Agricultural Weather Highlights – Tuesday - October 18, 2022

- In the West, warm, dry weather is promoting fieldwork, including California’s cotton and rice harvests. However, soil moisture shortages are adversely affecting some recently sown winter grains. On October 16, topsoil moisture was rated at least one-half very short to short in each Western State, except Arizona.

- On the Plains, unusually cold weather prevails, except in Montana. This morning’s low temperatures fell to near 10°F in parts of the eastern Dakotas and dipped to the freezing mark (32°F) as far south as Oklahoma. Meanwhile, dry weather continues to promote harvest activities and other autumn fieldwork. On October 16, statewide topsoil moisture was rated at least two-thirds very short to short, led by Oklahoma (96% very short to short) and Kansas (88%). Partly due to dryness, winter wheat emergence was more than 10 percentage points behind the 5-year average in Kansas and Oklahoma.

- In the Corn Belt, chilly air is in place. Freezes were noted throughout the western Corn Belt, with this morning’s temperatures falling below 20°F as far south as western Iowa, eastern Nebraska, and northwestern Missouri. In the eastern Corn Belt, cool, breezy weather accompanies scattered rain and snow showers. Despite the below-normal temperatures, producers continue to make good harvest progress, with 63% of the U.S. soybeans and 45% of the corn cut by October 16.

- In the South, lingering warmth is confined to Florida’s peninsula. Elsewhere, cool, dry weather favors summer crop harvesting and other fieldwork, including winter wheat planting. Early today, frost and light freezes were reported as far south as the Tennessee Valley. Dry conditions continue to plague parts of the mid-South and environs, with topsoil moisture (on October 16) rated more than three-quarters very short to short in Arkansas, Kentucky, and Mississippi.

Outlook: The coldest air of the season will continue to overspread the eastern half of the country, with mid-week freezes expected nearly to the Gulf Coast in Alabama, Mississippi, and western Florida. Mid-week temperatures below 20°F will be common throughout the upper Midwest, extending as far south as the Ozark Plateau. Meanwhile, late-season warmth will continue in the West. However, signs of change will occur as early as Friday, when precipitation will begin to move inland across the Pacific Northwest. During the weekend, showers will quickly spread eastward across the remainder of the western U.S., trailed by cooler air. Concurrently, a warming trend will commence during the weekend across the Central and Eastern States, with temperatures rising above 80°F throughout the central and southern Plains. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for October 23 – 27 calls for an important weather pattern change that should reverse recent anomalies. For example, above-normal temperatures will overspread the eastern half of the U.S., while cooler-than-normal conditions will develop across the West. Meanwhile, lingering near- or below-normal precipitation will be confined to the East, while wetter-than-normal weather will cover the western and central U.S.

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