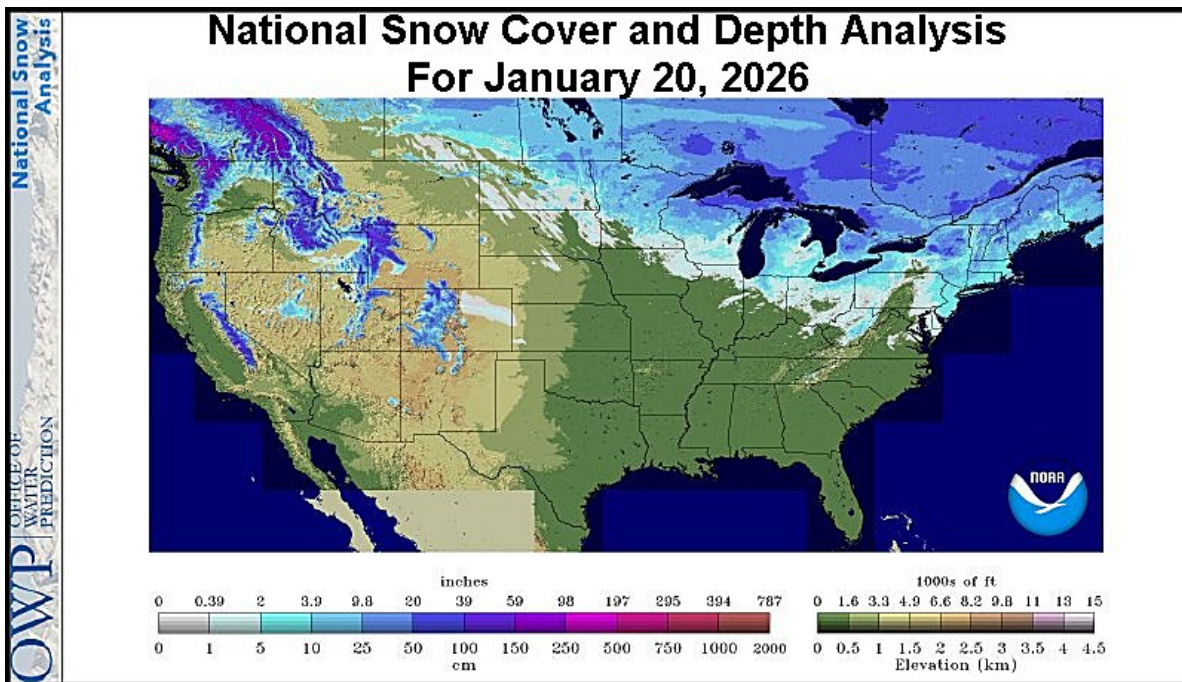


U.S. Wheat Needs Snow Ahead Of Bitter Cold

By Drew Lerner

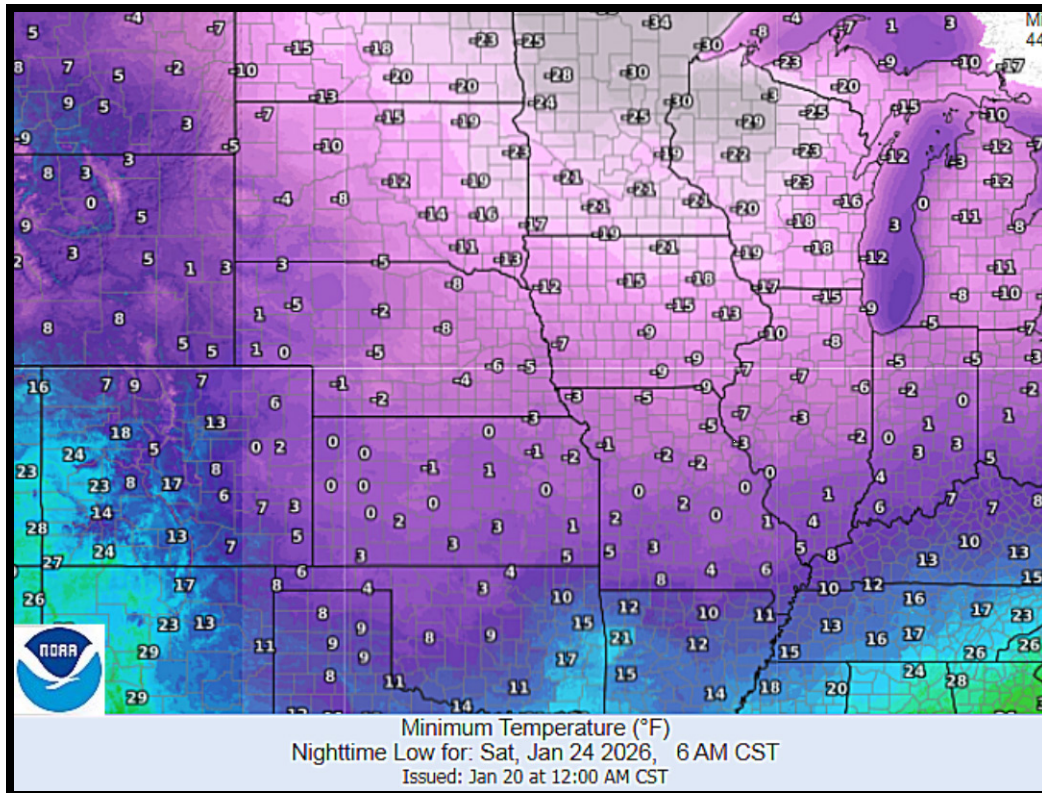
Kansas City, January 20 (World Weather Inc.) – Waves of arctic air continue to march through central and eastern parts of North America. The frequent succession of cold has dried out the atmosphere making it difficult for significant precipitation events to evolve in the northern and central Plains and portions of the Midwest. *Two more surges of bitter cold are expected and many areas are snow free. Temperatures will drop near and below zero Fahrenheit later this week and during the weekend raising a little concern over the fate of U.S. hard red and Midwest soft wheat as the coldest air arrives. Most likely the crop will handle the situation relatively well, but a layer of snow would certainly take the worry out of winterkill potentials.*



Snow cover is minimal from southern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan, Canada southward through Montana, western North Dakota and most of South Dakota to Nebraska, Kansas and a part of northeastern Colorado. Snow free conditions are also prevalent in the heart of the Midwest soft red wheat production region from Missouri to central and southern Indiana. These areas have all experienced bouts of cold weather in recent days adding some winter hardiness to crops after some unusually warm December and early January weather. *Winter hardiness is very important when temperatures drop near and below zero Fahrenheit especially when there is little to no snow on the crop.*

Two more waves of cold air are slated to move through the central and eastern United States in the coming week and each will bring with it a chance for some snow. Moisture content in the atmosphere has been reduced by so much dry and cold air moving southward from the arctic. Snow is still likely to fall; although, most of it will be light and fluffy so that it is easily blown around. That may lead to some snow free areas when the coldest temperatures arrive Friday and especially Saturday.

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Saturday's low temperatures are advertised to drop near and below zero Fahrenheit from eastern Montana and the western Dakotas through Nebraska into Kansas. Similar conditions are likely to the east across Missouri to the heart of the Midwest soft wheat areas in Illinois, Indiana and western Ohio. Some snow is expected to precede the coldest conditions, but in many cases snow is more likely after the coldest air has abated which raises at least some concern over the condition of winter crops after the cold hits the region. Snow free conditions will leave the crown of many crops exposed to some very cold conditions. The duration of the extreme cold and its intensity will then become important in determining the survivability of winter crops.

World Weather, Inc. is quick to point out that winterkill in the United States is usually rare during the middle of winter. More damage is done to wheat and barley in the spring when significant freezes occur after the crop has awakened from winter dormancy. That does not mean winterkill cannot occur during the heart of the winter season, but it does make it more of a rare event. Had there not been so many recent bouts of colder weather the concern over crop conditions in this bitter cold event would be greater; however, there has been and will be more time for crops to harden against the cold before the most threatening temperatures arrive.

Snow is needed to add a layer of protection onto dormant crops to prevent winterkill. There may be a dusting of snow in many areas and if the crown of most plants is at least thinly covered in snow the potential for winterkill will be greatly diminished. That means a very close watch on precipitation is warranted over the next few days before the coldest weather arrives.

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Some weather computer forecast models have completely discounted the potential for snow ahead of the coldest weather and a few suggested that snow will fall, but only after the coldest air has passed. The situation should be closely monitored.

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