Agricultural Weather Highlights – Friday - February 2, 2024

- In the West, a sprawling storm system is producing rain and snow from the Pacific Coast to the Rockies. However, near- or above-normal temperatures are limiting significant snow accumulations to high-elevation sites. Despite some light precipitation, a “snow drought” continues in the northern Rockies, where some river basins in western Montana are reporting snow-water equivalencies that are less than one-half of normal for this time of year.

- On the Plains, temperatures have slightly fallen, but remain significantly above normal. Fargo, North Dakota, reported daily-record maximum temperatures on January 31 and February 1, with respective readings of 52 and 48°F. The warmth has left minimal snow cover for winter wheat insulation—but has aided early-season lambing and calving operations.

- In the Corn Belt, record-setting warmth remains in place. It was the warmest February 1 on record in many Midwestern locations, including Joplin, Missouri (72°F); Lincoln, Nebraska (65°F); Burlington, Iowa (60°F); Rockford, Illinois (55°F); and La Crosse, Wisconsin (52°F). Navigating rural and farm roads has become easier in recent days, although some areas remain muddy in the wake of recent rainfall and melting snow.

- In the South, mild, dry weather prevails, despite an increase in cloudiness. Drought-related impacts, such as poor pasture conditions and low pond levels, continue to diminish, although full recovery may take several months. On January 30, lingering Extreme to Exceptional Drought (D3 to D4) was confined to 15% of Louisiana, 13% of Mississippi, and less than 2% of Tennessee and Texas, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

Outlook: A storm system emerging from the western U.S. will cross the southern Plains on Saturday and drift eastward along the Gulf Coast, reaching Florida by Monday. Rainfall associated with the storm could reach 1 to 2 inches from the central and southern Plains to the southern Atlantic Coast. Meanwhile, another strong Pacific storm will arrive in California, with impacts—including heavy rain, mountain snow, and high winds—peaking from February 4-6. As a long-duration event, this system has the potential to be more consequential than the previous storm, with precipitation totals of 4 to 8 inches or more expected in California’s coastal and mountainous areas. In contrast, little or no precipitation will occur during the next 5 days in the Midwest and Northeast. Elsewhere, mild weather will prevail nearly nationwide into next week, although cooler air will gradually overspread the West. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for February 7 – 11 calls for the likelihood of near- or above-normal temperatures and precipitation across much of country. Cooler-than-normal conditions will be confined to southern Florida and areas west of the Rockies, while drier-than-normal weather should be primarily limited to the Atlantic Coast States.

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Web Site: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/TODAYSWX.pdf

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Next scheduled noon release of the “Agricultural Weather Highlights” will be Thursday, February 8, 2024. On other weekdays, this product will be posted by 9 am ET.