

# Drought Conditions 'Everywhere Bad'

by Marcia Merry Baker

July 27—The drastic extent and food-loss impact of this year's drought and heat wave across the farmbelts of United States are indicated in the map series shown here, done in July by Federal agencies responsible for monitoring agriculture, food, weather, and atmospheric conditions. We have a fast-worsening food-supply crisis. Instead of merely a terrible regional disaster—as happened last year in the parched Southern Plains areas of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona—likewise in northern Mexico, resulting in huge losses of cattle and crops; we now face a nationwide and continental-scale disaster. This year is “everywhere bad” in the United States.

Moreover, any crop disaster in the United States is automatically an international catastrophe, since so much of the world's corn, soybeans, and wheat output has wrongly come to be concentrated in the States, as monoculture was imposed over decades of globalization, undercutting food sovereignty and development among the world's individual nations. Of the world's annual corn output, for example, the U.S. accounts for over a third.

As shown in **Figure 1**, as of July 23, there were 1,297 counties designated by the Department of Agriculture as official “disaster areas” out of the total of 3,000-plus counties in the United States. These farming disaster counties are spread over 29 states, as shown in Figure 1. Not all, but most of the counties are hit by drought. A much smaller number, declared as agricultural disasters, have damage from hail, freezing (as in Michigan), and flooding.

The widespread drought pattern is clear from **Figure 2**, the U.S. Drought

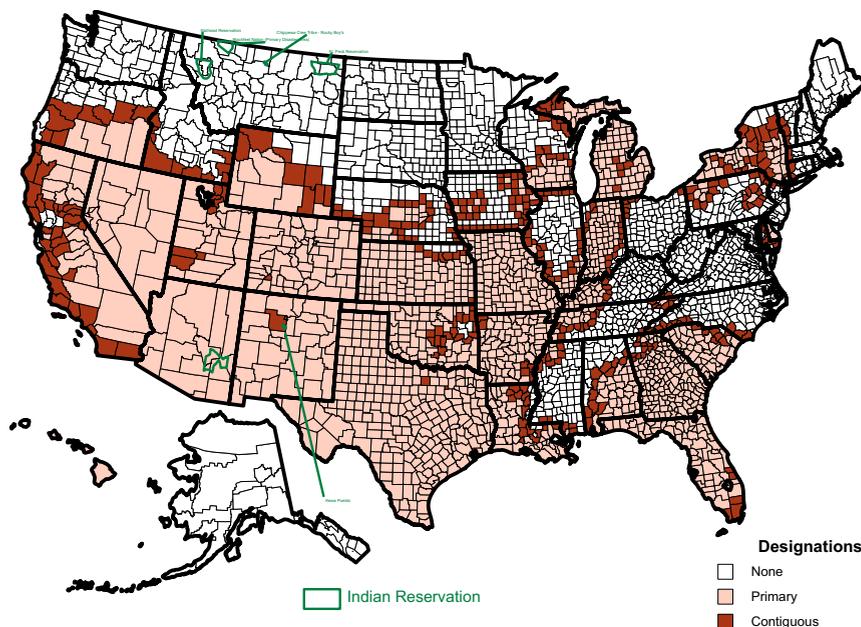
Monitor (July 24), issued weekly. Areas of “severe, extreme, or exceptional” drought are now extensive in the heart of the Midwest Farmbelt. In other words, the disaster counties are not only concentrated in the Southwest—known as the “Great American Desert,” since that term originated in the early 1800s—but also extend into the heart of the Cornbelt, into the High Plains Wheatbelt, as well as affecting the Southeastern states, home to specialty crops and orchards, such as peanuts and peaches, as well as to corn, soybeans, and general mixed farming. *Over 85% of all U.S. agriculture production is experiencing drought conditions.*

The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to designate counties as disaster areas, on grounds of crop damage and farm income losses, in order to make Federal disaster assistance programs available to farmers and ranchers. As the map of Secretarial Designations shows in Figure 1, there are whole states now in the disaster category—the latest being Missouri—among the leading corn, soybean, cattle, and hog-producing states.

## Corn Crop Hard Hit

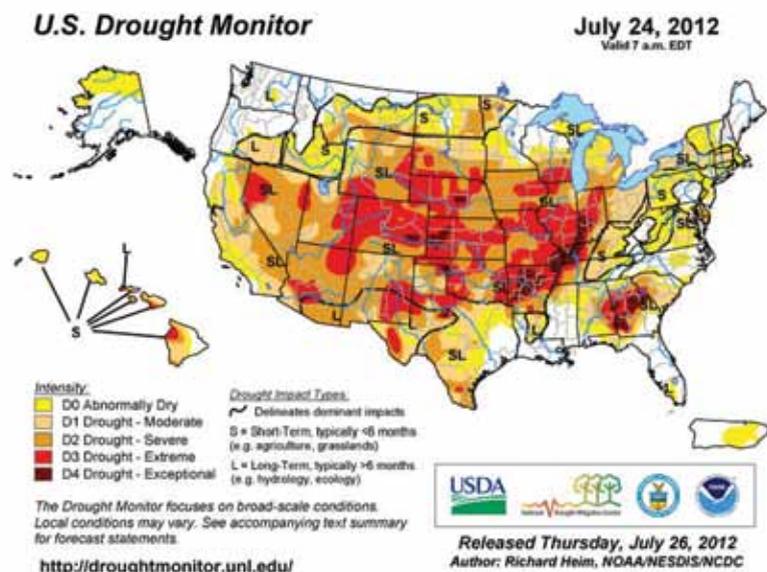
The current drought zone encompasses both the Winter Wheatbelt (centered on Kansas) and Cornbelt (centered on Iowa), as well as the top soybean produc-

FIGURE 1  
**Counties Designated as Disasters by the Secretary of Agriculture, as of July 25, Crop Year 2012**



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

**FIGURE 2**  
**Pattern and Severity of Drought Conditions in the United States, July 24, 2012**



tion region of the Midwestern United States. However, as of July, the losses in corn are causing the most immediate concern, for many reasons, but especially because corn carryover supplies from the last harvest are already below the danger level, and livestock and the entire food chain (starch, oil, sweetener, cereal, corn flour, citric acid, among many products) depend on corn. Also, Winter wheat is already gathered in, with varying rates of loss. Soybeans, which also are manifesting damage, mature later on.

Drought is devastating this year's corn crop. First, look at the extent. The map in **Figure 3** (July 17) shows the major and minor areas of corn cultivation in the United States—accounting for 88% of the annual harvest; most all of this area is in drought (cross-hatched on the map).

U.S. farmers planted a large area of 96.4 million acres to corn this year. This is very high, amounting to about a third of all crops sown. But the corn yield prospects are falling drastically week by week. In early July, over 25% of the crop came into its pollination period—lasting about 10 days, ahead of the norm, because it was planted early, after the mild Winter. But that was the very time

when dry, hot, windy conditions hit, and deterred the pollen and silks (hairs on the cob) from uniting.

Even the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—notorious for unreliable statistics—has put its latest national bushels-per-acre estimate down to 146, way below its earlier (and baseless) figure of 166 bushels per acre. For thousands of farmers, the yield prospects are zero. They are chopping the plants for silage.

The July 23 weekly “Crop Progress” report had to state that 45% of the nationwide corn crop is now rated as poor to very poor. In Illinois, the second-largest corn-producing state, 66% is rated poor; in Indiana, the fifth-largest, 71% is poor; in Missouri, 79% poor.

### Cattle Hard Hit

Along with the parched corn fields, pastures, hay and other fodder are also dried up in the drought. **Figure 4** shows that 75% of the cattle inventory of the nation is within the boundaries of the large area experiencing drought (as of July 24).

Ranchers and farmers face impossible expenses to provide water and feed under the drought conditions.

**FIGURE 3**  
**U.S. Corn Areas Experiencing Drought**  
 Reflects July 17, 2012 U.S. Drought Monitor data  
 Approximately 88% of the corn grown in the U.S. is within an area experiencing drought, based on historical NASS crop production data.



FIGURE 4

### U.S. Cattle Areas Experiencing Drought

Reflects July 24, 2012  
U.S. Drought Monitor data

Approximately 75% of the domestic cattle inventory is within an area experiencing drought, based on NASS 2007 Census of Agriculture data.



They are losing animals to the fierce heat, and are sending mass numbers to slaughter.

The number of cattle (dairy, beef, all types) in the United States as of July, was estimated at 97.9 million head, by the USDA, the lowest number since 1973, when such estimates began to be made twice yearly (January and July). The cattle herd as of July is down 2% from last year at this time, and far below the 115 million head of 30 years ago, which level is naturally fewer than required today.

### Keep a Perspective: You Create Nature

What this state-of-emergency picture calls us to understand, is that our vulnerability to weather extremes and damage comes from the man-made disaster of the lack of development of resources which would allow us to withstand, and even ameliorate, adverse weather. To protect agriculture and produce plentiful food involves construction and use of such practices such as irrigation, continental-scale water conveyance, creating freshwater from nuclear-powered desalination, climate-controlled protection for livestock, high-tech food preservation, etc. All of these involve providing and organizing ever higher volumes of power and organization for agricultural processes. Even “protected agriculture” in the Arctic is entirely feasible.

Because these projects have been blocked for decades, during the global-casino era of money-market-

based policies, we are now seeing food losses on a far larger scale than needs to be, because of the current North American drought. This underscores the urgency of launching NAWAPA XXI (see below), and initiating short-term emergency food and farm measures in the same spirit.

We must re-instate the historic imperative for development, affirmed in the Constitution and founding of the United States. Look at a few instances of U.S. history, concretely, in terms of the achievement of successively higher platforms of agro-industrial productivity, and the leaps in food output. In the 19th Century, the settling of the Midwest, out from the Atlantic coast, created vast new grain and meat production centers. In the 20th Century, California’s fabulously productive Imperial Valley was created out of a desert, as a result of the Colorado River Basin water-management system.

Less known, is the story of Iowa. It lies between two mighty rivers—the Missouri and Mississippi, which form its western and eastern boundaries—and, left to its “natural state,” Iowa fields tend to swampland. But the decades of intervention by farmers—even up to the present time—have underlain Iowa’s black-earth soils with extensive drainage pipe systems (tiling), to create one of the world’s most productive croplands. Iowa has the highest percentage of its area under cultivation of any state.

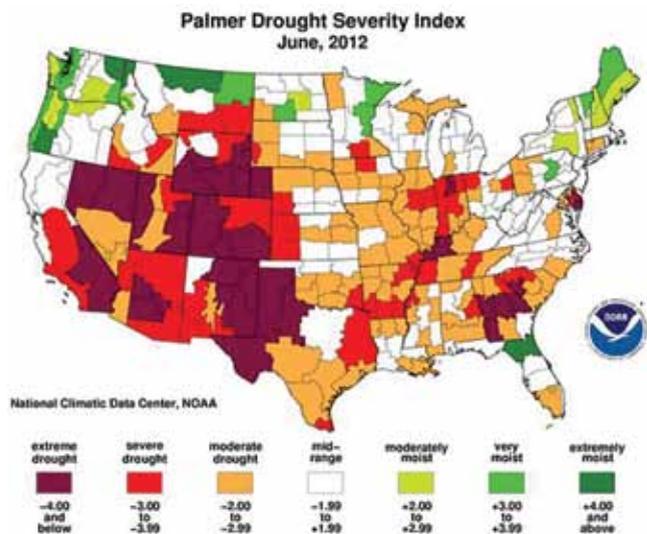
These examples document the principle that *man’s applied creativity creates the natural environment*, including in extreme weather.

### Don’t Panic; Dump Greenism

In this regard, it is absolutely essential—even therapeutic—to reject any form of the greenie assertion now making the rounds in the headlines, that today’s terrible drought must be seen as verification of the hoax of mankind’s culpability for global warming and planetary heat death. This myth has been cooked up and deployed for the purpose of deterring the discovery and application of high-technology advances—the very kind of activity we require for protection against adverse weather.

In particular, there is no grounds for a panic-response to the drought, to think that it is unprecedented, or record-breaking, if not apocalyptic. The appropriate scientific and historical perspective on today’s drought was presented July 21 by Peter Martinson, known as the

FIGURE 5  
**Pattern and Severity of Drought in the United States, June 2012**



National Climatic Data Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
*The Palmer Drought Severity Index (Figures 5-7) attempts to take into account the duration and intensity of long-term drought-inducing circulation patterns, while it measures water balance, considered as water supply (precipitation), demand (evapotranspiration), and loss (run-off). The three maps represent the years 1934, 1956, and 2012.*

Weatherman of the LaRouche Political Action Committee’s R&D team, in an LPAC-TV *Weather Report*, in the LPAC “Mastering Forces of Nature” series.

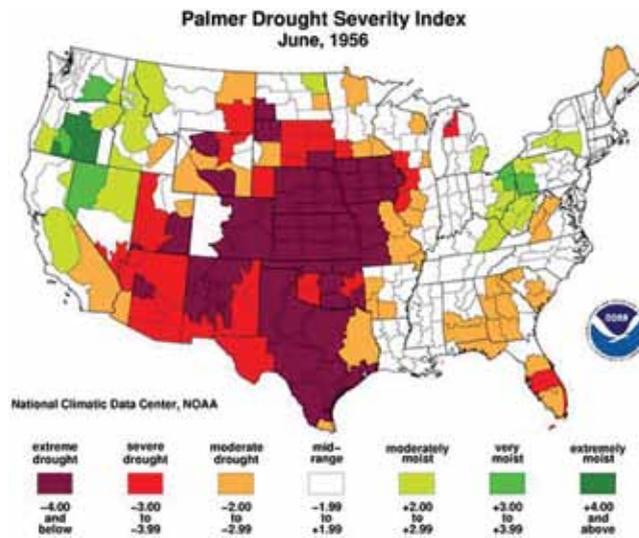
Martinson used the maps in **Figures 5, 6 and 7**, showing snapshots of the drought severity of today, from the 1956 drought, and from 1934, in the Dustbowl period.

He gave this background explanation: “Our planet is really old. Recorded human history goes back perhaps 10,000 years. Recognizable humans stepped out on the Earth, maybe 2 to 3 million years ago. The Earth itself is well over four and a half billion years old. . . . [Our records for the] measurements of climate go back only about 200 years, at best. Compared to 4 billion years, 200 years is equal to approximately zero.

“So in order for this panic alarm of man-made global warming to work, they depend on your willingness to be bowled over by ‘record-setting’ temperatures, or ‘record-setting’ drought . . . but none of these records are over a few decades old.

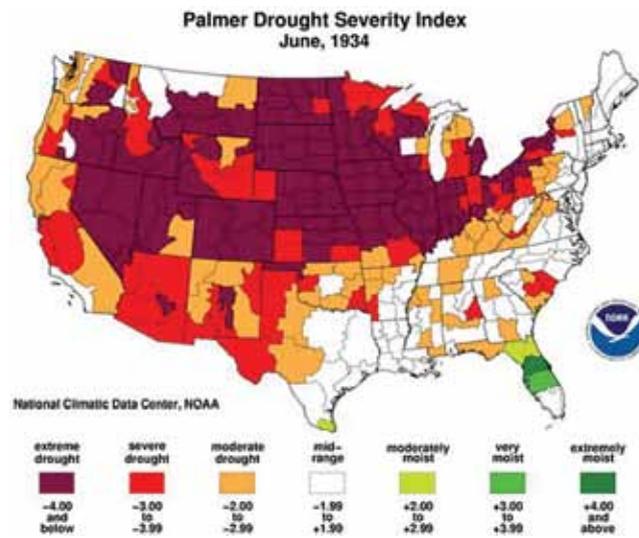
“Take the current American drought. Now this drought is terrible. We may lose our corn crop for the year. But we had a much worse drought back in the

FIGURE 6  
**Pattern and Severity of Drought in the United States, June 1956**



National Climatic Data Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

FIGURE 7  
**Pattern and Severity of Drought in the United States, June 1934**



National Climatic Data Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

1950s. And we had a much worse drought yet in the 1930s, during the great Dustbowl. But that’s not even a hundred years ago. We probably had much worse in the deep, deep past. . . .”

*marciabaker@larouchepub.com*