

Weather Effects on Arizona Agriculture in 2008

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. Virtually 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 temperature in 2008 was 118 degrees at Parker during the week ending June 22. Grand Canyon recorded the lowest temperature of 19 degrees below zero during the week ending December 28.

January: Alfalfa condition was mostly poor to good. Range and pasture conditions started out the year very poor to poor. Temperatures were mostly above normal for the month. Temperatures ranged from a high of 76 degrees to a low of 7 degrees below zero. Rain fell throughout the month. Small grain planting was over 50 percent complete by the last week of the month.

February: Alfalfa conditions remained the same at the beginning of the month with improvement near the end of the month. With the continued precipitation rangeland conditions started to improve throughout February. Temperatures were below normal for the first part of the month, but varied from a high of 85 degrees and a low of 17 degrees below zero.

March: Temperatures ranged from a high of 96 degrees to a low of 7 degrees. Precipitation was sparse during March. Cotton planting began in the Yuma area. Alfalfa condition ranged from poor to excellent, while range and pasture started to deteriorate from the previous month. The small grain crops completed emergence.

April: Precipitation was below normal at most of the reporting stations. Only one station started the month with above normal precipitation. Temperatures were mostly above normal ranging from a high of 103 degrees to a low of 9 degrees. Cotton planting was half finished by the final week of the month and over 80 percent of the small grain acreage had headed.

May: Alfalfa was rated in fair to excellent condition. Range and pasture conditions remained the same as the previous month. Small grain (barley and durum wheat) harvest began the third week. Temperatures were above normal hitting a high of 115. The final week saw all the reporting stations with below normal precipitation levels for the year to date.

June: Cotton planting was virtually complete by week two and cotton bolls had started to set. Crop conditions remained mostly fair to good. Temperatures were above normal by the end of the month with a high of 118 degrees and a low of 24 degrees. Precipitation continued below normal for most stations.

July: Small grain (barley and durum wheat) harvest was virtually complete by the end of July. Cotton condition remained fair to excellent for the month. Temperatures were mostly above normal reaching a high of 115. Only six stations had received above normal precipitation to date.

August: Alfalfa condition remained fair to excellent. Due to seasonal rains, range and pasture conditions started to improve from the previous month. Cotton harvesting began during the second week of August. Cotton bolls finished setting around the third week. Temperatures were mostly above normal for the entire month. Temperatures ranged from 114 to 40 degrees.

September: Cotton harvesting continued around the State. Cotton condition was mostly fair to excellent. The percent of acreage with open bolls was slightly ahead of the 5-year average. Temperatures were mostly above normal for the month. Temperatures ranged from 114 to 30 degrees.

October: Mostly below normal temperatures occurred the middle of the month with a high of 106 degrees and a low of 9 degrees. Alfalfa condition ranged from fair to good. Cotton conditions dropped to mostly good during the harvest. Cotton harvest was 41 percent complete by month's end, and slightly ahead of the five year average.

November: Temperatures were mostly above normal with a high of 98 degrees and a low of 7 degrees. Little to no rain fell during November. Sheeping off occurred in the alfalfa regions around the State. Cotton harvest was at 70 percent complete by the end of the month. Range and pasture conditions were mostly poor to good.

December: Alfalfa conditions were mostly fair, while range and pasture conditions remained in the poor to good range. By the end of the month, cotton harvest was nearing completion. Small grain planting started the second week of December. Temperatures were above normal for the beginning of the month and mostly below normal toward the end of the month. The highest temperature was 81 degrees and the lowest was 19 degrees below zero.