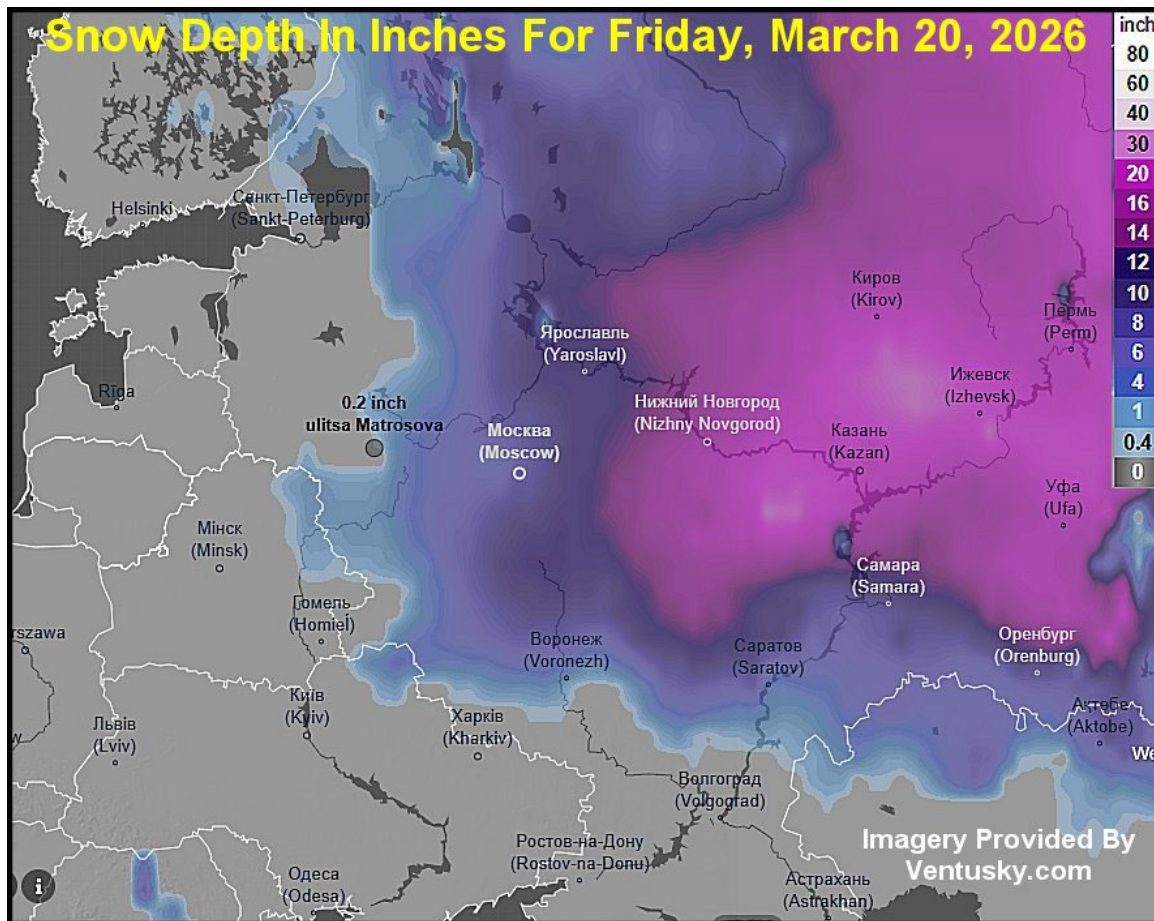


Russia Snow Melts Swiftly; Warm Conditions Prevail

By Drew Lerner

Kansas City, March 20 (World Weather Inc.) – *Warm weather in the Former Soviet Union over the past couple of weeks has brought on some quick snow melt.* Concern was rising over the snow melt season because in late February snow depths were varying from 2-3 feet in some areas of Russia and up to 1 foot in parts of north-central Ukraine. *Today snow free conditions are prevalent in Ukraine, Russia's Southern Region and most areas from Belarus into the Baltic States. Russia's remaining snow field is still deep in some areas, but it is steadily retreating and so far, there has not been much serious flooding even though there has been a heightened risk of such conditions this year.*



Snow depths at one point in late February ranged from one to more than three feet from northern Ukraine through Russia's Central Region and from there to the Ural Mountains region. *There was much concern at that time that the snow melt season might lead to serious flooding especially if precipitation was frequent and/or abundant during the melting period. So far that concern has failed to materialize.*

The past two weeks of weather in the Former Soviet Union has been placid. Very little precipitation of significance has occurred and temperatures have been warmer than usual. No excessive heat has occurred. Most of the daily high temperatures have risen into the 30s and 40s Fahrenheit with nightly freezes and that has helped greatly in regulating the

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daily runoff preventing all of the snow from melting quickly over a short period of time. A quick snowmelt would have resulted in serious flooding. This situation has been almost ideal in getting the snow to melt without causing calamity.

Not all of the snow is gone. There are still some significant accumulations that need to melt in the middle and upper Volga River Basin, Ural Mountains region and the Volga-Vyatka. Some of these areas still have snow depths varying from six to more than 30 inches. However, *the most important winter and early spring crop areas have already become snow free. Additional dry weather is needed to firm the soil since many areas were saturated with moisture long before then snow accumulated so greatly. That means many fields are either saturated with moisture or very muddy.*

Spring planting normally begins in April and sometimes in late March. The environment today suggests that planting might be possible in April after a period of additional warming takes place if precipitation stays restricted. *For now, though, the region is still too wet and soil temperatures are too cool to support new crop development.*

There are a few forecast models suggesting that a boost in precipitation may occur in April and that will have to be closely monitored. Too much moisture in April could still lead to spring flooding since many rivers and streams are running high from the recent melting snow and the ground is still saturated or nearly saturated. *Too much moisture in the spring could still lead to planting delays and winter crop development problems if there is not sufficient time to melt the remaining snow and firm the ground before more rain falls.*

The bottom line is that conditions in the FSU are better than expected a few weeks ago, but weather in April could still have a big impact on the bottom line for spring planting and winter crop development. The situation still needs to be closely monitored.

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