



Crop Progress and Condition



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Agricultural News (February): The Bluegrass State experienced record breaking cold temperatures during the month of February. Up until the third week of the month, dry conditions persisted across the state. Kentucky had seen seven straight weeks of below normal precipitation. By this time, the US Drought Monitor had placed over half of the state in Moderate Drought. A major winter storm pushed through the area on the 16th. Significant snowfall was seen across the entirety of the state with totals of 8 to 12 inches common. This was followed by an Arctic front the following night that dropped another 1 to 2 inches. Behind the snow, dangerously cold air built into the Commonwealth.

Precipitation for the month averaged 3.45 inches, 0.21 inches below normal. Precipitation totals by climate division, West 3.86 inches, Central 3.98 inches, Bluegrass 2.37 inches and East 3.58 inches, which was -0.22, 0.01, -0.80 and 0.14 inches respectively from normal. Temperatures for the period averaged 27 degrees, 10 degrees below normal. Based on preliminary data, this would be the fourth coldest February on record with data going back to 1895. High temperatures averaged from 37 in the West to 37 in the East. Low temperatures averaged from 20 degrees in the West to 18 degrees in the East.

Most tobacco producers have finished stripping their crop, but the remaining tobacco in the barns was being stripped as conditions allowed. The amount of tobacco stripped was 97 percent. Wheat and canola producers are optimistic the crop was safe from extreme cold temperatures in February due to the snowfall providing much needed insulation. However many fields in western Kentucky had begun to 'green-up' prior to the cold conditions, so some damage is expected. To determine if freeze damage has occurred to the wheat, experts recommend waiting until there has been at least 4 days above 40°F to assess damage. Therefore, farmers are waiting for warmer temperatures before assessing wheat freeze damage. The condition of winter wheat was reported as 2 percent very poor, 6 percent poor, 19 percent fair, 67 percent good, and 6 percent excellent.

Hay supplies have tightened due to weather conditions in February. Many producers are now running short. Hay and roughage supplies were reported as 7 percent very short, 26 percent short, 64 percent adequate, and 3 percent surplus. At the end of January, 82 percent of supplies were rated as adequate to surplus, compared to 67 percent currently. Livestock conditions have declined from last month. Weather conditions during the last two weeks of February have been stressful. Many reports of cow/calf operations experiencing higher than normal death losses on newborns during the extreme cold conditions. The condition of livestock were reported as 2 percent very poor, 6 percent poor, 26 percent fair, 60 percent good, and 6 percent excellent.

Producers marketed their grain and tobacco crops and attended various commodity meetings across the state. Farmers were busy performing routine equipment maintenance in preparation for the upcoming planting season.