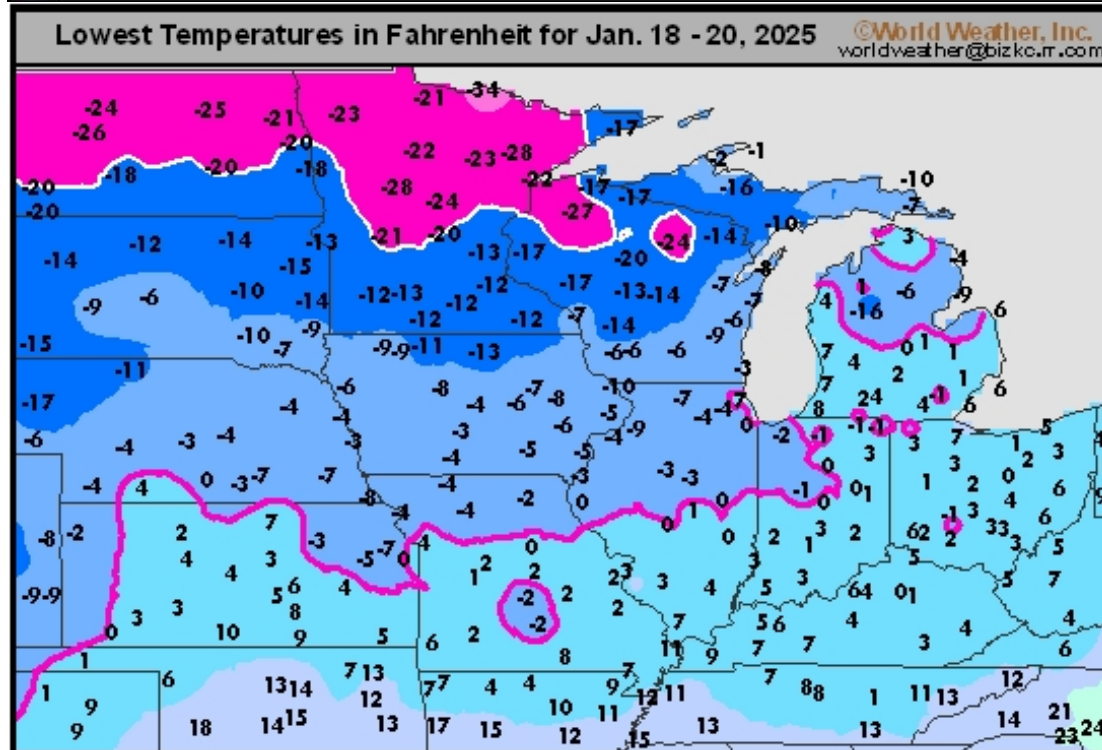
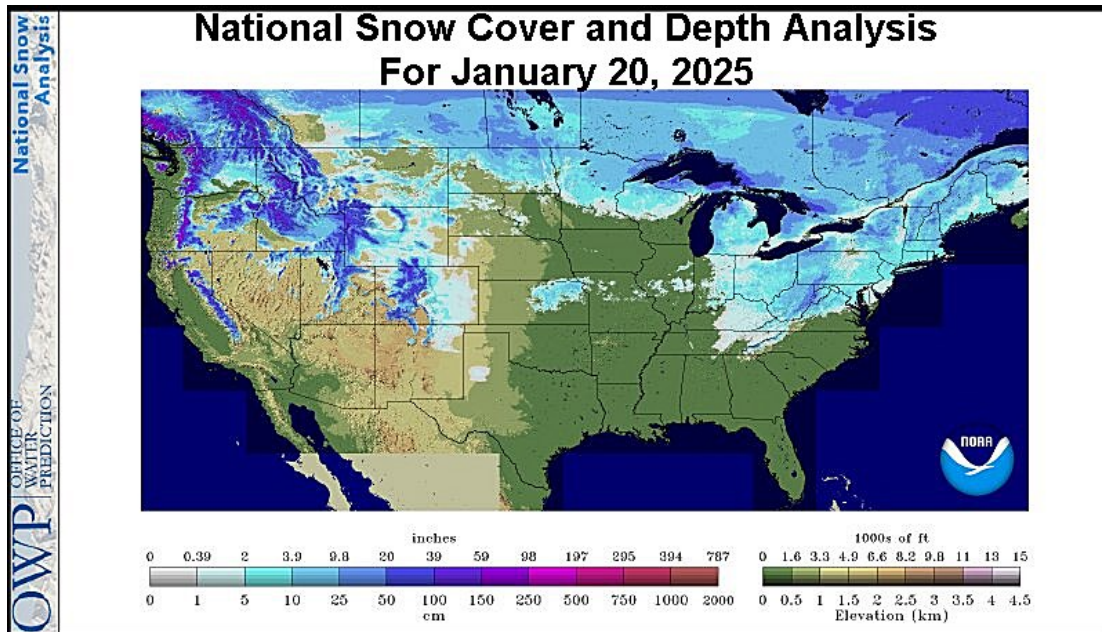


U.S. Bitter Cold To Threaten Sugarcane, Southern Wheat

By Drew Lerner

Kansas City, January 20 - (World Weather Inc.) – [Bitter cold temperatures occurred during the long U.S. holiday weekend, although the impact on wheat was minimal – at least so far. The coldest temperatures are still forthcoming over the next few nights and there may be some negative impact on lower Midwest, Delta and Tennessee River Basin production areas. However, damage to sugarcane in Louisiana may be more significant.](#)



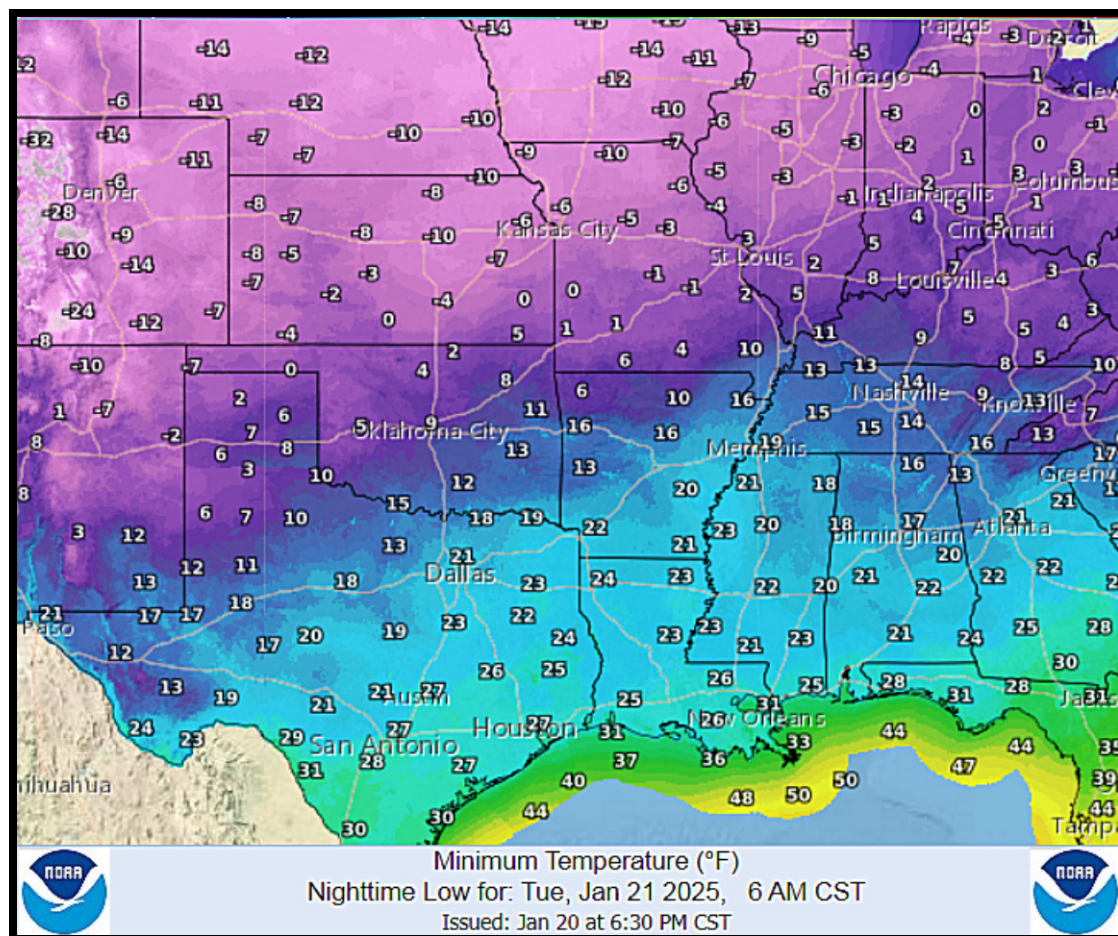
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The coldest temperatures noted Friday through Monday in the lower Midwest and hard red winter wheat production areas were not extreme enough to induce much permanent damage, despite the lack of snow cover.

Warm temperatures Friday occurred long enough to remove much of the snow that was on the ground across portions of Illinois, western Indiana, Missouri, the Delta and the Tennessee River Basin. Temperatures in these areas through Monday morning were not cold enough to induce damage in most cases; however, some sub-zero degree Fahrenheit temperatures were noted in Nebraska, northern Missouri, northern Illinois and northwestern Indiana.

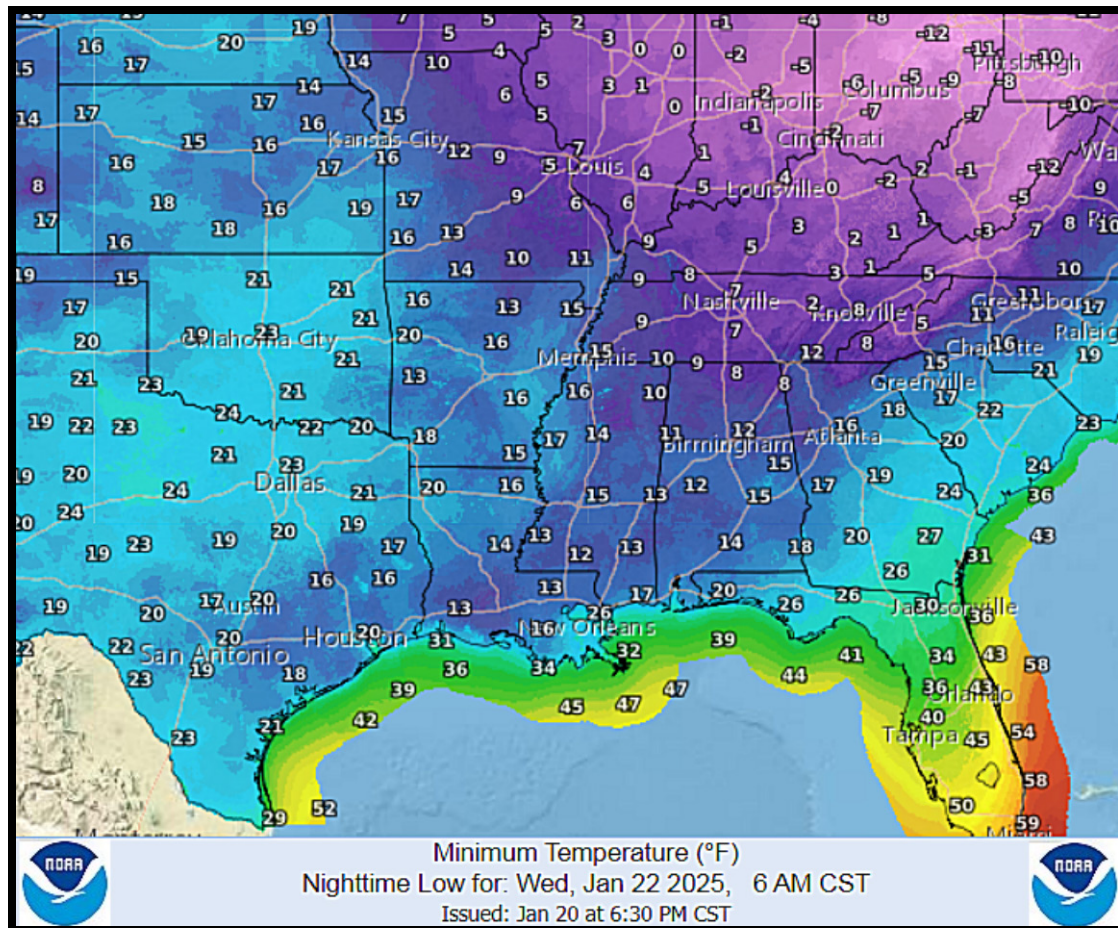
Sufficient hardening of the wheat crop was suspected in the snow free areas to handle temperatures down to the positive and negative single digit readings. **Additional cooling from the Midwest southward to the Gulf of Mexico coast is expected over the next few nights and that may bring some stressful temperatures to soft wheat areas of the lower Midwest, Delta and Tennessee River Basin. No new snow is expected to protect winter wheat.**

Winter hardiness is much greater in the central Plains and lower Midwest than in the Delta or Tennessee River Basin. The potential for some crop damage may be a little higher in those areas, although **most low temperatures will not slip lower than the positive single digits and teens which should not induce any serious crop loss. The burning of leaf mass because of the cold is quite likely, but the crown of most wheat plants should survive the cold. That should be true for other areas in the interior southeastern United States.**



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Low temperatures Tuesday morning will be the coldest of the season in hard red winter wheat areas where lows deep into the negative single digits are expected. That may raise some potential for crop damage, although World Weather, Inc. still believes the crop will survive relatively well. Some permanent damage cannot be ruled out, however. Assessments of the damage will not be possible before the crop greens and the true impact of the bitter cold cannot be fully known until the harvest because some of the damage might be in sterilizing the plants' reproductive parts. [New tillering of damaged crops will be possible if there is no winterkill and if soil moisture is abundant while temperatures are mild in the spring.](#) The above comments are valid for the lower Midwest and areas southward into the Tennessee River Basin as well.



SUGARCANE

Snow is expected to fall Tuesday from the Texas coast into Georgia, northern Florida and South Carolina. If the snow accumulates well there will be a very good potential for extreme lows to fall into the teens and 20s throughout the Delta and southeastern states; including the Gulf of Mexico coast from the Florida Panhandle to South Texas. Such conditions may negatively impact some winter fruit and vegetable crops, but the crop that could be more seriously impacted in Louisiana sugarcane.

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Freezes already occurred in southern Louisiana overnight and Tuesday night should be much colder. Lowest temperatures Monday morning were in the middle and upper 20s Fahrenheit, but lows Wednesday morning will be in the teens with a few 20s near the coast. The impact of Wednesday's cold will be much more significant than that of Monday morning. In the past, when low temperatures have slipped so far below freezing in sugarcane production areas, yields in that year were seriously reduced. Some of the crop did not fully recover in the following year. Much of the weather that follows the damaging cold in sugarcane areas will determine how much impact the freeze has on production. A sudden return of very warm temperatures (not very likely in this case) can seriously stress the damaged crop making it more difficult to recover. Widespread rain and mild to cool weather for a few weeks after the freeze can be best for the crop to recover as much as possible.

The snowfall expected in Louisiana Tuesday into Wednesday morning could help the crop if accumulations are significant. The help would come to the crown of the sugarcane plant. Significant snow accumulation around the base of the plant could insulate it from the coldest conditions allowing it to not be as seriously impacted by the cold. Warm soil temperatures during the snow event may limit the snow accumulation, but there is some potential for the snow to remain around Wednesday morning and could help limit the damage. Leaf mass will certainly be damaged and the more leaf burning that occurs the slower plant recovery will be.

BOTTOM LINE

The bottom line is that sugarcane in Louisiana will likely be more impacted by the cold than winter wheat. Some other fruit and vegetable crops will also be impacted in southern Texas and the southeastern U.S., although temperature extremes should not be as great in those areas as they may be in Louisiana.

Florida's main citrus production region *is unlikely to be impacted by seriously cold temperatures;* however, some minor production areas in the north of the state could suffer some damage along with other fruit and vegetable crops due to low temperatures in the 20s Fahrenheit.

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