

Weather Effects on Arizona Agriculture in 2002

With Arizona's diverse topography, the state's temperatures range from the wintertime cold in the higher mountain areas to the searing summertime heat of the desert areas. Arizona's wide spectrum of climate and terrain support a remarkable agricultural diversity. All crops in Arizona are irrigated, meaning yield variability is less influenced by rainfall here than in the rain-dependent agricultural states. Weather conditions are still important to crop farmers in making planting and harvesting decisions. The highest recorded temperatures for the year were 115 degrees at Parker on July 14, 21, and on August 18. Flagstaff recorded the lowest temperature of 5 degrees below zero on December 29. In general, Arizona experienced a cooler and wetter Spring this year compared to previous years. Temperatures were below average during December and mixed during the remaining months.

Planting of the small grain acreage was complete by mid-February. Cotton planting commenced in late March, about the same time as the previous year. Cotton plantings were ahead of normal by mid-April.

Range and pasture conditions ranged from poor to good throughout the year, due to the lack of rainfall. Livestock

were reported to be in fair condition. The range conditions began to worsen as high temperatures and no precipitation was the norm. Supplemental feeding began in the first quarter of the year by ranchers of Arizona.

The much needed precipitation came in mid-March through April. The precipitation brought a little relief to the drought conditions. Cotton planting was complete in late May. The state's small grain continued to progress normally. The state's citrus groves continued to be harvested.

The harvest of small grain crops was completed at the first of July. There were nine consecutive weeks with no precipitation. This drought caused a decline in range and pasture conditions. The stock water was reported as being short. Cotton progress was still ahead of normal.

There were heavy rains in the state during the fourth quarter of the year. Range and pasture conditions improved with heavy precipitation during the cool month of December. Small grain plantings were well underway. Cotton harvest was virtually complete by the end of December, earlier than normal.