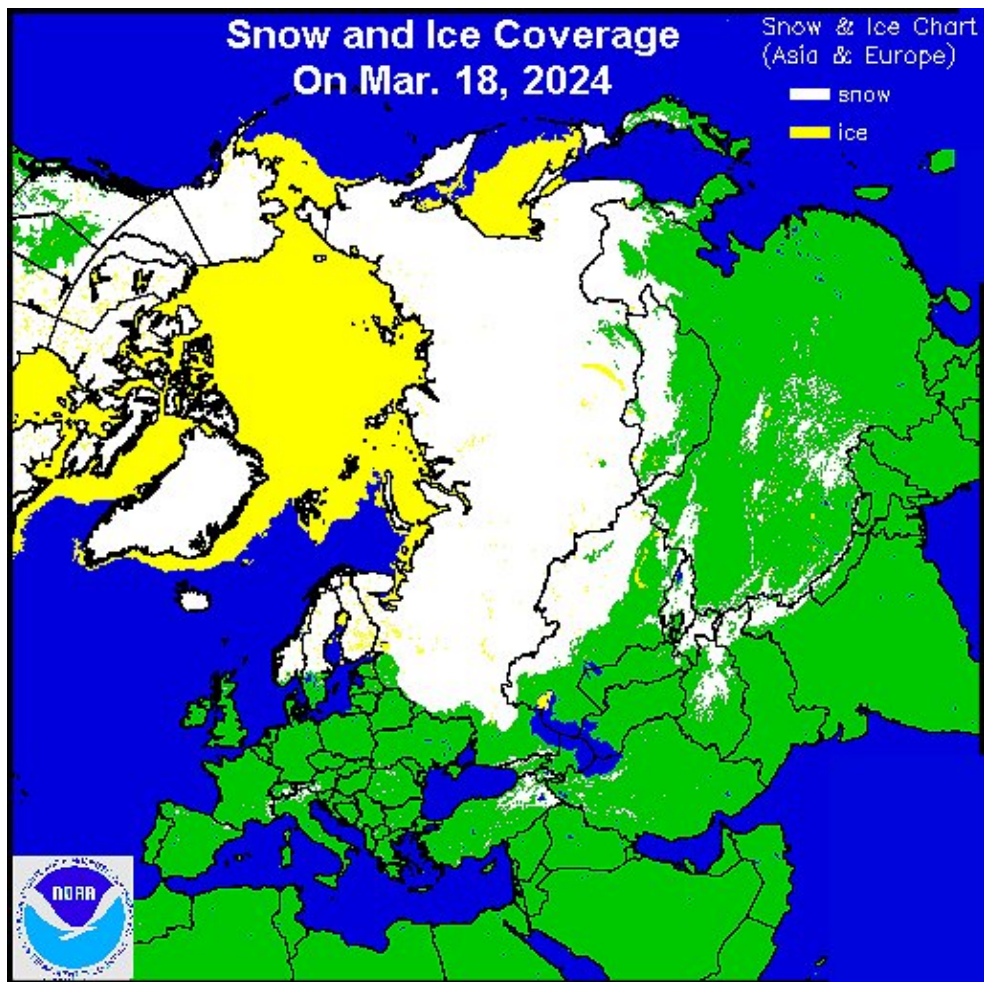


Russia Drier Than Normal Weather Good For Snow Melt

By Andrew Owen

Kansas City, March 19 (World Weather Inc.) – *A large section of the western Commonwealth of Independent States' winter grain and oilseed areas trended drier than normal during the past month. The drier biased environment was actually welcome as many areas had abundant snowpack on top of already wet soil.* Snowmelt in recent weeks helped reduce flood potentials for portions of Russia, though the threat for severe flooding persists in the wettest fields. The drier than normal environment will persist for Russia during the coming week. Snow melt rates will gradually increase as warmer air slowly settles over the region. Flooding will be a concern in the wettest locations and could limit early-season fieldwork. Winter wheat, barley, rye, and rapeseed production potentials will remain favorable across the region. Spring planting may begin sluggishly due to the potential for flooding due to melting snow and areas of standing water in the coming weeks.



A large portion of Russia, western Kazakhstan, eastern Ukraine, eastern Belarus, and neighboring areas were drier or much drier than normal during the past month. These areas generally received 25-80% of normal precipitation for the 30-day period ending March 17 with several pockets that received less than 25% of normal precipitation. Other locations in

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Ukraine and Belarus received near to above normal precipitation during this time. Soil moisture remains at adequate to excessive levels across the western Commonwealth of Independent States due to precipitation last autumn and over the winter.

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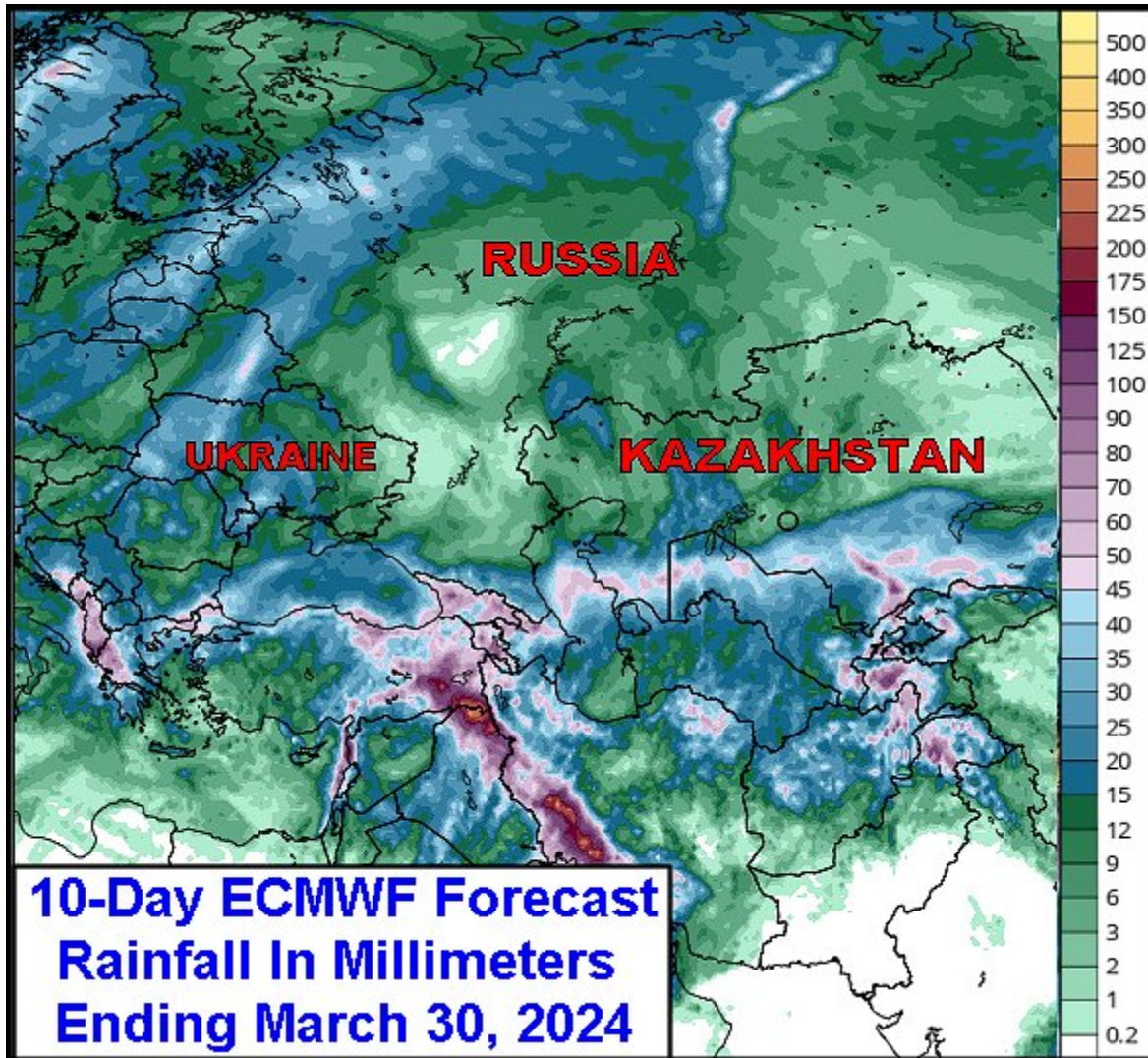
potential for serious flooding and crop damage is low. Flooding could damage a small amount of crop, though overall production losses should be minimal.

Early-season planting and fieldwork may also get off to a sluggish start in the wettest areas of the western CIS in the coming weeks. Flooding and standing water may limit fieldwork and the need for periods of dry weather will be high. There should be enough moisture in the soil to support favorable establishment and development.

WEATHER OUTLOOK

A large section of Russia and Kazakhstan will trend drier than normal during the coming week. Disturbances tracking near the region will still promote periods of precipitation for the ‘Southern Region’ and western Russia while other locations receive light amounts of precipitation or are mostly dry. Portions of the ‘Southern Region’ and western Russia will receive 0.10 to 0.75 inch of moisture with locally greater amounts by next Tuesday morning. Other locations will not receive enough rain to impact long-term soil conditions. Ukraine and Belarus will otherwise see a mix of precipitation and sunshine due to disturbances passing near or into the region. These areas will receive 0.25 to 1.50 inches of moisture with locally greater amounts by next Tuesday morning. Russia and Kazakhstan will likely remain drier biased March 27 – April 2 when a high-pressure ridge potentially builds over the region. Ukraine and Belarus will still have opportunities for precipitation during the second week of the outlook.

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A gradual warming trend is slated for the western CIS in the coming week. An upper-level low pressure center will meander around the region through Saturday that will limit warming. Ukraine, Russia's 'Southern Region' and neighboring locations will warm to the 40s and 50s while other production areas generally warm to the 30s and 40s. Warmer air will gradually spread across the region later this weekend and early next week with highs often reaching the 40s and 50s and pockets in the 60s. Warmer-than-normal weather will occur on a frequent basis March 27 – April 2 if the high-pressure ridge verifies.

The lack of precipitation and gradual warming trend will slowly melt snow in Russia and Kazakhstan in the coming weeks. The gradual snow melt will help limit severe flooding, though some localized flooding and standing water will still be concerns. Crop and structural damage should be minimal. *Winter grain and oilseed production potentials will remain favorable despite the drier biased environment.*

Portions of the 'Southern Region' may dry a little too much toward early April, though no significant production impacts are expected as long as the region receives timely rain later in the spring. Field working potentials will slowly improve as the remaining snow melts and soil temperature rise.

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Ukraine and Belarus will have enough moisture to maintain favorable conditions for the winter grains and oilseeds in the coming weeks. Some of the crop will eventually come out of dormancy and develop under generally good conditions. Early-season fieldwork conditions will slowly improve as well.

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