Agricultural Weather Highlights – Tuesday - September 27, 2022

- In the West, dry weather accompanies unusual warmth, but rain is needed for recently planted Northwestern winter grains. By September 25, more than half of the winter wheat acreage had been planted in Montana (58%) and Washington (57%).

- On the Plains, dry weather favors summer crop maturation and harvesting, as well as wheat planting. However, soil moisture is lacking in many areas. On September 25, for example, topsoil moisture was rated more than one-half very short to short in each of the region’s states, led by Montana (95% very short to short) and Oklahoma (91%).

- In the Corn Belt, showers linger in the Great Lakes region, mainly across Michigan. Across the remainder of the Midwest, cool, dry weather favors summer crop maturation and early-season corn and soybean harvest efforts. On September 25, more than one-half (58%) of the nation’s corn crop was fully mature, while 63% of the soybeans were dropping leaves.

- In the South, Hurricane Ian—a Category 3 storm with sustained winds near 125 mph—is moving northward at 12 mph and approaching Florida’s west coast. Rain showers and gusty winds are already overspreading southern Florida. Elsewhere in the South, dry weather continues to promote summer crop maturation and harvesting. In advance of Ian’s approach, Southeastern cotton bolls open ranged from 66% in South Carolina to 80% in North Carolina.

Outlook: Following a quick but destructive traversal of western Cuba, Hurricane Ian will emerge today into the southeastern Gulf of Mexico. Ian will likely remain a major hurricane, with sustained winds greater than 110 mph, while approaching Florida, with landfall expected near Tampa Bay late Wednesday or early Thursday. However, only a small westward jog in Ian’s track would lead to landfall occurring farther north along Florida’s Gulf Coast. Regardless of precise track, substantial damage may occur across Florida’s peninsula due to storm surge, winds, and rain. Storm surge could reach 5 to 10 feet in Tampa Bay and environs, leading to widespread inundation of low-lying areas. High winds—especially in west-central Florida—could damage buildings and trees, including orchards containing ripening oranges. With much of Florida expecting 4 to 12 inches of rain—and isolated totals exceeding 20 inches—flash flooding will unfold as Ian arrives, while river flooding could linger for days or weeks. Once inland, Ian’s primary threat will be heavy rain, which is forecast to spread northward across the southern and middle Atlantic States. Across the remainder of the U.S., generally warm, dry weather will prevail for the remainder of the week, although spotty showers should occur in the Rockies, Pacific Northwest, and Great Lakes region. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for October 2 – 6 calls for near- or above-normal temperatures nationwide, except for cooler-than-normal conditions in New England. Areas from the Pacific Coast to the Mississippi Valley will have the greatest likelihood of experiencing warm weather. Meanwhile, near- or below-normal rainfall across most of the country should contrast with wetter-than-normal weather—due to the remnants of Hurricane Ian—in the middle Atlantic States.

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