

Monthly El Niño / La Niña Outlook
 Issued Thursday, December 11, 2008 at 12:15 PM Central Time

About

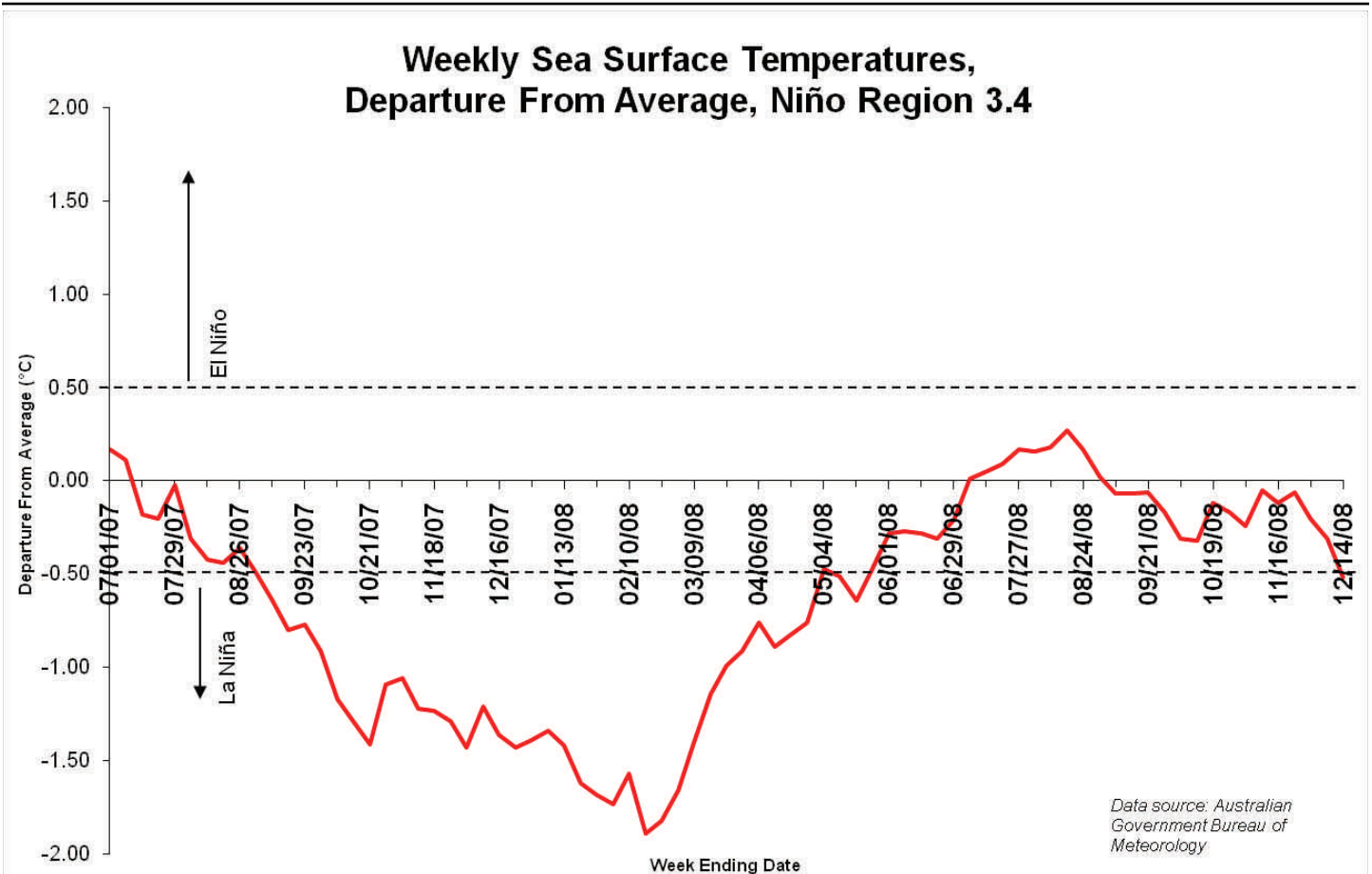
This four-page report coincides with today's release of the Climate Prediction Center's (CPC) monthly El Niño / Southern Oscillation Diagnostic Discussion. Our next report will coincide with the next CPC discussion on Thursday, January 8.

La Niña Conditions

Water temperatures across the central Pacific Ocean are now more than 0.50°C colder than average (see chart). While indicative that La Niña conditions exist, a La Niña classification requires that the 3-month average is at least 0.50°C lower than average. The September-November average was only 0.21°C below average, which means that neutral conditions (neither a La Niña nor El Niño) exist. Recall that this is a potentially important issue because the development of a La Niña can affect the average position of the jet streams across both the northern and southern hemispheres, though correlations to weather are typically highest when ocean temperatures are far from average, as was the case last winter when ocean temperatures approached 2.00°C lower than average (see chart).

Forecasted Conditions

The CPC states that a continuation of neutral conditions or the development of a La Niña are "equally likely"



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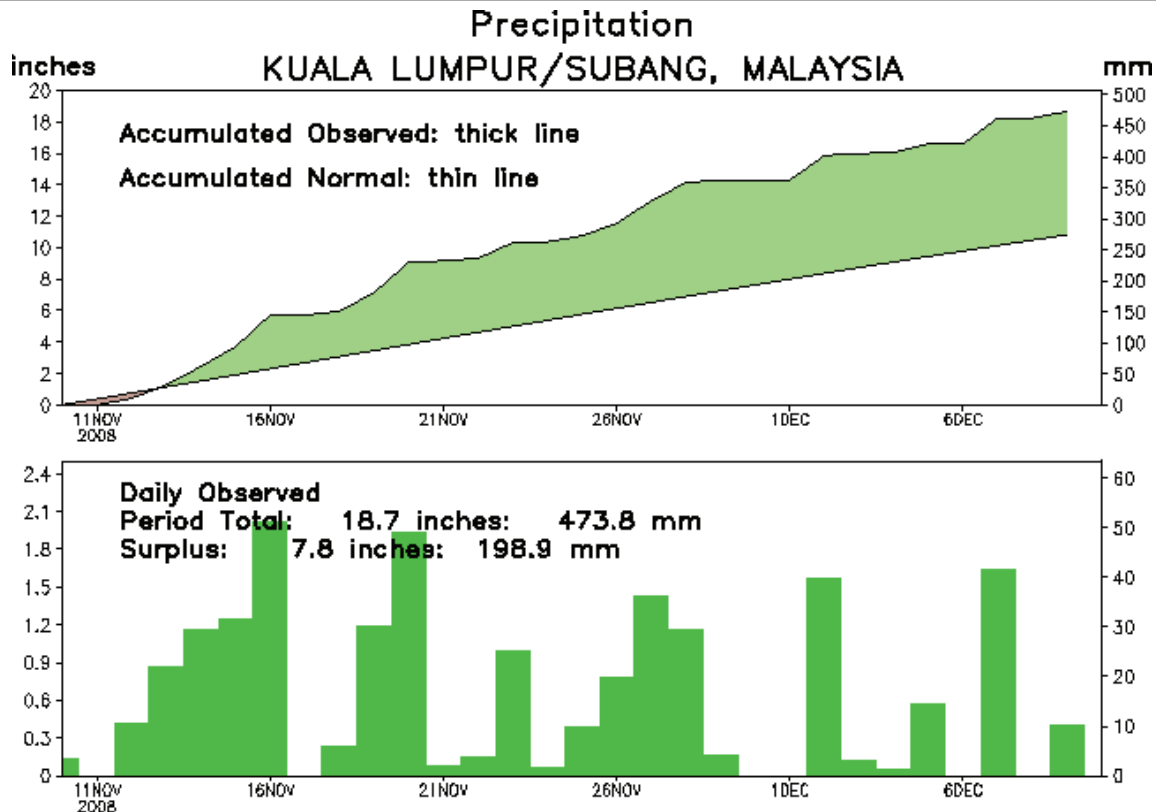
over the next few months. This is based on a combination of recent ocean temperature observations and climate model projections

La Niña Weather May Already Be Underway

La Niña weather most notably includes above-average wetness across Indonesia and below-average dryness across southern Brazil / eastern Argentina during the northern hemisphere winter. Dryness in southern Brazil has been an ongoing issue and localized severe flooding has affected the Malay Peninsula in recent weeks. In fact, the chart below shows that it has been nearly twice as wet as usually in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia over the last 30 days. Additionally, eastern Australia is typically wetter than average during a La Niña — Queensland and New South Wales have been wet to excessively wet at times over the last month+. Therefore, our assessment of worldwide weather patterns currently seem to match expectations of a moderate to strong La Niña.

La Niña Strength Typically Important, But...

The correlation between the strength of La Niña and worldwide weather patterns is typically much higher when a strong event occurs. It is unlikely that a strong event will unfold, especially since ocean temperatures typically begin to revert toward average in March. In other words, there is minimal time for a strong La Niña



Data updated through 09 DEC 2008

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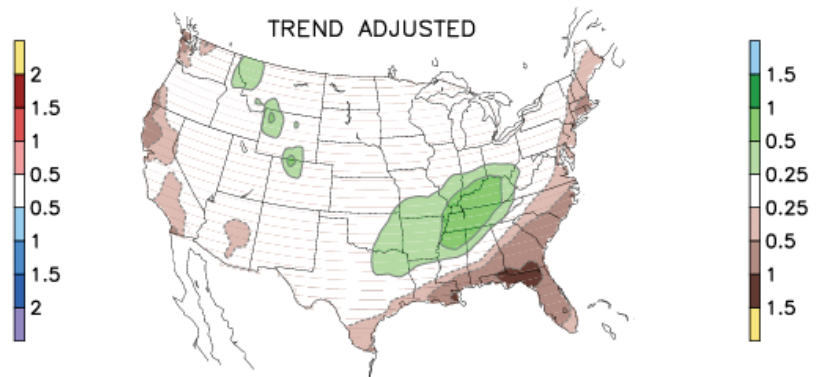
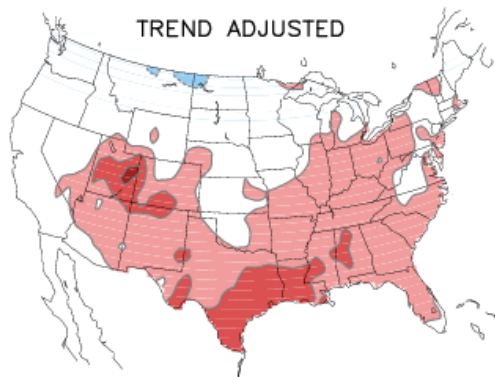
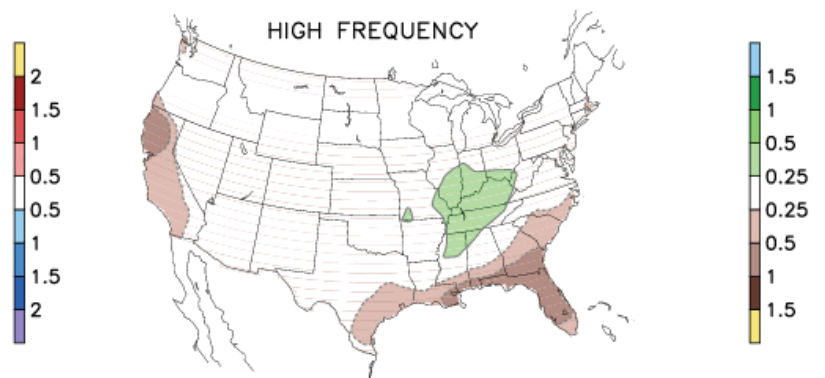
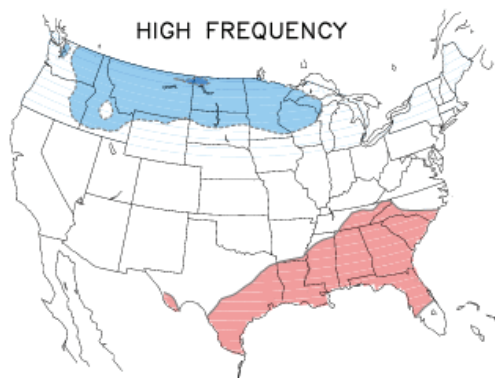
to develop. Nonetheless, worldwide weather patterns may resemble a La Niña because the atmosphere never fully recovered from the intensity of the La Niña in late 2007 / early 2008, which makes the potential effects of a weak La Niña more enhanced than would otherwise occur. This seems sensible, but the intensity of the La Niña in early 2008 was among the strongest of the last 50 years, which means there is not a large number of observations for use in comparisons to worldwide weather. Regardless, we conclude that typical worldwide weather that occurs with moderate Niña conditions (regardless of Niña intensity) are more likely than indicated in our earlier Outlooks.

United States Weather Effects

The maps below show that temperatures are typically colder than average across the northern U.S. and wetter than average across the Delta / eastern Corn Belt during a moderate to strong La Niña. We do not believe the “trend adjusted” charts provide particular use because they overweigh the effects of weather during the last 10-15 years. Interestingly, and possibly not coincidentally, the upcoming weather pattern through at least 10-14 days will somewhat resemble these expectations (though the Rockies will be much snowier than usual). That being said, we suspect the coverage of colder-than-average weather across the central U.S. will probably be higher based on recent weather / foreseeable weather / previous thinking.

DJF LA NINA TEMPERATURE ANOMALIES (°C)
 (20 CASES)

DJF LA NINA PRECIPITATION ANOMALIES (MM DAY⁻¹)
 (20 CASES)





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The end result is that notable moisture deficits are unlikely to exist for most corn, soybean, and wheat areas in the spring.

South America Weather Effects

La Niña weather patterns typically result in below-average dryness from southern Brazil through eastern Argentina, which is essentially what has been occurring over the last month. As has been noted in the U.S. and South America Outlooks, a substantial pattern change is not currently foreseen. Therefore, our best estimate is that this type of pattern is most probable to continue through January or February. Note that the same pattern last year did not result in dramatic production losses because it remained wet across Center-West and Southeast Brazil, which remains sensible.

Indonesia-Malaysia Weather Effects

A continuation of wetter-than-average weather is probable to continue through the next few months. While not ideal for oil palm in the Malaysia Peninsula that has flooded, this region can handle excessive amounts of rain. Nonetheless, this pattern may be slightly too wet given a wet starting point.

Europe / western Russian Federation Weather Effects

Connections between European weather and the Niño / Niña phenomenon are low. That being said, we remain concerned at the lack of snow cover that leaves the winter wheat / rapeseed belts susceptible to unforeseen winterkill.

China Weather Effects

The North China Plain is typically dry during the winter, as has been occurring. Last winter, rapeseed areas to the immediate south of the North China Plain were pummeled by several large-scale snowstorms. This potential will need to be monitored, but we are not expecting the unusual pattern to return in January and February.