

2011 Weather Review

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 2011 was 121 degrees at East Mesa on July 2. Bellemont recorded the lowest temperature of 30 degrees below zero on January 1st.

January: Temperatures across the State were below normal early in the New Year, but above normal after the middle of the month. Very little precipitation fell throughout the month. The vegetable harvest continued in full swing and sheeping off occurred on various alfalfa fields across the State. Range and pasture conditions toward the end of the month were mostly fair to good.

February: Temperatures across the State were mostly below normal during February. Precipitation in the form of rain or snow had fallen throughout the month. The vegetable harvest continued in full swing and sheeping off occurred on various alfalfa fields across the State. Range and pasture conditions remained mostly fair to good across the State.

March: Temperatures remained below normal early in March then warmed up only to be back below normal toward the end of March. Precipitation fell throughout the month. Cotton planting was underway the first week of March. Alfalfa harvesting continued for Arizona. The winter vegetable harvest remained active throughout March. Range and pasture conditions remained mostly fair to good due to the rain showers throughout the month.

April: Temperatures were near normal to above normal throughout April. Rains fell mainly during the 2nd week of the month. Cotton planting was about two-thirds complete by the final week of the month. The winter vegetable harvest was wrapping up. Range and pasture conditions began to dry out as temperatures rose. By the end of the month more than a third was in very poor to poor condition.

May: Range and pasture conditions continued to dry out with the warmer temperatures and dry winds. More than half was in very poor to poor condition. Miscellaneous melons, potatoes, and onions were harvested this month. Temperatures were near normal the first half of May, but above normal toward the end of the month. Most of the rains fell during the third week of May. Cotton planting was wrapping up by month's end and squaring had occurred on just over 10 percent of the acreage.

June: Cotton squaring had occurred on two-thirds of the acreage and bolls had set on about twenty percent by the end of the month. Potato, onion, and melon harvesting remained active. Temperatures were mostly below normal early in

June, then above normal the second half of the month. Very little precipitation fell during June. The dry weather negatively impacted grazing areas. Stock tanks were drying up and hauling water became necessary. Nearly two-thirds of the range was in very poor to poor condition.

July: Cotton bolls were set on a third of the crop early in July, but setting bolls was 88 percent complete by August 1. Melon harvest continued throughout July. Temperatures were above normal for most of the month. Seasonal rains fell every week, especially in Southeastern areas of Arizona. Stock tanks were replenished in some areas, but remained dry in others. Range condition varied from very poor to good, depending on elevation.

August: Temperatures continued above normal throughout August and many areas continued to receive good doses of precipitation. All bolls were set by month's end and just over half of the acreage had open bolls. Range conditions improved slightly from the various showers that fell across grazing areas.

September: Cotton harvesting started in the Yuma area during the first week and was just under 20 percent complete State wide by month's end. Melon harvesting continued active in a few areas. Temperatures continued above normal the first half of the month and seasonal rains continued to drench many areas around the State. Range and pasture conditions improved after the much needed rains.

October: Temperatures were mostly above normal during October. Various showers fell during the first two weeks of the month, but then the weather turned dry until late in the month. Virtually all cotton bolls had opened by the second week of October and harvesting was nearly 50 percent complete by month's end. Cooler weather slowed any new growth on range and pasturelands across the State. Stock tanks were drying out in a few locations.

November: Weekly temperatures were below normal during the first half of November but were above normal during the second half. Many areas received rain throughout the month. Sheeping off occurred in the alfalfa regions around the State. Cotton harvest was about three-fourths complete by the end of the month. The winter vegetable and citrus harvest began in early November. Low elevation pastures benefitted from the various storms that hit Arizona.

December: the cotton harvest progress fell behind the 5-year average by the end of the year. Temperatures alternated weekly between above normal and below normal temperatures. Precipitation fell in many areas throughout the month. The winter vegetable and citrus harvest continued in the desert southwest part of the State. Sheeping off was also active. The year ended with nearly half of the range in fair to good condition and half in very poor to poor condition.