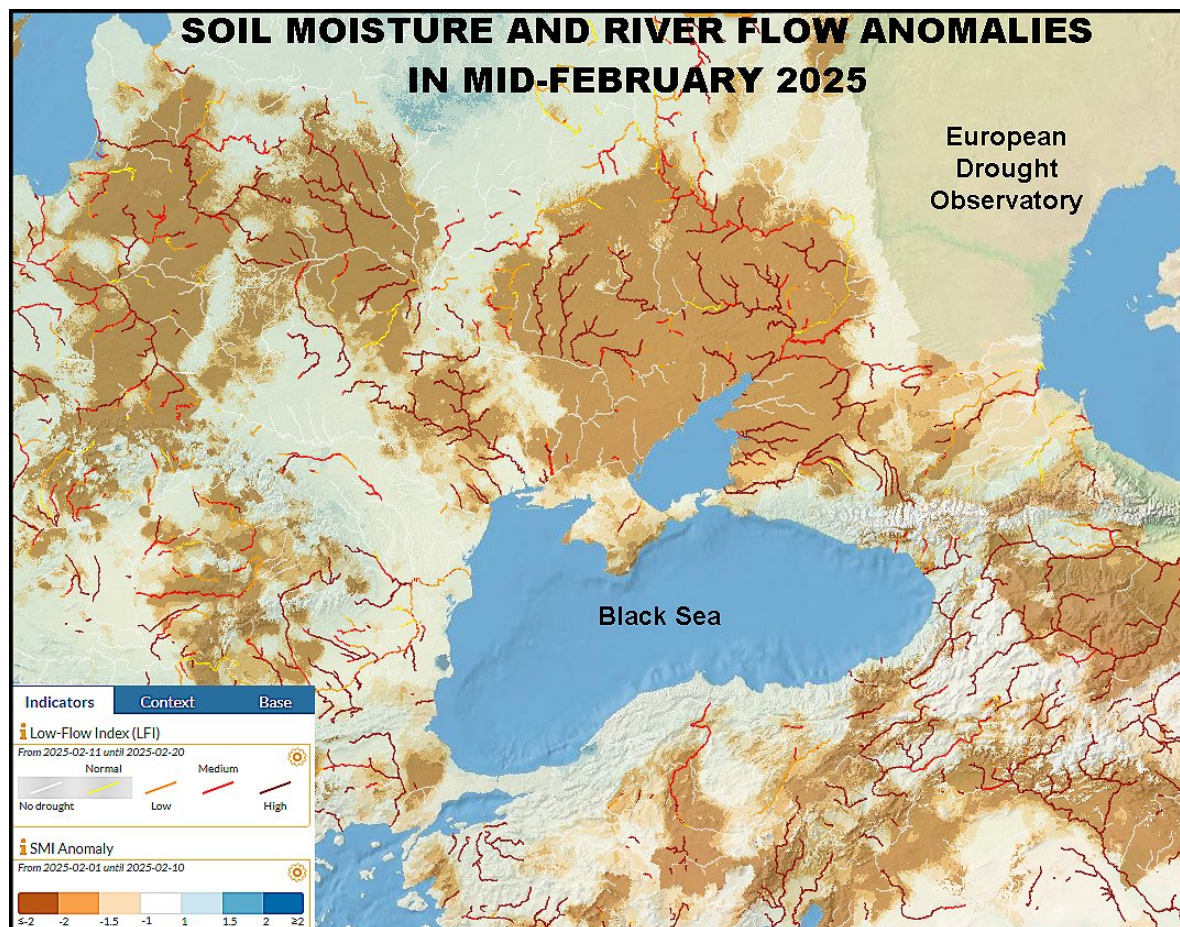


Eastern Europe Dryness Lurks Below The Surface

By Drew Lerner

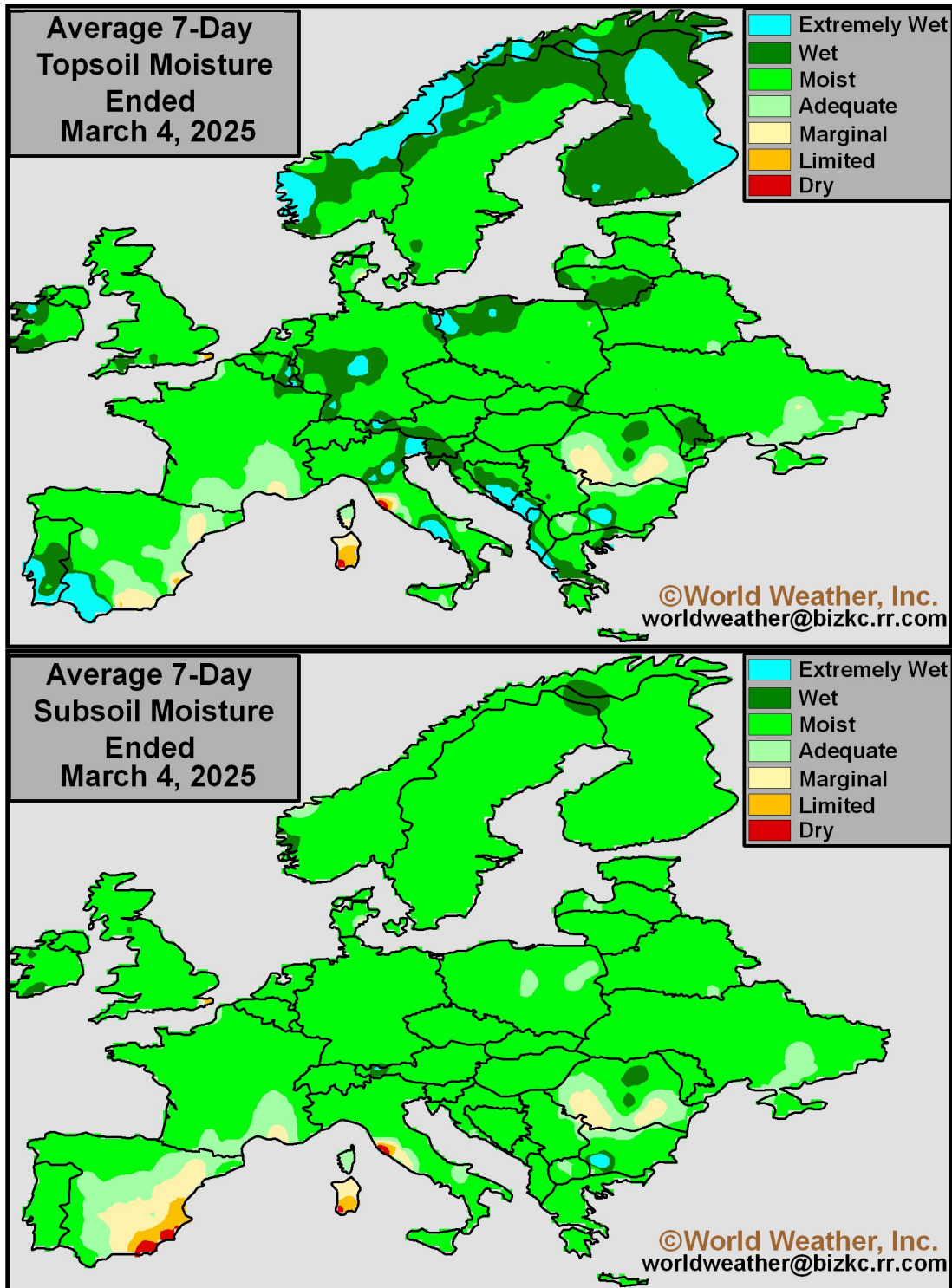
Kansas City, March 6 (World Weather Inc.) – Weather in Eastern Europe has been favorable this winter with very little extreme cold and sufficient snow cover to protect crops during the few bouts of cold that occurred. **Precipitation was welcome and beneficial, though not enough to ensure moisture abundance in the spring.** There has been some recent chatter in the marketplace about the potential for dryness to become a greater issue in Eastern Europe and in Russia's Southern Region and indeed there is some reason to be watchful of events in the region. Precipitation in the next few weeks is expected to remain a lighter than usual, although temperatures may eventually slip a little lower to help conserve soil moisture. There is need for greater precipitation soon to ensure long term soil moisture and water supply are bolstered for long term crop development and human consumption.



The European Drought Observatory produced the above graphic in recent weeks showing dryness and drought in the soil in the Black Sea region. Portions of Turkey, Southern Russia, Ukraine and areas northwest into Belarus and Poland are included in the drier bias. River and stream flow throughout these areas is also running low, although some of that is a winter phenomenon that occurs until the ground thaws and snow melts.

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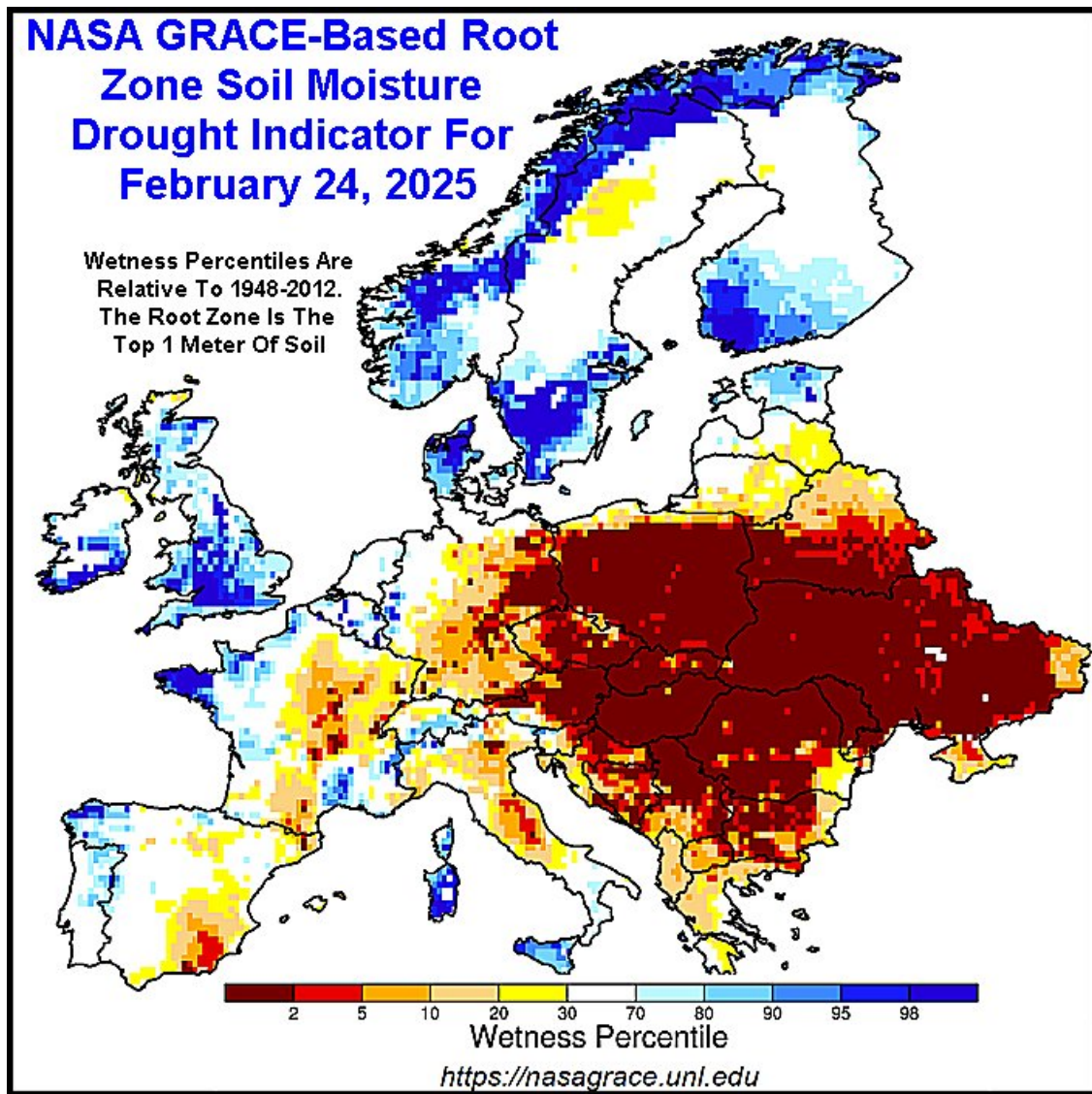
Snow depths are greatest in northern and western Russia and minimal to non-existent in Eastern Europe. Southern Russia has some snow cover, but the depths are not great enough to suggest much runoff potential when it melts. That puts much pressure on rainfall in the next few weeks to restore a more robust moisture profile.



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World Weather, Inc.'s soil moisture assessment does not show much of a problem in any part of Europe except in southeastern Spain and a part of the lower Danube River Basin. However, the analysis is being somewhat skewed by cold surface temperatures and the truth is that dryness still lurks down deep in the ground. As long as timely rain occurs this spring crops will perform just fine; however, warmer than usual temperatures and lackluster precipitation could lead to a more definitive dryness problem and that is what the European Drought Observatory is trying to suggest.

The European Drought Observatory is not alone in suggesting that there may be a problem lurking below the surface in Eastern Europe. NASA (the U.S. National Aeronautical and Space Administration) has some drought indicators it has been using for several years and it, too, shows a potential problem deep in the ground across Eastern Europe and southern Russia. NASA's Root Zone and Groundwater Drought Indicators are rather alarming to look at. The imagery for Root Zone moisture shown below is quite dramatic and alarming. Some caution is needed when using this product.

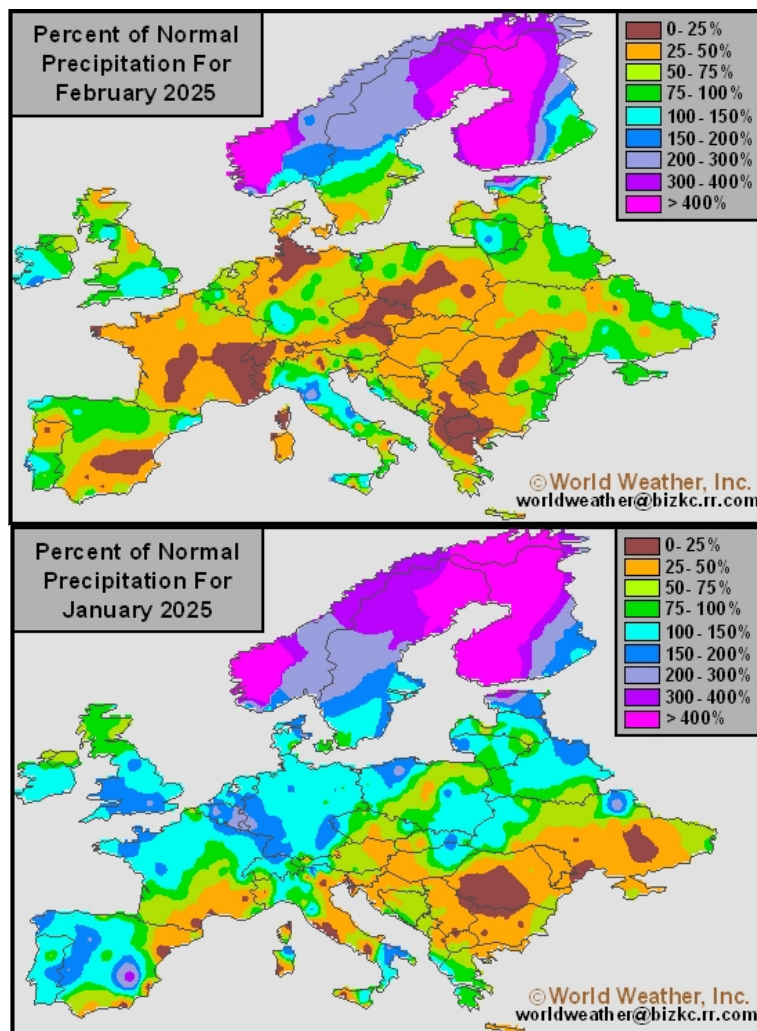


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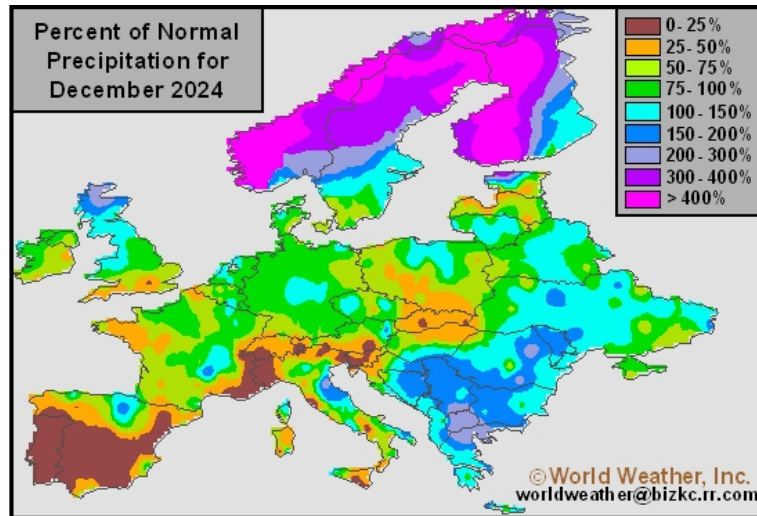
World Weather, Inc. urges much caution in using some of the drought indicators because of their inflammatory presentations; however, there is long term moisture deficits prevailing in portions of Eastern Europe and southern Russia. Timely rain will be imperative this spring to ensure that sufficient moisture remains in the soil for spring planting, emergence and establishment of all kinds of crops. A boost in soil moisture will be needed most once seasonal warming begins because it would not take long for a dry and warmer than usual pattern to bring the long term dryness deep into the ground to the surface raising a more urgent need for moisture.

The spring outlook for Eastern Europe perpetuates a lighter than usual precipitation bias into April with three out of four analog years delaying the arrival of significant moisture until May. Temperatures are advertised to be warm in March and near to below normal in April. This scenario should leave soil moisture at marginally adequate levels which will be great for early spring fieldwork, but any sudden onset of warmer than usual temperatures and no rain would bring on drought at the surface relatively quickly. The situation must be closely monitored.

The potential for improved rainfall does get better in May for much of this region, but any change in prevailing weather patterns between now and then could change that prospect.



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