

March 27, 2017

**GEORGIA:** Total rainfall for the month ranged from 0.4 inches in Polk County to 4.8 inches in Rabun County. On average, rainfall totals were as much as 4 inches lower than normal for the month. According to the U.S Drought Monitor, the percentage of the State in a moderate to severe drought remained around 27 percent throughout the month. In addition to the continued drought throughout the northern most portion of the State, much the central and southern regions moved into the abnormally dry designation. Average temperatures were on par for this time of year. During mid-March, the State received several nights of below freezing temperatures that caused moderate to significant damage to blueberry, peach, and pear crops and mild to moderate damage to pastures, strawberries, and early vegetable crops. Consequently, yields were expected to be greatly diminished. Onions were largely unscathed by the cold and remained in good condition. Small grain damage varied widely. Some wheat was damaged to the point that growers were harvesting it for silage. Pastures and hayfields started to green up prior to the freeze, but were set back by the cold and frost. Some producers began harvesting rye and ryegrass crops for silage and hay. Pest pressures in pastures and small grains included leaf rust, aphids, mildew, and winter grain mites. Ability to graze winter forages remained low, and many farmers relied heavily on feeding hay. Most cattle producers were either out of hay or on their last bales with many having to feed a mixed ration. Cattle condition was fair to good, despite feed shortages. Field preparations were well under way throughout the State. Farmers used irrigation generously on recently planted field corn and vegetables; however, many growers delayed planting while waiting on rain events to improve soil moisture.