Agricultural Weather Highlights – Thursday - December 22, 2022

• In the West, frigid air has settled across much of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and western Montana, following recent snowfall. Northwestern daily-record lows for December 21 included -34°F in Bozeman, Montana, and -8°F in Ellensburg, Washington. However, most Northwestern winter grains remain insulated by an extensive snow cover. Elsewhere, mild, dry weather prevails from California to the southern Rockies.

• On the Plains, the leading edge of an Arctic cold front is sweeping across Oklahoma and northern Texas. A post-frontal band of snow, extending across Kansas and eastern Colorado, is causing brief but significant travel disruptions due to low visibility in snow and blowing snow. Early today, temperatures have fallen below 0°F as far south as Texas’ northern panhandle, with readings below -20°F—accompanied by blustery weather and dangerously low wind-chill temperatures—observed on the northern Plains. Across the southern half of the Plains, winter wheat’s protective snow cover is limited.

• In the Corn Belt, bitterly cold, windy weather prevails across the upper Midwest, where this morning’s low temperatures ranged from 0 to -20°F. In areas where snow fell on Wednesday—for example, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, received 7.4 inches—blowing snow is resulting in some travel difficulties. Early today, disruptive snow is falling near the leading edge of the Arctic air, which stretches from the Great Lakes region into the lower Missouri Valley.

• In the South, mild weather prevails in advance of a rapidly approaching cold front. Early today, rain is falling in parts of the Southeast, especially from the Carolinas northward. Producers in the Deep South continue to prepare for the upcoming cold wave, which will feature freezes throughout the region, except in southern Florida.

Outlook: A short-lived but severe Arctic outbreak will continue through the holiday weekend in most areas from the Rockies eastward. By Friday morning, sub-zero temperatures should occur along and north of a line from Texas’ northern panhandle to the central Appalachians, while freezes will cover the western and central Gulf Coast States. In fact, Deep South Texas will likely endure a 3-day freeze (December 23-25), with possible adverse impacts on citrus and sugarcane. In addition, producers in southern Louisiana will be monitoring unharvested sugarcane. Although most of Florida’s citrus belt should escape major freezes, protective measures may be needed in some northern orchards. Concurrently, a major winter storm will evolve across the Midwest, with wind-driven snow and bitterly cold conditions resulting in major travel disruptions, as well as an increase in livestock stress. In the Great Lakes region, storm-related impacts should linger through Christmas Day. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for December 27 – 31 calls for the likelihood of warmer-than-normal weather nationwide, with lingering near- or below-normal temperatures confined to the southern Atlantic States. Meanwhile, drier-than-normal conditions in New England and central and southern Texas should contrast with above-normal precipitation across the remainder of the country.

Contact: Brad Rippey, Agricultural Meteorologist, USDA/OCE/WAOB, Washington, D.C. (202-720-2397)
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