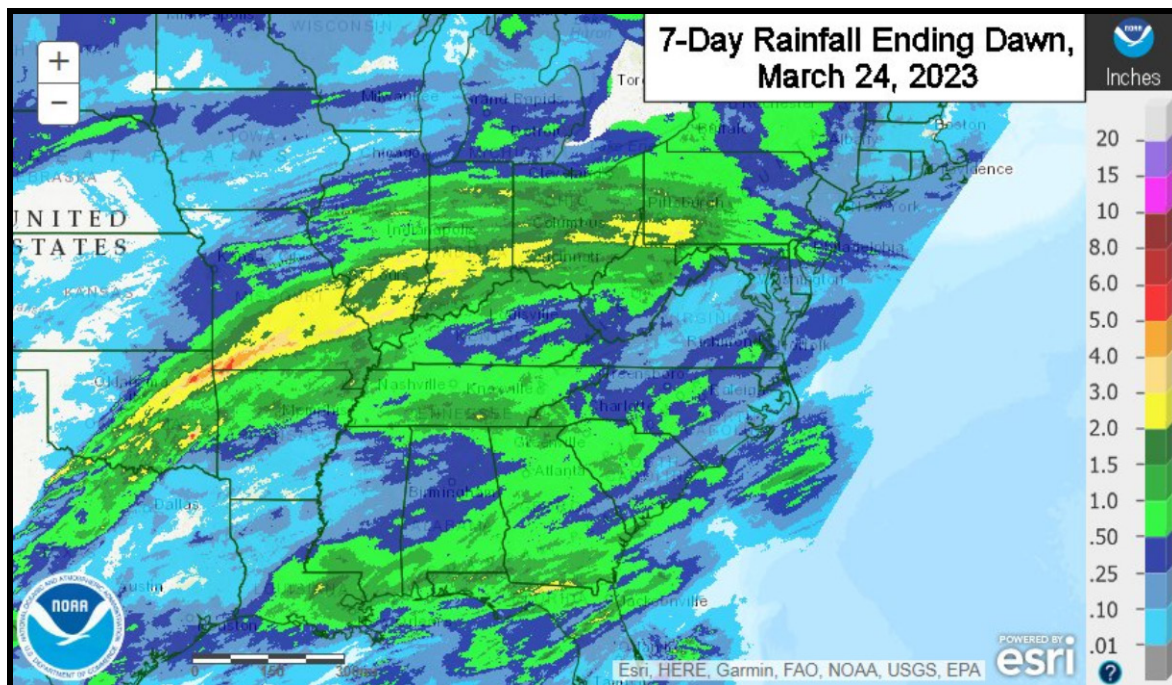


U.S. Midwest, Delta Planting To Continue Slow Into April

By Andrew Owen

Kansas City, March 24 (World Weather Inc.) – Many areas from the U.S. Corn and Soybean Belt into the Delta are abundantly to excessively wet after frequent rainfall in recent days. Planting had already begun in portions of the Delta earlier this season where soil temperatures warmed early enough to promote such conditions. Recent wet weather has stalled that process, though, and future field progress is likely to limp along slowly for a while because of additional rain and some eventual cool temperatures. The northward advancement of planting into the lower Midwest in early April is likely to be delayed as well. Some of the early planted fields in Louisiana and Mississippi may have to be replanted because of freezing temperatures earlier this week.

Precipitation varied across the Midwest, Delta, and Tennessee River Valley during the past week. Southern and east-central Missouri into southern Illinois, much of Indiana and Ohio, and Kentucky received 1.00 to 4.00 inches of moisture for the seven-day period ending this morning. Other locations received 0.10 to 1.50 inches with drier pockets in the central Delta and western Midwest.



A large portion of the Delta into portions of Tennessee River Valley and the eastern two-thirds of the Corn and Soybean Belt are excessively wet in part due to recent rainfall. Periods of precipitation last autumn and over the winter kept soil moisture rated adequately before the bouts of heavier rainfall in recent days further bolstered soil moisture. The western Corn Belt generally has adequate amounts of moisture in the soil.

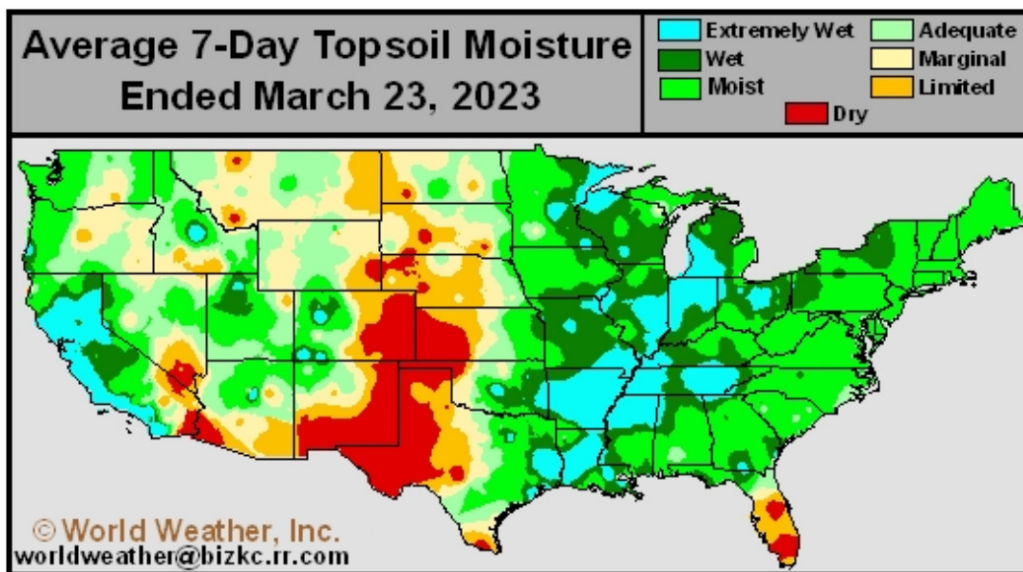
Planting of corn and rice is well underway in Louisiana. As of March 19, corn planting was 87% complete, up from 78% during the previous week and 32% this time last year. The previous five-year average planting pace was 26%. Rice planting was 37%

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finished, up from 24% this time last year and 19% for the five-year average. Soybean planting had just begun as well. Arkansas had 1% of the corn planted while Tennessee had 7% of the corn planted.

Early-seeded crops established favorably and the outlook was good until hard freezes occurred earlier this week damaging some of the emerged crop. All of the Delta and much of the lower Midwest will need drier and warmer weather soon to accelerate topsoil firming and get planting back under way.

Corn and soybean planting in the lower Midwest normally begins during the first half of April and generally expands to the north and west later in April and May. Current soil conditions suggest planting may get off to a poor start especially if rainy weather occurs over the next ten days as suggested in recent computer model runs. The moisture abundance will be good for early season crop development once the soil firms and warms up a little better.

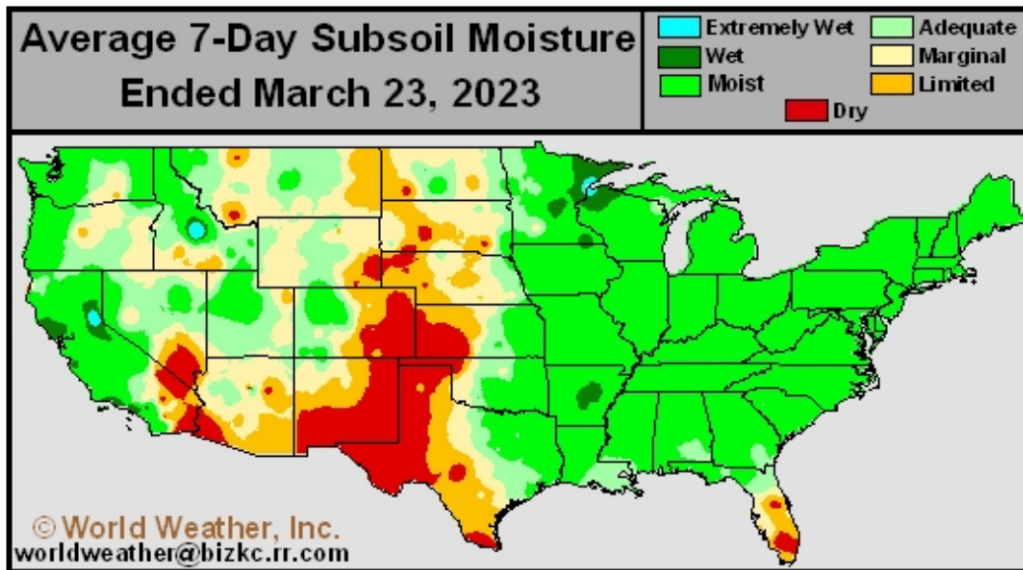


The Delta, Tennessee River Valley, and eastern half of the Midwest will remain in a wet weather bias through the first week of April. A strong upper-level trough will build over central Canada in the coming days that will help bring a series of disturbances across the Delta and Midwest through Monday. Another upper-level disturbance will likely bring rain to these areas later next week as well. Moisture totals by next Friday morning will range from 1.50 to 5.00 inches from southern Missouri into southern sections of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio and much of northern Kentucky. Local rain totals over 6 inches will also be possible. Other locations will receive 0.75 to 3.00 inches of moisture with locally greater amounts. The western Corn and Soybean Belt will also see a good mix of precipitation and sunshine with totals ranging from 0.50 to 1.50 inches and locally greater amounts.

The most significant precipitation from southern Missouri into the eastern Midwest will evolve today as the first disturbance advances over the region. Flash flood warnings are already in place and could saturate the soil for an extended period of time. In the meantime, today's disturbance will also generate significant snow for portions of northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin into central and northern Michigan today into early Saturday. Snow totals will range anywhere from 1 to 6 inches, though a small band from north-central

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Illinois into extreme southeastern Wisconsin and west-central Michigan will receive 6 to 12 inches of snow. Light snow will also accumulate in portions of Iowa and eastern Nebraska today and Saturday.



Temperatures will trend near normal for the Delta and Tennessee River Valley through the end of next week. Daytime highs will peak to the 60s and 70s Fahrenheit with pockets in the southern Delta warming to the 80s. Portions of the Tennessee River Valley will also only warm to the 50s during periods of more significant rain. The Midwest will otherwise see mild temperatures with highs generally reaching the 40s and 50s.

The upper-level pattern will be similar April 1 – 7 compared to the first week of the outlook for North America. Disturbances will continue to track across the U.S. that will promote more waves of precipitation for the Delta, Tennessee River Valley, and Midwest. The temperature profile will remain seasonable in most locations.

The ground will become or remain saturated in much of the Delta, Midwest, and Tennessee River Valley for the next two weeks. General fieldwork will likely remain sluggish until the ground has a chance to firm. Cool soil temperatures may also slow drying rates and delay emergence and establishment. Some farmers will not plant when the ground is wet and cool because corn does not perform well in that environment.

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