

# Dynamics of a Region - Relief | Sample answer

## **Examine the importance of relief to the economic development of two contrasting European regions (Not in Ireland).**

The Mezzogiorno is a peripheral region in the North of Italy. 85% of its land is upland and mountainous and hinders the development of the primary activities of farming. The Apennine mountains there were formed 60 million years ago when the Eurasian and African plate collided. This makes mechanised farming extremely difficult in this region. However, the higher mountain lands do not go to waste, as olives are planted on the slopes to produce olive oil. The subduction zone of the colliding plates are still active which leads to much volcanic activity evident in the eruptions of Mount Etna. In the short term, the volcanic eruptions lead to destruction of the land. The long term effects lead to fertile soil, which is beneficial to farming. There is a thin soil cover throughout the Mezzogiorno and this, paired alongside limestone, the backbone rock, results in no moisture being retained within the soil as the rain is absorbed by the permeable underlying rock. The lack of moisture within the soil prevents productive farming and the growth of abundant grass for pastoral farming. Land is often given over to less profitable sheep, goat and buffalo farming. In the summer, the Mezzogiorno experiences hot, arid conditions which lead to drought and often irrigation is needed for crop growth. However, the mountainous landscape makes installing irrigation difficult and expensive. This once again, limits the region to poorly paying crop growth or animal rearing. While there is low-lying land along the coast that has potential to be productively farmed, tourism companies are buying up the land to build tourists resorts.

The Paris Basin is a core region in France. The low lying and relatively flat topography has greatly helped the economic development of this region, especially the primary activities of farming. The gentle synclines of the region allows for extensive use of mechanised farming. All farming areas are utilised for maximum yields, which is important as the average farm size for the Paris basin is 400 hectares. This helped the Ile De France region earn the title “the grainery of France”, where 12% of the world’s wheat is produced in the flat land. The chalk escarpments in the the dry Champagne area has aided in the development of the wine industry, as the sunny south facing

slopes aid in the growth of the grape vines. On the low lying, flood plains of the River Seine, rich alluvial soil is deposited. In places such as Normandy, this has greatly helped pastoral farming, as it is home to the famous brie cheese. 25% of the low lying land has a sedimentary rock such as limestone as the underlying bedrock. This allows for a calcium rich soil and thus grass, this has helped the development of the livestock industry. The low lying land has also helped the construction of an extensive transport network such as the development of railway systems and roads which has helped the movement of fresh produce nationally and internationally. Brie and Camembert cheese are transported to Paris city on the boulevard peripherique or A86 and sold to the local market of 21 million. The famous, sparkling white wine - champagne can be transported internationally on the TGV train to London in three hours via the channel tunnel.