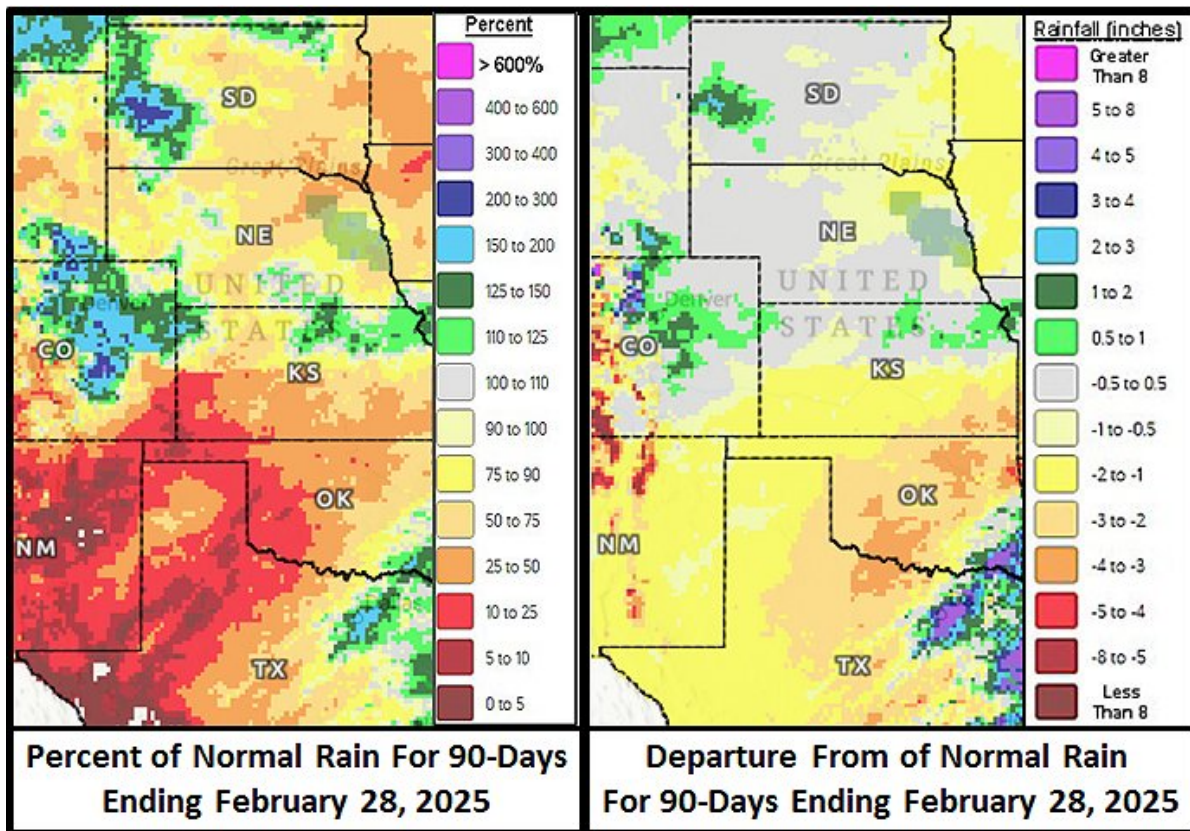


U.S. Plains Moisture Deficits Will Not Improve Much In March

By Drew Lerner

Kansas City, February 28 (World Weather Inc.) – [Weather in most of the U.S. Plains during February was not very great leaving moisture deficits in place that may become an issue as the warm season arrives. March is unlikely to bring much change to the region, although a little more rain and snow will fall in Nebraska, northwestern Kansas and northeastern Colorado. Precipitation will remain limited in the northern and southwestern Plains while the lower and eastern Midwest, Delta, Tennessee River Basin and northeastern states are wetter biased.](#)

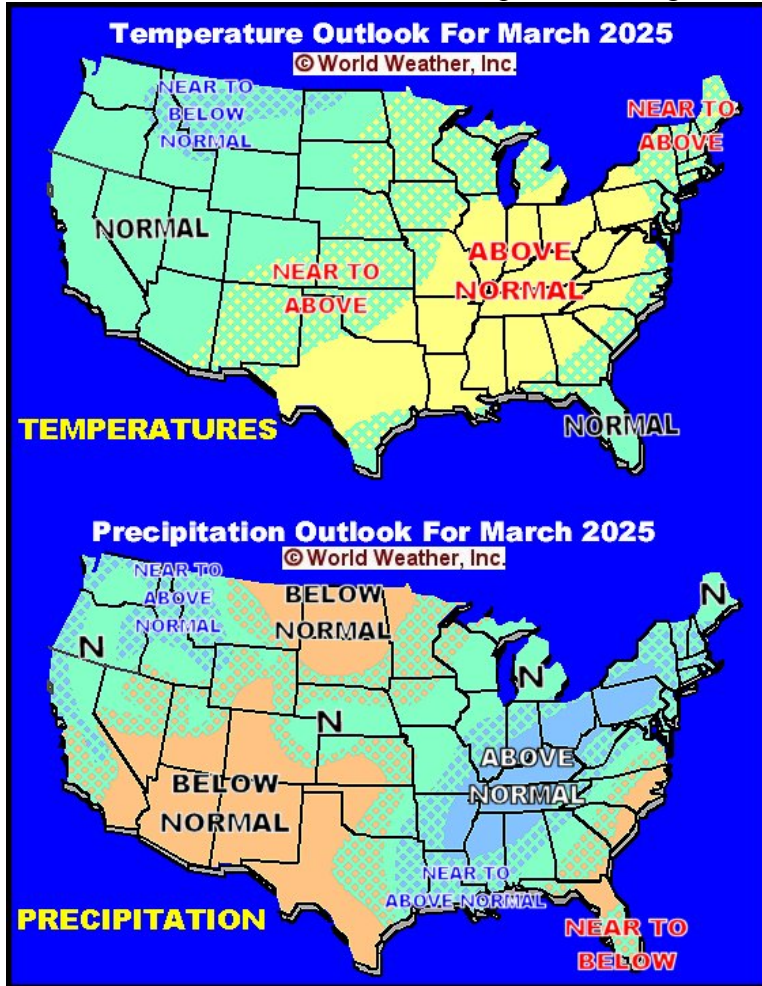


Most of the hard red winter wheat production areas in the central U.S. experienced some cold weather in February and precipitation was restricted. The same limited precipitation bias also occurred in the upper Midwest while the northwestern Plains were wetter biased. [Concern remains over the lack of soil moisture in the central and southwestern Plains and the upper Midwest with some lingering worry over moisture deficits in both Canada's Prairies and the northwestern U.S. Plains.](#)

November brought significant precipitation to much of central North America from the Canadian Prairies into the central and southwestern Plains and a part of the western Midwest. That stormy weather has carried crops through the winter, [although precipitation in December, January and February was certainly not greater than normal and most of it was lighter than usual.](#) However, [temperatures were cold in January and much of February and that helped to conserve soil moisture.](#) Some snow fell during the colder

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weather and that has melted into the topsoil allowing some moisture replenishment in a few areas.



Most of the moisture deficits in the central United States and Canada's Prairies are about the same today as they were in early December and change is not very likely for a while longer. The biggest threat to soil moisture is the warmer temperatures that will dominate the first half of March. The warmer bias will induce faster drying rates and that may lead to greater moisture deficits by the time April comes along.

March weather will perpetuate a wet bias in the Delta, Tennessee River Basin and northeastern states as well as the lower and eastern Midwest. Those areas are wet biased today and they will remain that way a month from now. Similarly, dryness in a part of the southern Great Plains, the southwestern desert

region, northern Mexico and the southern Rocky Mountain region will also prevail during March as will dryness in the northern Plains. There is also a narrow band of poor soil moisture from northern Florida into eastern Virginia and that, too, will prevail in March while the Pacific Northwest does relatively well with precipitation as will the Sierra Nevada and some of the central valleys of California.

Temperatures during March are predicted to be warmer than usual in the eastern half of the United States – mostly due to the first half of the month. There is some potential for cooling in late March and more likely in April and a close watch on that potential will be warranted since some wheat will have resumed its development by that time.

The warmer biased temperatures in March will also increase evaporation from the drier areas in the Plains making the need for timely rain much greater as April approaches.

If the March weather outlook is correct, the start of spring planting may be delayed in the Delta and Tennessee River Basin along with the lower Midwest while fieldwork in the southern Plains is a little slow and winter wheat development may be slow in areas that have low soil moisture. Fieldwork in the northern Plains and upper Midwest could advance swiftly in April if time timely rain falls while the ground is not excessively wet. March should be the last month for these anomalies, although there is potential for additional drying in the central Plains and a part of the southwestern Corn and Soybean Belt.

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The bottom line is that March is unlikely to provide enough change in weather to seriously change the moisture profile that is in place today. Warmer temperatures may reduce some of the soil moisture in the Plains and that should be closely monitored because it will be imperative for greater rain in April to protect production potential.

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