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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 16, 2003

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March 17, 2003

WEATHER SUMMARY: Rains during the week of March 9 through 15 brought significant moisture to many Panhandle and northern Peninsula areas and some central Peninsula localities. Rainfall totaled from traces to nearly four inches. Temperatures in the major cities averaged one to eleven degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 50s and 60s with Pensacola and Tallahassee recording at least one low in the 40s, and with Miami reporting no lows below 70. Storms on Sunday, March 16 brought more rainfall to nearly all areas with amounts ranging from traces to over two inches.

FIELD CROPS: Rain continued to add moisture to soils in the northern and central Peninsula and Panhandle counties. Soil moisture supplies are rated short to mostly adequate with surplus moisture reported for some Panhandle and northern localities and short moisture reported for some southern Peninsula areas. Some pine seedlings were lost to recent flooding in the Big Bend area. Drier conditions for most of the week allowed some field preparations for corn, soybean, peanut and cotton planting with most delayed by the wet soils. Sugarcane harvesting in the Everglades is active.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	15	10	10	10	10	0
Short	25	30	30	15	25	45
Adequate	45	40	60	65	65	55
Surplus	15	20	0	10	5	0

VEGETABLES: Mostly dry conditions during the week allowed planting and picking to proceed normally. Strawberry picking is slowing seasonally as supplies from other states increase. Some snap bean growers stopped picking due to the poor market. Storms at the end of the week reduced the quality of some vegetables and slowed field activities. Other vegetables available include carrots, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, sweet corn, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, tomatoes and very light supplies of eggplant.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern areas, pastures improved following rainfall and warmer temperatures. Cool season pastures are growing at a rapid pace. In the central and southwestern areas, range condition was lower due to drought. Statewide, cattle are in fair to good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	10	15	10	5
Fair	70	55	45	45
Good	20	30	45	50
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: More Spring weather covered Florida's citrus belt this week. Temperatures hit the 80s in virtually all groves the first part of the week. There were scattered clouds with a few showers Friday thru Sunday, March 14, 15, and 16. Sunday night and early Monday morning thunderstorms rumbled through the state dumping various amounts of much needed moisture on most groves. Sub-surface soil moisture varies depending on soil type and area. A lot of growers and caretakers are irrigating on a rotating basis to ensure good tree condition during the current bloom cycle. Most groves reached full open bloom this week. A few of the older grapefruit, tangerine and tangelo blocks are still showing swelling buds and opening flowers. Most young tree groves had a large portion of their bloom petals hit the ground. Many Valencia groves are now passing maturity tests and are being picked for both fresh and process use. Most all of the remaining grapefruit are showing very good maturity tests. Most of the fresh grapefruit are being packed and shipped from the lower east coast. There are still some of the honey tangerines and Temples being packed and processed.

Caretakers are busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops for fire protection and prior to the arrival of harvesting crews. Large numbers of dead trees are being cut out and removed so that the soil can be prepared for early summer replanting. Postbloom nutritional sprays are underway in all areas that have had petal drop. Hedging and topping are both very active in harvested groves.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 2	Mar 9	Mar 16
Navel oranges	22,000	6,000	1,000
Early & Mid oranges	1,146,000	397,000	94,000
Valencia oranges	1,282,000	2,560,000	3,565,000
All grapefruit	1,865,000	2,497,000	2,098,000
Honey tangerines	117,000	125,000	144,000
Tangelos	5,000	2,000	2,000
Temples	91,000	103,000	61,000

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