International Weather and Crop Summary

NOAA/USDA Joint Agricultural Weather Facility

March 1 – 7, 2009

International (202) 720-9807

HIGHLIGHTS

FSU-WESTERN: Rain and snow boosted moisture reserves for dormant winter grains in Ukraine and southern Russia.

EUROPE: Wet weather over much of the continent increased soil moisture reserves for winter grains and oilseeds.

MIDDLE EAST: Showers provided additional moisture for winter grains in western growing areas, while dryness remained a concern for greening winter crops in northwestern Iran.

NORTHWEST AFRICA: Widespread rain maintained favorable moisture supplies for reproductive winter wheat and barley.

AUSTRALIA: Relatively dry weather reduced soil moisture for immature cotton and sorghum but helped spur the maturation and harvesting of more fully developed crops.

SOUTHEAST ASIA: Heavy rains slowed rice maturation in Indonesia, while favorably drier weather prevailed elsewhere in the region.

SOUTH ASIA: Dry, warm weather accelerated winter wheat development over northern portions of India and Pakistan.

ARGENTINA: In central Argentina, locally heavy rain provided ample moisture for second-crop soybeans but likely caused some flooding.

BRAZIL: Warm, mostly dry weather fostered rapid harvesting of soybeans in key production areas.

SOUTH AFRICA: Sunny skies promoted development of filling corn.

FSU-WESTERN: Rain and snow (5-25 mm or more of liquid equivalent) fell across Ukraine and southern Russia, boosting moisture reserves for dormant winter grains. Although early-week snow provided a thin to moderate snow cover in these areas, an approaching storm system from Europe ushered in warmer air and rain at week's end, causing considerable snow melt. At week's end, most of Ukraine and the southern half of the Southern District in Russia were void of snow cover. Meanwhile, light snow (mostly less than 10 mm of liquid equivalent) fell from northern Belarus eastward across northern Russia, maintaining a moderate to deep snow cover in winter grain areas. Weekly temperatures averaged near normal in Belarus, Ukraine, and southern Russia and 2 to 4 degrees C above normal across northern Russia.

EUROPE: A pronounced trof (southward dip in the jet stream) developed over the western half of the continent, bringing unsettled weather to much of the Europe. In particular, 10 to 30 mm of rain in France and England maintained abundant moisture for vegetative winter grains but slowed crop development. Showers (5-60 mm) on the Iberian Peninsula eased irrigation demands for winter wheat and provided an additional boost to reservoirs and ground water reserves. Locally heavy rain (10-75 mm) and mountain snow in Italy was favorable for jointing winter grains, most of which are irrigated. In Germany, moderate to heavy showers (25-50 mm) in western growing areas contrasted with much lighter rainfall (less than 5 mm) in northeastern crop districts; winter wheat has broken dormancy in western Germany, but remained dormant across the eastern half of the country. Widespread showers and thunderstorms (10-100 mm) over the Balkans were beneficial for winter grains and oilseeds, with temperatures up to 5 degrees C above normal accelerating crops out of dormancy in northern portions of Danube River Valley. In Poland and the Baltics, crops remained mostly dormant, although above-normal temperatures (1-4 degrees C above normal) likely caused some greening of wheat and rapeseed in western Poland.

MIDDLE EAST: Rain across the eastern Mediterranean contrasted with dry conditions in northwestern Iran. In Turkey, light to moderate showers (1-20 mm) maintained adequate to abundant moisture supplies for vegetative winter grains, although drier conditions (less than 2mm) returned to central Turkey's Anatolia Plateau. Locally heavy showers (10-125 mm) continued along the eastern Mediterranean Coast, boosting moisture reserves for vegetative winter wheat. Showers (5-30 mm) from northern Syria eastward into northern Iran provided additional relief from long-term dryness, improving prospects for semi-dormant to vegetative winter grains. Dry conditions (2 mm of rain or less) lingered in northwestern Iran, further reducing moisture supplies for vegetative winter wheat. However, satellite imagery depicted locally heavy showers and thunderstorms over northwestern Iran on March 9, which would prove timely for greening winter crops. Across northeastern Iran, up to 35 mm of rain favored vegetative wheat and barley.

NORTHWEST AFRICA: Wet weather returned to much of the region after last week's respite. In Morocco, up to 40 mm of rain continued the record-setting pace of the current wet season, with abundant moisture reserves available for reproductive winter wheat and barley. Locally heavy rain (25-100 mm) also fell in central and eastern portions of Algeria's wheat belt, favoring jointing to heading winter grains. In Tunisia, another round of beneficial mid- to late-season rain (25-105 mm) erased lingering impacts of the dry start to the wet season, favoring jointing to heading winter wheat.

AUSTRALIA: Widely scattered, light showers (1-3 mm, locally more) fell across major summer crop areas in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. The resulting increase in net evaporative losses reduced soil moisture for immature cotton and sorghum, but the relatively dry weather helped spur the maturation and harvesting of more fully developed crops. Temperatures in major summer crop areas were generally seasonable, with weekly temperatures averaging within 2 degrees C of normal.

SOUTHEAST ASIA: Widespread showers (25-100 mm) continued to slow maturation of rice in Indonesia, while also causing harvest delays for oil palm. Similarly, an increase in showers (50-200 mm) across peninsular Malaysia boosted moisture for oil palm but slowed harvesting. In contrast, drier weather prevailed in the eastern Philippines and was especially welcomed in the south after several weeks of flooding rains. Overall, the moisture condition across the Philippines was favorable for rice and corn harvested in the first quarter of the year. Meanwhile, mostly warm, sunny weather continued to favor development and harvesting of winter-spring rice in Vietnam.

SOUTH ASIA: Dry, warm weather prevailed over the subcontinent, promoting fieldwork and crop development. In northern India, sunny skies and above-normal temperatures (up to 4 degrees C above normal) accelerated winter wheat through reproduction, although peak daytime highs (30-34 degrees C) were insufficient to cause widespread stress. Sunny skies across southern India were favorable for rabi (winter) rice and groundnut harvesting; however, as of March 9, a tropical disturbance was approaching southern-most crop districts accompanied by locally heavy rain and gusty winds.

ARGENTINA: On March 4, moderate to heavy rain (25-100 mm, with isolated reports of more than 200 mm) soaked central Argentina, increasing moisture for the second soybean crop but causing localized flooding. The heaviest rain fell from northern Cordoba eastward to Uruguay, including the lower sections of the Parana and Uruguay River valleys that border Entre Rios. Flooding of low-lying fields and pastures was likely in this vicinity, and some localized summer crop losses were possible. Somewhat lighter rain (10-50 mm or more) covered La Pampa and southern Buenos Aires, which has recently been experiencing some of the most severe drought conditions currently affecting the country. In these areas, the rain helped to stabilize soybeans and other immature summer crops and increased moisture for pastures and livestock. Winter wheat planting is still several months away, so sufficient time remains to recharge subsoil moisture reserves. In northern Argentina, mostly dry, warmer-than-normal weather (temperatures averaging 2-3 degrees C above normal, with highs approaching 40 degrees C) dominated Chaco, Formosa, and nearby locations in Santiago del Estero and Salta, hastening maturation of summer row crops, including cotton, and reducing moisture for pastures and livestock. Beneficial rain (10-25 mm) covered southern Santiago del Estero, northern Santa Fe, and Corrientes.

BRAZIL: Mostly dry, warmer-than-normal weather (temperatures averaging 3-4 degrees C above normal, with highs in the middle and upper 30s degrees C) dominated a broad area of south-central Brazil, stretching from southern Mato Grosso to Parana and southern Minas Gerais. Consequently, conditions favored rapid dry down and harvesting of soybeans, although additional moisture will be welcome for development of safrinha corn and other secondary crops. In contrast, beneficial rain continued in Rio Grande do Sul, maintaining overall favorable moisture levels for later-planted soybeans. At week's end, showers (greater than 25 mm) returned to northern growing areas of Mato Grosso and Goias, improving moisture for safrinha corn and temporarily lowering temperatures to seasonable levels. However, scattered, lighter showers (generally less than 25 mm) occurred in western Bahia and parts of northern Minas Gerais, which have experienced considerable drying over the past few weeks and where farmers are likely seeing rapid maturation of soybeans. Elsewhere in northern Brazil, rain (25-50 mm or more, most areas) maintained mostly favorable moisture levels for soybeans and cotton in Tocantins, while locally heavy rain (10-50 mm or more) hampered sugarcane harvesting and other seasonal fieldwork along the northeastern coast.

SOUTH AFRICA: Drier, albeit mild weather (temperatures averaging near to slightly below normal, with highs mostly in the middle and upper 20s degrees C) fostered growth of filling to maturing summer crops across the corn belt, following several weeks of showery weather. Rainfall exceeding 10 mm was generally confined to western farming areas of North West and in portions of central Free State, although pockets of heavier showers (locally greater than 25 mm) were recorded in outlying farming areas of northern Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Locally heavy rain (greater than 25 mm) also fell in southern and in some eastern sections of KwaZulu-Natal, boosting late-season moisture levels for sugarcane, which is harvested from April to September. Scattered showers (5-25 mm or more) spanned the southern Cape Provinces, but hot (highs reaching 40 degrees C), dry weather hastened crop maturation in the western vineyards and orchards of Western Cape.