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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending October 6, 2002

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**FLORIDA
 AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Drier weather prevailed during the week of September 29 through October 5 as Hurricane Lili rushed northward through the Gulf pulling rains away from the Peninsula. The Panhandle escaped the heavy rains as Hurricane Lili made landfall over the Rainey Refuge on the west side of Vermillion Bay just southwest of New Iberia, Louisiana on Thursday, October 3, 2002. Rainfall ranged from none at Citra, Ocklawaha and Okahumpka to over an inch and a half at Jay. Jacksonville reported over an inch and a third rainfall while Pensacola recorded over an inch for the week. Most central and southern Peninsula stations recorded less than a quarter inch of rain for the week except for almost three quarters inch at West Palm Beach and a half inch at Ona. Temperatures in the major cities averaged two to seven degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 80s and 90s. Nighttime lows were in the 60s and 70s.

FIELD CROPS: Soil moisture dried in most localities with supplies rated mostly adequate. The few localities getting rain reported surplus moisture supplies while about the same number not getting rain reported very short to short supplies. Peanut digging is 55 percent finished compared with 63 percent last year and the five-year average of 61 percent done. Most growers report peanut condition as fair to good with a few producers in wetter localities reporting peanuts in poor to very poor condition. Cotton baling continues to increase slowly as more acreage reaches maturity.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	5	0	3	5	5	1
Short	15	10	14	20	10	15
Adequate	60	55	63	55	55	68
Surplus	20	35	20	20	30	16

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, pasture and cattle conditions were fair to good, relatively unchanged from the previous week. The conditions are acceptable for cool season forage growth. The range and cattle conditions improved somewhat in the northern counties but worsened in the central and southwest areas. Statewide, the condition of pastures and range was mostly good, but down slightly compared to the previous week.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	5	5	5	5
Fair	15	5	10	5
Good	75	80	80	80
Excellent	5	10	5	10

CITRUS: This was the first mild and relatively dry week in four months. There were only a few light scattered showers throughout Florida's citrus belt the first of the week. Moisture is generally adequate except for a few of the high sand hill groves. Temperatures were generally in the upper 80s with a few low 90s. The weather was nearly perfect for harvesting early fruit for fresh shipments. Fruit sizes are generally good and maturity is advanced due partially to the heavy summer rains. Trees in all areas are in very good condition and most well-cared-for groves have an abundance of new growth. Fresh fruit packing houses are moving Navels, Ambersweet and Hamlin oranges, Fallglo tangerines, and white and colored grapefruit.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops that continue to make good growth as a result of the current abundant moisture levels. Vines that have covered the tops of trees are being removed. Dead and dying trees are being pushed, cut out and burned along with the remains of some hedging and topping operations. Fall fertilizations and sprays are still being applied in all areas. A few resets are still being planted in many of the larger groves.

VEGETABLES: Planting remains active in central and southern Peninsula areas. Strawberry planting is about one-third finished around Plant City and Dover with the crop rated in good condition. Fall crop harvesting is getting underway in a few southern Peninsula localities with very light supplies of cucumbers, Bell peppers and squash available. Okra harvesting continues in Dade County with very light supplies available. Tomato harvesting continues around Quincy.

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In cooperation with the Florida Cooperative Extension Service whose county directors participate in supplying field information.