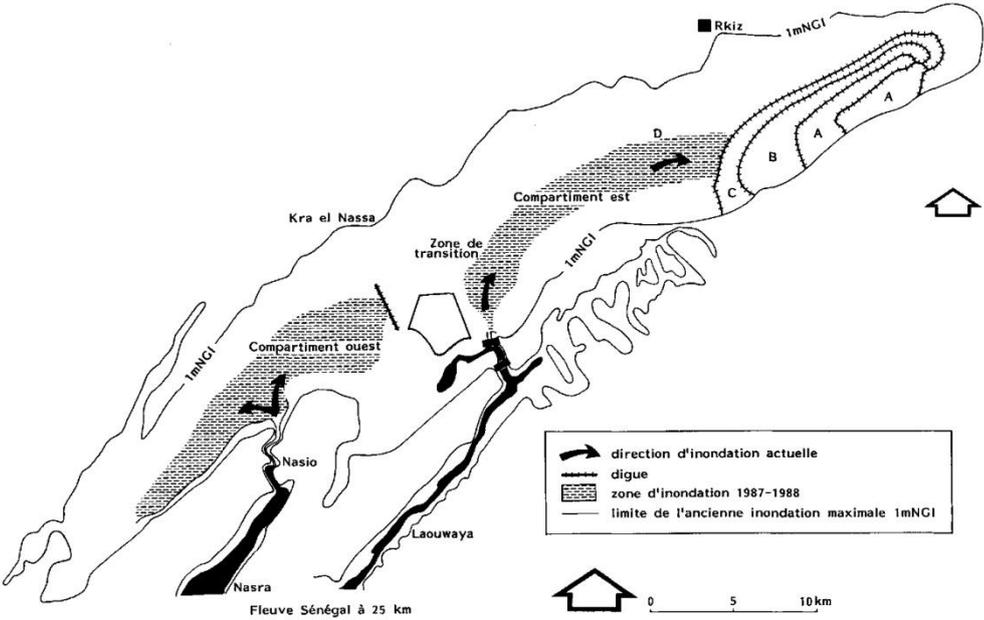


Figure 1. Polders in Lake Rkiz area (van Wetten et al., 1990)



Figure 2. Artist impression of the proposed polders in the Senegal River Delta (source: Royal HaskoningDHV)

Table I. General characteristics of existing and proposed polders in Mauritania

Name	Reclamation	Area in ha	Type *)	Latitudes	Longitudes	Elevation in m+MSL	Land use
<i>Existing polders</i>							
Polders in Lake Rkiz area		2400	RLL	16° 51' N	15° 18' W		
<i>Proposed polders</i>							
4 polders							
Total		2400					

\*) RLL = reclaimed low-lying land; LGS = land gained on the sea; DL = drained lake