APPALACHIAN DISTRICT (MD, PA, VA, WV): The sap was running in the maples at the beginning of March along with rivers from several light to heavy rains. Daytime temperatures ranged in the upper forties and lower fifties and nighttime temperatures near to above freezing, with a few colder than normal days and a couple of warmer than normal days mixed in. Beekeepers have started checking on colonies as bee activity is increasing. Beekeepers are still assessing winter losses, which are currently variable. Most are reporting the colonies that survived look healthy and they are seeing the appearance of drone brood and are preparing for spring splits. Bees are foraging on early wildflowers, such as skunk cabbage, blues, hellebores, crocus and a few dandelions depending on elevation and location. Witch hazels are also in bloom and cherry orchards in the southern part of the District were just beginning to open.
ALABAMA: Unusually cool weather across much of the state during the latter half of the month slowed earlier spring build-up, and in some cases resulted in chilled brood as earlier egg-laying outstripped adult worker population force. Some beekeeping groups have started to receive their packaged bees, as scheduled. Reports of high winter colony mortality have been discussed across the state. Several beekeepers in the northern part of the state have reported symptoms of European Foulbrood. This is consistent with elevated cases reported last year.

ARIZONA: Some Arizona bee colonies remained out of state during the first part of the month for the purposes of pollinating fruit and nut trees elsewhere, including California. However, towards the end of the month, most colonies began returning to the state. This, coupled with warmer weather, has resulted in an increased level of bee activity in the state. Alfalfa and desert and plant bloom were the main sources for nectar and pollen in the state. Temperatures were at below normal levels during most of the month. The demand for honey in Arizona was good.

ARKANSAS: No report issued.

CALIFORNIA: Though it may bode well for honey production later this spring, heavy rain that continued through March also resulted in a lack of mated queens for California beekeepers. “This will affect beekeepers across the U.S., many of whom depend upon California queens and packages,” one beekeeper said.

Another noted the industry faced delays of two to three weeks to rebuild colonies. “We need to start making splits to fill all the dead outs and to relieve the crowding conditions in our colonies due to the good buildup,” he said. Cool, wet weather conditions extended almond bloom long enough to keep bees in orchards far beyond normal into early April. “Bees came out of the almonds with some added nectar and increased populations,” a beekeeper said. Others reportedly weren’t as fortunate.

Still, most agree that the heavier rains will help replenish groundwater, which should benefit late season pollen sources and make for better honey crops. By early April, some hives had been moved into cherry pollination. Beekeepers also held onto hope for a good sage honey flow ahead thanks to adequate moisture. “We just need some heat to go along with it,” one said.

FLORIDA: The month had about normal temperatures and about normal rainfall with not much precipitation. Bee health was considered to be about average with many hives returning from California being split to rebuild the numbers. Many hives returned from California and were being prepared to ship to more northern state for pollination duties. Cold weather in the north had kept most bees in Florida at the end of the month. Most will be relocated to more northern states ranging from the Northwest to the Northeast for honey production including clover, and pollination work in a multitude of fruits and vegetables. Food sources included Spanish Needle, oak, orange, primrose and clover. The orange blossom honey season began in early March and lasted for about 3-to-4 weeks compared to last years’ season that ended in about 10 days. There appears to be a cycle in orange bloom that peaks about every 3-to-4 years and this year appeared to be the peak in the cycle. Orange blossom honey production is expected to be a good crop with some prices being reported in the $2.65-$2.85 per pound range. There was good demand for the orange blossom honey and very light supplies of other types of stored honey.

GEORGIA: Some beekeepers have reported losses in the Southern parts of the state and are trying to figure out what the cause is from. It is suspected that this may be due to a virus and a virus is being checked on at this time. The weather has been a roller coaster going from extreme cold, to rain to warm weather and back to freezing temps again. This has affected the Northern areas more than the Southern areas that seem to be more on track. The bloom cycles seem to get turned around and do not know when to start and restart again after a freeze or heavy rainstorms. The Red Maple had a short cycle this year and the bees are still feeding out stored food in the hives until they can get out and forage more frequently as the weather is expected to get warmer. This winter is longer than usual.

IDAHO, COLORADO, UTAH: During the month of March temperatures were below normal across the entire State of Idaho, Northern areas of Utah and most of Colorado. Temperatures were slightly above normal during the same period in Southern Utah. Precipitation during March was above normal across all of Colorado and Utah. Most reporting areas of Idaho experienced slightly below normal precipitation during the same period. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor website, above normal precipitation during March helped ease drought conditions in Idaho, Utah and Colorado. Persistent abnormally dry areas are still present over much of Utah and Southern and Southwest areas of Colorado. Most of Idaho has normal soil moisture conditions.

Commercial beekeepers are now finished with the almond pollination in California. This pollination season in California was certainly protracted due to the wet and cool weather this year. Also, due to the lack of fly time, very little honey was made by bees during the almond pollination period. Many of the commercial beekeepers have headed back to their respected States. Some have opted to stay in California a little longer to make sure that weather conditions are good back home.

The cool wet spring has held back queen breeders so far this year. Therefore, many commercial beekeepers are needing to delay division of hives as a result. With some of the various losses of bees this winter, beekeepers are hoping to catch back up on overall colony numbers with these divides. So dividing colonies will be a big project when it gets under way.

Beekeepers overall report that bees are coming into the spring on the lighter side. While in California, the cool, damp weather did not help put much weight on bees. Lack of fly time was a major contribution to this issue. Most beekeepers are not reporting many varroa mites at this time. However, as part of ongoing good management practices, beekeepers plan to keep testing for any mites present and treat when necessary. Beekeepers plan to utilize supplemental feeding where necessary to keep the hives healthy prior to spring pollen and nectar availability.

Demand for Idaho, Utah and Colorado honey continues to be very good for locally sourced honey. Much of the commercial honey has been committed to packers, except for small amounts saved back for retail sales. With this said, few prices exist to establish a current market price for wholesale white honey. The work is never done for commercial beekeepers who travel.

ILLINOIS: The weather for March was normal with just enough of rain. Beekeepers report some losses of bees over the winter. Beekeepers are trying to rebuild their populations with heavy purchases of packages. Existing bees are taking cleansing flights. Crocuses and Soft Maple are beginning to show themselves. Demand for honey is good at the retail level and demand was weak at the wholesale level. Prices are generally unchanged.

INDIANA: The weather has fluctuated from cold to hot to average for March temperatures with a decent amount of rain. Most beekeepers report that some of their bees have survived the winter in good condition, while many report some dead hives. Beekeepers say that they have bought new packages to rebuild their hives. Demand for honey is good at the retail level and fairly good at the wholesale level. Prices are generally unchanged.
IOWA, KANSAS, MISSOURI, NEBRASKA: No report issued.

KENTUCKY: The month of March in Kentucky was difficult for many beekeepers, although the weather was milder and “normalized” for the first time this year. For some beekeepers, it was the first time the weather had been dry enough and warm enough to check their hives. Quite a few beekeepers report high losses, some losses as high as 50%. According to the Hardin County Beekeepers Association, beekeepers had started the Fall 2018 in October with 121 hives, but had 90 hives in February. Although it is anecdotal, the reasons varied from varroa mites, starvation, queen failure, moisture, and the suspicion that bees got into something toxic. In another report from USDA Beltsville lab, a beekeeper from Oldham County had high nosema spore counts, over 10.75 million present per bee. In several cases, queen failure was reported, typically from beekeepers who had not requeened last fall. In a few cases, the queens were found lying on the bottom board, having just laid eggs a few hours before. There were hive losses due to unexpectedly high winds in the middle of March, with some hives being blown over and in one case, a tree fell on one hive, pulverizing the hive and all inhabitants. On a brighter note, the weather during March had temps being around 54F, when typically, it is 57F, and the precipitation was noticeably less with only 1.22 inches, when typically Kentucky normally receives approximately 4 inches of rain. Beekeepers are beginning to put on honey supers because the honey bees are bringing in nectar, and on March 30, the first swarm reported was recorded in Owingsville, KY.

LOUISIANA: No report issued.

MICHIGAN: Much of the month has been too cold for cleansing flights. The danger to the hives recently has been lack of food and starvation until the first blooms begin. With warmer weather in the forecast in the near term, pussy willow and maples will be some of the first bloom, and build-up will begin as the queen lays eggs heavily. Many beekeepers have related heavy losses, but some are also reporting good survival rates over the winter. Packages and nucs will begin to arrive in the next few weeks; reports of shortages of bees and queens due to weather related issues in the warmer regions of the country, that have seen a slight increase in price. Local honey supplies are in short supply for the small local beekeepers, although large scale honey producers still have stocks on hand. Prices are unchanged.

MINNESOTA: During the month of March temperatures were below normal across the entire State. Precipitation in March was above normal across the entire State with the exception of a drier pocket around Mankato. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor website, the entire State of Minnesota had normal soil moisture conditions in March.

Commercial beekeepers are now finished with the almond pollination in California. This pollination season in California was certainly protracted due to the wet and cool weather this year. Also, due to the lack of fly time, very little honey was made by bees during the almond pollination period. Some beekeepers have opted to stay in California or go to other Southern States a little longer to make sure that conditions are good at home weather wise or upon the completion of potato planting of field crops in Minnesota. Whereas, other commercial beekeepers are in the process of returning to Minnesota.

The cool wet spring has held back queen breeders so far this year. Therefore, many commercial beekeepers are needing to delay division of hives as a result. With some of the various losses of bees this winter, beekeepers are hoping to catch back up on overall colony numbers with these divides. So, dividing colonies will be a big project when it gets under way.

Beekeepers overall report that bees are coming into the spring on the lighter side. While in California, the cool, damp weather did not help put much weight on bees. Lack of fly time was a major contribution to this issue. Most beekeepers are not reporting many varroa mites at this time. However, as part of ongoing good management practices, beekeepers plan to keep testing for any mites present and treat when necessary. Beekeepers plan to utilize supplemental feeding where necessary to keep the hives healthy prior to spring pollen and nectar availability.

Demand for Minnesota honey continues to be very good for locally sourced honey. All of the commercial honey has been committed to packers except for small amounts for retail sales. With this said, few prices exist to establish a current market price for wholesale white honey.

MISSISSIPPI: The bees are reported to be in good shape after a wet and cold March. Beekeepers are working with the hives and getting the broods separated and new hives put in place for the Spring flow. No major losses reported yet, and the bees are anxious to get out and about to forage as the weather starts to change to warmer days.

MONTANA: No report issued.

NEW ENGLAND: In New England, weather for the month of March offered some very cold temperatures which were lower than normal, exhibiting daytime temperatures in the high 20’s and low 30’s whereby mostly freezing temperatures overnight combined with high winds creating a low wind chill effect. Precipitations in the form of heavy snow fall in Northern New England as opposed a wintry mix in the south. The resulting high moisture levels should provide conditions for abundant pollen and nectar sources. Early spring ornamentals such as hazelnut catkins, skunk cabbage, potato ivy, swamp red maple, and silver maple, winter aconite and all the willows such as goat, white, black, and pussy as well as snow drops (Galanthus nivalis), snowflakes (Leucojum vernum), glory of the snow (Chionadoxa luciliae), Scilla Siberica (Siberian squill) are beginning to bloom in a limited way. Just recently, in southern New England bees have been returning to their hives with their pollen sacks brimming with orange, yellow and cream-colored pollen from crocus, daffodils, and witch hazel. There is pollen being brought in, but most southern New England keepers have started feeding light sugar syrup, and light cane syrup to stimulate egg laying and to increase early populations as we look ahead to apple and fruit pollination in April/May. March is a critical month for feeding. Current cold temperatures require Northern New England keepers to feed only solids such as protein patties, fondant, sugar candy, or dry granulated sugar around the opening of the inner cover.

Early reports are encouraging, as we are hearing that many beekeepers have strong colonies coming out of another long and recently cold winter. Deep snow was a help as it provided insulation for hives. Many keepers, both hobbyists and commercial, have expressed a frustration about over wintering because purportedly, their bees going into winter were strong and had plenty of food but experienced losses at about 35% after checking. Those hives that died were small in population going into winter and probably lacked the critical mass to maintain temperatures within the cluster. The second reason was starvation, especially in single colonies as they simply ran out of honey. Russian honeybee colonies looked to be the most enduring as they can survive on less honey and get by with smaller populations.

In New England, comprehensively, colonies reported losses were variable. In some cases, there were various reports of big losses and surprisingly several bee keepers indicating no losses. The individuals reporting no loss or little loss seemed to have feed bees or left plenty of winter feed honey and treated for mites. Most mite/disease treated apiaries, which had gone into over wintering strong, were still in reportedly good condition this spring, while weaker hives will require packages to build up their colonies. The varroa mites took a bigger bite last year due to problems of treatment. Queen breeders
and nuc/package producers have been busy taking orders in anticipation of an early spring demand. This month is traditionally a time for bee association classes, as well as nuc and package bee pick-ups to be scheduled. Reportedly, there has been a strong demand for new equipment, nucs and package bees & queens which means bee production is low and it’s hard to come up with enough bees for everyone in the demand cycle. The mostly price for 3- brood nucleus colonies are $175.00 and for New World Carniolan Queens is $37.00.

Demand at all retail/wholesale outlets remains good and honey sales remain firm. Prices quoted for retail 1lb bottled units were strong and quoted at $10.00 to $12.50 mostly $10.50 and occasionally higher inclusive of all varieties and honey quarts at mostly $24.00 per quart; for food service operations prices were strong with 5-gallon units selling at $200.00 to $225.00 mostly $225.00 occasionally higher for all raw and natural honey depending on variety and quality. Pollen is selling for mostly $30.00 per quart and propolis mostly at $17.00 for 2 ounces.

NEW YORK: It has been an extended cold winter with few warm ups. In some regions, snowfall has been less, which is a good insulator for hives during the winter months. It is fairly dry and should slow the thawing of the ground and bud set for the early bloom. Winter losses are expected to be high and nuc and package sales will be higher and possibly setting new sales records. The larger beekeepers who treat for mites regularly or transport hives south will do better than the smaller, backyard keepers. For now, the ground is still frozen, nights are below freezing, leaving hive manipulations limited to sugar feeding and pollen patties. This type of weather pattern could produce a late winter snowstorm which could easily pose problems if a beekeeper gets too far ahead with management decisions before the temperatures moderate. Honey prices have remained steady, both at wholesale and retail levels.

NORTH CAROLINA: Temperatures in North Carolina were below normal for March with a statewide average temperature of 47.6°F. Precipitation was also below normal. Overall statewide soil moisture levels were rated 0 percent very short, 2.5 percent short, 68 percent adequate, and 29.5 percent surplus the week ending March 30. The North Carolina Drought Management Advisory Council reported one county as being abnormally dry.

Colony conditions continued to vary by management practices. According to apiary inspectors, the main issues reported were starvation and varroa mite damage. Swarming was reported in the southern Piedmont region or “Foothills” in mid-March as bees began building up brood about a week or two early this year. Demand for replacement bees continues to be high with supply barely keeping up with demand; veteran beekeepers are replacing winter losses and associations across the State continue to see an influx of new beekeepers attending beginner classes.

Commercial pollinators began moving hives back to North Carolina; primarily to the eastern part of the state for blueberry pollination. Bees could also be seen working Blackberry and Dandelion in the Coastal Plains region. Red Maple and Sugar Maple were in bloom in the Piedmont and Mountain regions.

Honey supplies were very low. However, retail prices for honey at the Raleigh State Farmers’ Market remained steady and were: $8.00 per 8 ounce jar, $13.00 per 16 ounce jar, $22.00 per 32 ounce jar, and $18.00 per 44 ounce jar. Prices at the Piedmont Triad Farmers’ Market in Greensboro were also steady at: $8.00 per 8 ounce jar and $14.00 per 22 ounce jar.

NORTH & SOUTH DAKOTA: Although temperatures and precipitation varied throughout the region, generally colder weather prevailed. Soil moisture was generally adequate. Bees have been moved to winter locations in more temperate parts of the country. The California almond crop was got off to a slow start, with cool, wet weather. By the 20th, sunshine and warmer weather, spurred the blossom across the region. By the end of the month bloom was peaking in Northern areas.

OHIO: The winter has been hard for bee losses, much higher than normal. Package producers have experienced a wet, cold early Spring, and repopulating the lost colonies will be later, if ever. Nucs are popular but expensive. Supplies for local honey are very short, although the store shelves seem to be loaded with easy to get imported honeys from a variety of countries. Some of the imports have true source labels, although many do not. Local retail honey prices are generally selling at discount stores for $4.00 per pound, while local farm markets are $7.00 per pound retail.

OKLAHOMA: No report issued.

OREGON: No report issued.

SOUTH CAROLINA: No report issued.

TENNESSEE: Overwinter average losses look like they are going to be around 40% this year. The nectar flow is on in Tennessee. Redbuds, forsythia, willows, maples dandelions, henbit and other spring nectar and pollen sources are in full bloom. Colonies are building up rapidly. Swarms have already been reported in all areas of the state.

TEXAS: No report issued.

WASHINGTON: Snow fall picked up in February. A few very cold nights damaged some vegetable crops on the West side and some isolated damage on soft fruit on the East side. Heavy snows fell in the mountains and across most of the state throughout most of the month. The snowpack was brought up to more normal levels which should help irrigation supplies this summer.

WISCONSIN: The temperatures in March started colder than average, but the later part of the month had above average temperatures with ample rainfall. During warmer days, the bees took cleansing flights. Beekeepers have been checking on the bees to see how they are doing. Most beekeepers report that most of their bees have survived the winter in good condition. Snow Drops and Winter Aconites are blooming and Maple buds are swelling, but not open yet. Some beekeepers have made pollen patties. Demand for honey is good at the retail level and fairly good at wholesale level. Prices are generally unchanged.
U.S. Exports of Honey By Country, Quantity, and Value

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U.S Imports of Honey By Country, Quantity, and Value

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**EXTRA LIGHT AMBER HONEY – NOT PACKAGED FOR RETAIL SALE**

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**LIGHT AMBER HONEY – NOT PACKAGED FOR RETAIL SALE**

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Notes:

1. Data Source: Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Statistics.
2. All zeroes for a data item may show that statistics exist in the other import type. Consumption or General.
3. (*) denotes a country that is a summarization of its component countries.
4. Users should use cautious interpretation on QUANTITY reports using mixed units of measure. QUANTITY line items will only include statistics on the units of measure that are equal to, or are able to be converted to, the assigned unit of measure of the grouped commodities.
5. The CIF Value is not included within the 13th month data loads. This means that the CIF Value will be zero (0) for any records that are inserted during this process.