



Snow miss 'worsens prospects' for US winter wheat

Heavy snows, which are burying some farms more than a foot deep, appear to have many missed key US winter wheat areas, threatening seedlings already battling a lack of moisture with frost damage too.

A cold snap which some forecasts believe could bring a record mix of cold and snowfall has already caused US flight cancellations, factory shutdowns and disrupted grain movements, before hitting the Midwest in earnest later on Tuesday.

However, it appears to have missed areas of the southern Plains where hard red winter wheat seedlings needed the snow both to replenish depleted soil moisture levels and protect them against follow up cold which is expected to take temperatures as low as -15 Fahrenheit (-26 degrees Celsius), veteran meteorologist David Tolleris said.

An area of west Kansas, northern Texas, east Colorado and part of Nebraska "has not had any" snow, Mr Tolleris, head of WxRisk.com, said.

"I do not know how that [winter wheat] crop is not going to be seriously hurt, but we will have to wait and see," he said.

'Producers concerned'

High rates of winterkill would further diminish hopes for a hard red winter wheat crop already in poor condition, with just 17% of Texas seedlings rated in "good" or "excellent" condition as of Sunday, down four points in a week.

More than half the crop is rated as in "poor" or "very poor" health.

In Kansas, America's top wheat growing state, 27% of the winter crop was rated in "good" or "excellent" condition as of yesterday. Meanwhile, 37% was rated in the bottom two grades, four points more than a month ago.

"Dry conditions continued across Kansas during January as 44 of 52 weather stations reported below average precipitation for the month," a joint report from state and federal agriculture officials said.

"Only six locations reported greater than an inch of precipitation.

"The dry soil conditions have some producers concerned that their winter wheat crop is vulnerable to wind and freeze damage as well as not having enough moisture in the spring."



'Short on moisture'

Broker US Commodities said: "The crop ratings on the US winter wheat crop continue to deteriorate.

"Most of the topsoil across the southern Plains is short to very short on moisture," which was especially important as the dormancy period ended heading into March.

Wheat prices in Kansas, home of trading in hard red winter wheat, were stable in late deals on Tuesday at \$9.24 ³/₄ a bushel for March delivery, escaping the fall in Chicago, which trades soft red winter wheat, growing in states such as Illinois which have had more plentiful rains.

Chicago's March lot was 0.5% lower at \$8.36 ¹/₄ a bushel.

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