Agricultural Weather Highlights – Tuesday - March 31, 2020

- In the West, cool, showery, unsettled weather prevails from the Pacific Northwest to the northern Rockies. Late-season snow is accumulating at many high-elevation sites in the Northwest. Meanwhile, mild, dry conditions stretch from central and southern California into the Southwest, favoring spring fieldwork and crop development.

- On the Plains, mild, mostly dry weather favors winter wheat growth and spring planting preparations. In late March, at least one-half of the winter wheat was reported in good to excellent condition in all major reporting states on the Plains, ranging from 50% in Kansas and Montana to 85% in South Dakota. In Oklahoma, 44% of the wheat was jointing by March 29, while the crop was just starting to joint in Kansas (3%) and Colorado (1%).

- In the Corn Belt, cool but mostly dry weather prevails. However, many fields and feedlots remain very wet, following recent storminess. In Illinois, for example, topsoil moisture was rated 56% surplus in late March. Meanwhile, final harvest efforts remain largely stalled in North Dakota, where the corn harvest is 75% complete.

- In the South, the latest in a series of storms is producing soaking rain across interior sections of the region. Some of the heaviest rain is falling across the Tennessee Valley and the southern Appalachians, where wetness-related fieldwork delays continue. In stark contrast, very dry conditions persist in Florida and along the Gulf Coast. The dryness is promoting fieldwork but reducing soil moisture for crop germination and growth. In Texas, 56% of the intended rice acreage had been planted by March 29, compared to the 5-year average of 25%.

Outlook: For the remainder of today, locally heavy rain will spread eastward across the South toward the southern Atlantic Coast. Meanwhile, the focus for stormy weather will shift to the northern Plains and the Northwest. By mid-week, late-season snow will overspread parts of Montana’s high plains and continue across the Cascades and northern Rockies. As the week progresses, precipitation in the Red River Valley of the North may aggravate snow-melt flooding. Farther south, rain along the Gulf Coast may provide some drought relief from Texas to Louisiana. Mostly dry weather will persist, however, across Florida’s peninsula. Toward week’s end, chilly air will engulf most areas west of the Mississippi Valley, possibly resulting in freezes by Saturday morning as far south as the northern panhandle of Texas. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for April 5 – 9 calls for the likelihood of above-normal temperatures across the central and eastern U.S., while cooler-than-normal conditions will prevail in much of Montana and the Far West. Meanwhile, near- or above-normal precipitation will cover much of the country; drier-than-normal weather should be limited to Florida’s peninsula and most of New England.

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Product issued by USDA’s World Agricultural Outlook Board, Office of the Chief Economist.
The outlook is an interpretation of National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts and products.
The next scheduled noon release of the “Agricultural Weather Highlights” will be Thursday, April 9. On other weekdays, this product will be posted by 9 am EDT.