

the Outlook

A powerful low-pressure system generated from the Gulf of Alaska moves into California today with strong winds, rain, and cold temperatures. This slow-moving system is expected to be one of the strongest this season moving out of the region on Saturday. Very cold air behind the system will bring another round of freezing temperatures throughout the west. High-pressure ridging brings warmer temperatures throughout the region early next week.

These relatively late winter storm systems, usually impact the west in December and January, which were the warmest on record throughout California. These warm temperatures to start the year created false spring conditions across the state. Growth rates increased bringing crops weeks ahead of schedule. Flowering crops (Strawberries, Citrus, Stone Fruit, Nuts, etc.) came into bloom weeks early. Then we had the cold spell and storms beginning around mid-February continuing into March. These very cold temperatures and strong winds damaged the bloom of these flowering crops throughout the state. Of most concern are the upcoming cherry, stone fruit and nut crops in Northern and Central California. With powerful storms continuing through the week growers will begin crop assessments next week. Early reports indicate significant bloom damage on the stone fruit and nut acreage set for spring harvests.

Growth rates of row crops, weeks ahead of schedule, have slowed to a crawl in the recent very cold temperatures, adding to the concern of upcoming supply gaps. Production will be impacted as growers must wait for fields to warm up sufficiently before harvests begin. Lesser quality and shelf life will be the norm for the near term as freeze-related damage (discoloration, blister, epidermal peel, tip burn) impact yields. The young plants and seedlings set for spring harvests are also of concern given the duration of the cold temperatures and very strong winds. As always upcoming weather patterns will play a crucial role in supplies a quality going forward.