



WEATHER CROP



Cooperating with the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
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Week ending December 19, 2010

Arctic Blast Swept Across the Sunshine State

Weather Summary: An arctic cold front early in the week brought below freezing temperatures to the Sunshine State. Record lows for December were shattered by freezing temperatures from the Panhandle down to the southern Peninsula. Cold and windy weather lowered the average temperatures which ranged from six to twelve degrees below normal. Frigid evening lows were in the 20s and lower 30s with the wind chill factor in the teens at several stations. Daytime highs were in the 40s to 60s with at least one high in the 70s. Rainfall ranged from traces to slightly over an inch. The freezing temperatures coupled with the lack of precipitation increased the risk of wildfires.

Soil Moisture Ratings

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	Previous week	Previous year	Current week	Previous week	Previous year	Current week
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Very short	19	1	19	19	1	14
Short.....	40	14	40	35	19	39
Adequate	40	71	40	45	68	45
Surplus	1	14	1	1	12	2

Field Crops: Five nights of below freezing temperatures severely damaged the 2010 sugarcane crop in the Everglades region. Much of the crop experienced below freezing temperatures for up to 12 hours. Newly-planted cane for the next season was burnt back to the ground from the hard freeze. The top of the older sugarcane crop was completely frozen as growers planned to harvest the crop before it becomes unusable.

Vegetables: Nearly a week of continued freezing overnight temperatures inflicted varying damage on vegetables across Florida. To assist growers, a state of emergency for agricultural crops was issued, easing restrictions on truck weights until December 31. Damage to crops from the cold was still being assessed. Some producers put freeze covers over vegetables for protection. Strawberry growers ran overhead sprinkler systems to form ice caps on berries as cold protection. Cold weather slowed the ripening of strawberries in the Palmetto-Ruskin area. Some growers along the west coast in the southern Peninsula used helicopters to protect snap beans and sweet corn fields, pushing warmer air closer to the ground which prevented frost from settling on the crops. There were reports of about eighty percent of snap beans damaged due by the freeze in Miami-Dade County. The freezing temperatures caused limited damage to sweet corn. Strong winds caused some leaf burn on snap beans and squash in other areas with recovery expected. The cold temperatures caused leaf burn on the tops of bell peppers in areas of the southern Peninsula. Ruskin tomato growers were able to harvest about 90 percent of their crop before the cold snap. Tomato growers ran irrigation to protect plants from freeze damage. Harvesting of endive/escarole was curtailed due to cold weather. Freeze damage and cold weather sharply reduced vegetable movement statewide. Only light shipments of vegetables were available for marketing.

Floriculture and Nursery: Growers applied cold temperature protection to ferns, potted foliage, other floriculture, and nursery products with blankets, sprinklers, and heaters. Producers in Pierson and Apopka used sprinklers and heaters to protect leather-leaf ferns, other cut greens, and potted foliage from cold temperatures. Although some losses occurred, most plants were expected to recover.

Livestock and Pastures: The pasture condition decreased significantly due to a killing freeze and continued drought. Most pasture in the Panhandle and northern areas was in poor to fair condition. Another week with below freezing temperatures stopped forage growth and caused damage to late-planted oats and ryegrass planted for winter grazing. Hay feeding continued and hay supplies were dwindling. The cattle condition ranged from very poor to excellent with cattle suffering from extreme cold earlier in the week. In the central areas, pasture condition was mostly very poor to poor. There was little opportunity for over seeding pastures in winter annuals or small grains. The cattle condition ranged from poor to excellent with most in fair condition. Ranchers began to feed hay a month earlier than normal. In the southwestern areas, pasture was in mostly poor condition. Two weeks with freezing temperatures and frost have killed the perennial grass and winter grain forages were not ready to graze. Stock ponds water levels continue to decline. The cattle condition was mostly good. Statewide, the condition of the cattle ranged from very poor to excellent with most in fair to good condition.

Cattle and Pasture Condition

Condition	Cattle		Pasture	
	Previous week	Current week	Previous week	Current week
	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)	(percent)
Very poor.....	4	5	15	15
Poor.....	10	5	45	55
Fair.....	35	40	25	20
Good.....	50	45	15	9
Excellent.....	1	5	0	1

Citrus: Highs during the early part of the week were in the 40s and 50s, with early morning lows in the lower 20s and 30s, rising to highs in the 60s and 70s with lows in the 40s and 50s in the latter portion of the week. Potentially damaging lows were experienced over much of the citrus-producing region on the nights of December 14 and 15. Twenty-two of the 25 stations recorded some precipitation. Arcadia reported the most precipitation with 1.07 inch of rainfall recorded. Overall, there were moderate drought conditions in most of the citrus area according to the U.S. drought monitor, last updated on December 14. Indian River, Brevard, and St. Lucie counties are experiencing extreme drought conditions, while surrounding counties are experiencing severe conditions. Moderate to extreme drought conditions extend over most of the citrus area. Forty-four packinghouses and fourteen processors have opened, with few more scheduled to open. Cultural practices continued, including application of lime and irrigation. A state of emergency for agricultural crops allowed citrus growers to load their trucks heavier than usual in order to expedite the harvest and reduce losses due to the freeze.

Citrus Estimated Boxes Harvested

[In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes]

Crop	December 5, 2010	December 12, 2010	December 19, 2010
	(boxes)	(boxes)	(boxes)
Early and mid oranges.....	2,462	3,856	4,561
Ambersweet.....	17	8	5
Navel oranges.....	277	301	222
Grapefruit.....	457	431	509
Tangelos.....	91	96	81
Tangerines.....	214	269	263
Total.....	3,518	4,961	5,641

This report is available, at no cost, on the NASS web site: http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Subscribe_to_FL_Reports/index.asp. To set-up this free subscription, select Florida Crop-Weather; enter your name and your email address, click on Subscribe. This report will be sent automatically each week; or call us at 800/344-6277 and we will enter the subscription for you. The precipitation and temperature data used in this report originates from the Florida Automated Weather Network (FAWN). Data for individual reporting stations is available at: <http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu> maintained by UF/IFAS Information Technologies.