

January 30, 2017

GEORGIA: January brought a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions. Regular rain events resulted in total statewide rainfall between 3.6 inches and 13.2 inches for the month. According to the U.S Drought Monitor, 73.5 percent of the State was in a moderate to severe drought on January 3rd, but the percentage declined to 36.2 by January 24th. The central and southern regions of the state saw 2 severe storm systems that contained heavy rains, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and hail. The severe storms damaged buildings, equipment, pivots, grain bins, pecan orchards and pine timber, but minimally affected livestock and field crops. Many farmers were busy with debris clean up as opposed to field preparation. The central and southern regions received rain as much as 8 inches above normal for the month. The rains left some fields flooded and others eroded, further delaying field preparation. Groundwater supplies and subsoil moisture were replenished in the southern half of State, but the northern half continued to show signs of drought. During January, average temperatures were 6 to 10 degrees above normal, and crops were behind on chilling hours. The mild temperatures and showers helped green up fescue and encouraged ryegrass growth in drought-stressed pastures, but neither forages were providing much grazing. With hay in very short supply, livestock producers were still rationing hay to make it last through the winter. Late-planted small grains looked good and responded positively to the mild temperatures, but were way behind normal since most of them did not germinate or come up until early to mid-December due to the dry fall. Some farmers were able to start soil testing and lime applications. Blueberries began to break bud ahead of historical trends. The warmer weather promoted onion growth, with little signs of damage from storms or freezing temperatures. Overall, winter vegetables were in good condition, but some crops were damaged by a freeze. Livestock condition was fair to good.