

# the Outlook

As crops complete the transition to the Southwestern Desert regions, Mother Nature looks to continue to wreak havoc for many crops. Out on the West Coast extended range forecasts expect the storm track to open allowing Pacific storm systems to roll in. In previous (drought) years a very strong high pressure ridge blocked many of these storm systems from California, instead pushing the precipitation north into the Pacific Northwest. This season however, El Niño looks to be on target for a tremendous winter for California and the southwest. Of current concern is a cold low approaching California today. A very cold latter part of the week is on tap for the West Coast as a strong low pressure system drops into the region from the Gulf of Alaska. This system will bring very strong winds (25-40mph) to Southern California and the desert locals with possible freeze conditions the citrus regions of the San Joaquin Valley and the numerous protected inland valleys.

The desert growing regions will cool significantly with freezing morning temperatures expected into early next week. These temperatures and winds will impact the entire Western Desert growing region with light to moderate freeze damage possible industry wide over the next few weeks. These crops were weeks ahead of schedule prior to these cold temperatures. Growth rates will slow to a crawl over the next week or more creating a potential gap in supplies mid to late next month. Quality issues due to freeze damage (blister, epidermal peel, discoloration, fringe burn) are likely to become prevalent in upcoming supplies. The coldest of the temperatures are expected later this week as the cold air mass behind the system moves into the Southwest.

On another front we are also closely watching Tropical Storm Sandra currently off the tip of Baja. This system is expected to intensify into Hurricane strength over the next few days and turn to the north, northeast. Sandra is forecast to weaken to a tropical storm before making landfall in Sinaloa early Saturday. If the forecast holds true Sandra will be the latest landfalling Eastern Pacific storm system on record. Sandra will bring heavy rains to Sinaloa and Baja Sur on Saturday. These regions of Mexico have been hard hit this year from numerous storm systems and hurricanes this fall. Many crops are in the line of fire with this unusual late season tropical storm. Remnant moisture from Sandra will impact Texas and Arkansas with heavy rains late next week. This is more typical of September and October than late November. This late season storm is yet another indication of a strong El Niño set up this winter. In fact the latest sea surface temperature readings indicate a rise of 3.1(degrees Celsius) above average. This is the highest weekly value observed during any El Niño in NOAA's records. Once again all signs point to a significant El Niño event this season.

Current stands remain weeks ahead of schedule as growers reach for product to meet demand. Cold temperatures on the way will slow growth rates significantly and likely impact yields as well. Significant loss of production from Mexico has already impacted overall supplies as another tropical system is set to impact the region once again. With the strong likelihood of significant weather (rains followed by cold temperatures) ahead growers may not get back to anything close to a normal schedule this season.

At this point we will have to wait and see how the storms impact the various regions, how cold it gets and how the various crops come through this cold snap. We will be closely watching the ground temperatures various factors and keep you up to date as we obtain more information as to potential damage and supplies.

