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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 2, 2003

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**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Dry weather gave way to sporadic and sometimes heavy showers over much of the State during the last part of the week of February 23 through March 3. Amounts of rain varied from traces in many southern Peninsula localities to nearly six inches at Jacksonville with a few southern Peninsula areas recording no measurable rain for the week. Temperatures for the week averaged from normal at Pensacola to seven degrees above at West Palm Beach. Daytime highs were in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s with several Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities reporting at least one low in the 30s.

**FIELD CROPS:** Localities in most areas report short to adequate soil moisture supplies. The rainfall replenished soil moisture, especially over the Panhandle and northern Peninsula. However, several southern Peninsula localities, especially those that the rain missed, reported short to very short soil moisture. Surplus soil moisture exists in areas receiving the brunt of the recent rain, such as the northeastern Peninsula and a few Big Bend and Panhandle localities. Tobacco, cotton, corn, soybean and peanut producers in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula continue land preparations for planting. In the Everglades, sugarcane harvesting is active with the recent rains causing very few delays.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	10	5	1	5	10	2
Short	35	30	14	35	25	27
Adequate	45	63	77	55	64	68
Surplus	10	2	8	5	1	3

**VEGETABLES:** Dry conditions during the first part of the week aided planting and harvesting activities. Some northern Peninsula producers are preparing land for watermelon and other vegetable planting. Vegetables available include snap beans, carrots, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, strawberries, tomatoes and very light supplies of cucumbers.

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle and northern counties, pasture condition improved, helped by warmer nighttime temperatures and rain. Rye grass and cold season forage growth is rapid due to warmer temperatures. Pasture in some locations is flooded from locally heavy rain. Brood cows in some herds are exceptionally thin for this time of year due to poor quality hay and delayed grazing. In the central areas, pasture condition is fair due to drought. In the south, range grass is hurt by persistent drought. Statewide, cattle and calves are in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	5	0	0
Poor	15	25	0	5
Fair	70	60	60	70
Good	15	10	40	25
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** The first part of this week had some warm days and mild nights over the citrus areas, then Friday through Sunday were generally overcast and rainy with highs in the low 80s. Rainfall accumulations were less than one inch in most locations. In fact, virtually all of Florida's citrus belt recorded below average rainfall for the month of February. New growth and bloom buds of all sizes are showing on all citrus trees. Some young Valencia and Navel trees are currently showing a lot of open bloom. Most older trees have developing pinhead buds. Groves and trees are in very good condition for the current bloom cycle. Harvesting of early and midseason oranges is all but over as most of these crops have been picked. A few crews have started picking Valencias for both fresh and processing. Many of the fresh fruit packing houses are working long hours to fill current orders. Grapefruit, Honey Tangerines and Valencia oranges are currently in demand and being shipped in good numbers by most packers.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops to help generate new growth for the upcoming bloom period. Dead trees are being pushed, cut out and burned in record numbers in the areas where sour orange root stock was used. A few sprays and fertilizations are still being applied. Hedging and topping were reported for many harvested groves.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended			
Crop	Feb 16	Feb 23	Mar 2
Navel oranges	72,000	36,000	22,000
Early & Mid oranges	4,669,000	3,972,000	1,146,000
Valencia oranges	257,000	661,000	1,282,000
All grapefruit	1,843,000	1,915,000	1,865,000
Early tangerines	2,000	2,000	1,000
Honey tangerines	88,000	109,000	117,000
Tangelos	16,000	9,000	5,000
Temples	170,000	116,000	91,000

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