



Satellite image with enhanced low cloud-top temperatures for 6:10 a.m. EDT (NOAA)

Agricultural Weather Highlights – Wednesday - March 20, 2024

- In the *West*, warm, dry weather in advance of approaching storminess is allowing spring fieldwork to proceed in several key agricultural regions across *California* and the *Southwest*. However, colder, wetter conditions are lurking to the west and north, with showers expected to arrive later today in the *Pacific Northwest*.
- On the *Plains*, cold air is edging into *northern Montana* and the *Dakotas*, setting the stage for a winter storm. Across the *southern half of the Plains*, warm, dry weather is promoting fieldwork and winter wheat development. On March 17, more than one-half (55%) of the winter wheat in *Kansas* was rated in good to excellent condition, along with 61% in *Oklahoma*. In *Texas*, 46% of the wheat was rated good to excellent on that date, with 13% of the crop headed.
- In the *Corn Belt*, dry weather prevails, aside from snow showers in the vicinity of the *Great Lakes*. Cold air has settled across the *northern Corn Belt*, with this morning's minimum temperatures falling below 10°F in *northern Minnesota*. With a storm brewing, season-to-date snowfall totals that have not yet reached one foot could soon get a boost in locations such as *Mobridge, South Dakota* (6.5 inches), and *Rochester, Minnesota* (11.9 inches).
- In the *South*, scattered frost was observed this morning as far south as *Alabama* and *Georgia*, as producers continue to monitor blooming fruits and winter grains for signs of freeze injury. Dry weather throughout the region favors spring fieldwork, including early-season planting efforts, except in areas that recently received heavy rain. In *Virginia* and environs, windy weather and low humidity levels are resulting in a temporarily elevated wildfire threat.

Outlook: Back-to-back storms across the *northern U.S.* should produce significant snow, starting later today, from the *northern Plains into the upper Great Lakes States*. The second storm system, expected to reach peak intensity over the weekend or early next week, has the potential to double season-to-date snowfall totals in parts of the *upper Midwest*. In addition, wind-driven snow from both storms could complicate rural travel and lead to hardship for *Northern* cattle, especially newborns. Separately, a late-week storm will produce rain in the *southern and eastern U.S.*, with 1- to 3-inch totals possible in portions of the *Gulf and Atlantic Coast States*. Elsewhere, cool, unsettled weather will return across the *West*, especially from *northern and central California and the Pacific Northwest to the northern Rockies*. Elsewhere, a prolonged cold spell will settle in across the *North*, with frequent freezes expected as far south as the *central Plains* and the *Ohio Valley*. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for March 25 – 29 calls for near- or above-normal temperatures in the *East* and along the *Gulf Coast*, while colder-than-normal conditions will stretch from the *Pacific Coast to the Plains and upper Midwest*. Meanwhile, wetter-than-normal weather will cover nearly the entire country, with the greatest likelihood of wet conditions focused across the *West* and from the *central Gulf Coast northward into the Great Lakes States*.

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

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