

New El Nino Brews In The Pacific

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An El Nino typically makes an appearance every three to seven years.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), we are in the early stages of the largest El Nino event since 1982-1983. The early weather effects of this new El Nino have been cooler and wetter temperatures in some parts of the Midwest in late summer and heavy rainfall in the Southwest this fall.

Scientists are suggesting that this El Nino could disturb weather all around the globe and many governments, including the U.S., Australia, and Brazil are worried about effects on world agriculture.

The El Nino is simply a warming of the ocean surface temperature off the coast of Peru, in the eastern and central Pacific Ocean. This temperature change in the ocean surface can cause a shift in the normal air currents which in turn changes the rainfall patterns around the world.

In places like Australia and Indonesia, there is a tendency to have drier than normal climates during El Nino years. On the

other hand, places like Peru often have excessive rainfall, sometimes at damaging levels.

The Corn Belt has a tendency to have better than average growing conditions when El Nino events persist through the spring and summer. In Pennsylvania, El Nino effects appear to be weaker than in the Midwest.

Past crop and weather data tell us that during 7 out of 22 recorded El Nino years, Iowa had corn yields 10 percent above average. Only 3 of the 22 El Nino years showed Iowa corn yields 10 percent below average. Simply put, we can not guarantee increased corn yields from any given El Nino event. However, it appears that generally if an El Nino persists into the spring it often results in above-average growing conditions in the Corn Belt.

In the future, when more weather data has been compiled, forecasters will be able to relate growing conditions to El Nino events with a higher degree of certainty.

Do we know for sure if this El Nino will have the same effect as El Ninos of past? No. A lot depends on the severity

and length of this El Nino. If this El Nino turns out to be weaker or shorter than originally thought, its effects will probably not be noticeable.

Sea surface temperatures that influence the El Nino are monitored in the Pacific by a system of 70 moored buoys. To

monitor the El Nino effect and related news, visit the website at www.pmel.noaa.gov/toga-toa/home.html.

With today's improved ocean-atmosphere computer models and an overall increased level of understand-

ing of El Nino, climatologists are better able to make accurate and detailed predictions. As corn growers, we need to be able to access and interpret this information rapidly to make the best use of it in making production and marketing decisions.

Citizens Will Pay If Incentive Program Eliminated

EDGEWATER, Md. — Maryland citizens will lose 217 jobs and pay \$99.4 million more for gasoline if an ethanol tax incentive program is eliminated in Washington, according to a nationwide study.

The study, conducted by Dr. John Urbanchuk of AUS Consultants in Moorestown, N.J. for the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), also found that cutting the ethanol program would cost Americans across the country an additional \$500 million in higher federal gasoline taxes, \$3 billion in higher gasoline costs, and \$2.9 billion in lost household income each year.

America's ethanol industry has come under attack by spe-

cial interests, including Big Oil, who want to terminate the federal ethanol program. The ethanol tax incentive program is a 5.4 cent per gallon exemption on the current gasoline excise tax of 18.4 cents per gallon. Legislation to end the program immediately is being considered this week by the House Ways and Means Committee, where Chairman Bill Archer (R-TX) has targeted the incentive as part of the tax legislation coinciding with the recent bipartisan budget agreement.

"Although ethanol is produced primarily in the midwest, it still plays a vital part of Maryland's farm economy.

Killing the federal ethanol program will reduce Maryland farm income as much as \$30 million and increased gas prices will hit all Maryland's consumers in their wallets," said Melvin Baile Jr., president of the Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA).

Wallie Hardie, a North Dakota farmer and NCGA president, said, "Americans did not vote for higher taxes, higher gas prices or dirtier air. Let's hope Congress can do what's right for all Americans, not just what's right for Big Oil."

For more information contact Lynne C. Hoot, executive director of MGPA, (410) 956-5771.

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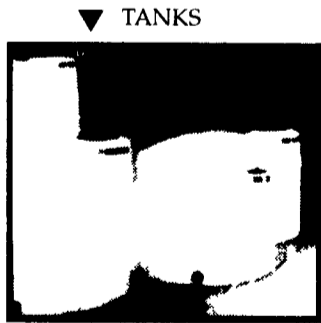
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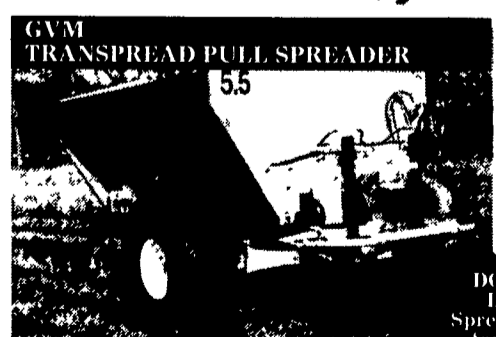
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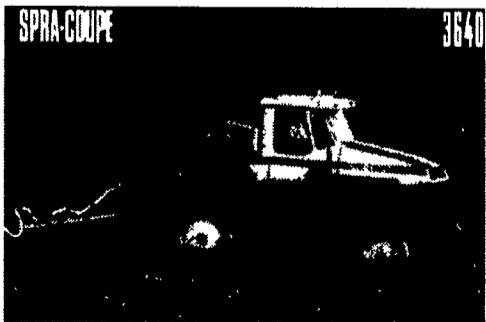
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