Agricultural Weather Highlights – Tuesday - September 19, 2017

- In the West, a significant, early-season storm is providing the northern half of the region with cool, showery conditions. The boost in Northwestern moisture will benefit rangeland, pastures, and recently planted winter grains. On the 17th, Washington led the U.S. with 43% of its winter wheat planted.

- On the Plains, late-season heat prevails from Nebraska southward, reducing topsoil moisture for newly planted winter wheat but promoting fieldwork. Meanwhile, cool, showery weather is returning to Montana, where topsoil moisture rated very short to short improved from 99 to 65% during the week ending September 17.

- In the Corn Belt, showers are occurring early today in Indiana and environs. Despite last week’s favorable weather, U.S. corn was just 34% mature by September 17, well behind the average of 47%. Corn maturity was at least 15 percentage points behind average in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas.

- In the South, warm, mostly dry weather favors fieldwork. The U.S. rice harvest passed the halfway mark during the week ending September 17, with progress advancing from 41 to 59% in Arkansas.

Outlook: Hurricane Jose, currently centered less than 250 miles east-northeast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, will drift northward and weaken. Nevertheless, winds to tropical storm force (39 mph or greater) and heavy rain should graze the coastal southern New England, starting later today. Meanwhile, potentially catastrophic Category 5 Hurricane Maria is on a path that should take the core of the small but extremely intense storm over, or very near, Puerto Rico, on Wednesday. Winds to hurricane force (74 mph or greater) can also be expected in the U.S. Virgin Islands, particularly on the southern island of St. Croix. On the U.S. mainland, cool air will gradually spread eastward, encompassing the northern Plains and all of the western U.S. by week’s end. Precipitation, initially limited to the Northwest, will become more focused late in the week across the nation’s mid-section. Five-day precipitation totals could reach 1 to 3 inches in the Northwest and from the southern Rockies into the upper Midwest. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for September 24 – 28 calls for the likelihood of below-normal temperatures from the High Plains westward, except along the California coast. Late-season warmth should cover the eastern half of the U.S. Meanwhile, near- to below-normal rainfall in much of the East and Far West will contrast with wetter-than-normal weather across the nation’s mid-section, including the Plains, mid-South, and upper Midwest.

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