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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 29, 2002

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December 30, 2002

WEATHER SUMMARY: Storms across the Panhandle and the northern and central Peninsula dropped from one to three and a half inches of rain during the week of December 22 through 28. Most southern Peninsula areas recorded only traces of rain for the week except for a half inch reported by Miami. Temperatures averaged from one to four degrees below normal in the major cities. Daytime highs were in the 60s and 70s with Homestead, Immokalee, Ft. Lauderdale, Ft. Pierce, Miami and West Palm Beach recording at least one high in the 80s. Nighttime lows were in the 30s, 40s and 50s with Alachua, Jay, Live Oak, Marianna, MacClenny, Quincy and Tallahassee recording at least one low in the 20s. Frost and hard freezes occurred in many Panhandle and northern and central Peninsula localities during the week.

FIELD CROPS: Rainfall eased dry soils in many localities during the week. Topsoil and subsoil moisture is mostly adequate with a few areas of surplus supplies scattered across the Panhandle and the Peninsula, and a few localities reporting short supplies, especially Suwannee County and the southeastern Peninsula. Sugarcane harvesting remained active as weather permitted in the Everglades.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	0	1	17	0	1	18
Short	5	4	31	5	9	27
Adequate	60	55	52	70	55	55
Surplus	35	40	0	25	35	0

VEGETABLES: Mostly clear conditions in the major areas of production, including Immokalee, Homestead, Jupiter and Stewart, allowed planting and harvesting to continue at a normal pace. Producers continued to harvest crops to meet the holiday demand. Some slowdown in field work is expected this week as growers observe the holiday. The cooler temperatures are aiding the development of strawberries. Vegetables available include snap beans, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and strawberries.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, near freezing temperatures and frost are limiting grass growth. Stock ponds are filling from recent heavy rains. In the northern counties, cool season forages are doing well. In the central area, pastures are in poor to good condition. Some pastures have standing water from recent heavy rains. Statewide, the condition of the cattle ranges from poor to fair, with most in good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	5	0	0
Poor	15	10	0	5
Fair	30	40	35	20
Good	55	45	65	75
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Florida's citrus belt had lower than normal temperatures for the entire week. There was a fast-moving cold front that passed through the State Christmas eve. The lower west coast and a few interior counties however, got very little rain. Other areas got a good soaking. Generally, the upper interior and both upper coasts had between one and two inches added to the already wet soils. Groves continue to be in very good condition. There is very little if any new growth. The cold temperatures have helped place most trees in a quasi-dormant condition. Citrus trees never go completely dormant. Harvesting crews are rapidly moving as much of the early and midseason fruit as the processors can handle. Many of the juice plants are running around the clock to utilize the large quantities of delivered fruit. Most of the fresh fruit packing houses are also running wide open with large amounts of grapefruit, early and mid oranges, including navels, and a few sunburst and Honey tangerines and Temples.

Caretakers are busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops to dry out the wet grove lands. Dead trees are being pushed out and burned. Hedging and topping continues in harvested groves. A few sprays are being applied in the southern areas.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 15	Dec 22	Dec 29
Navel oranges	495,000	300,000	88,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	7,064,000	7,595,000	5,685,000
All grapefruit	845,000	704,000	623,000
Early tangerines	247,000	173,000	25,000
Honey tangerines	0	29,000	61,000
Tangelos	216,000	216,000	104,000
Temples	0	2,000	10,000

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