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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 20, 2005

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February 22, 2005

**FLORIDA
 AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Clear conditions allowed field work to progress at a normal pace during the week of February 14 through 20. Most Peninsula localities received no measurable rain for the week. The danger for wildfire remains high in the northern, central and southern Peninsula. Some Panhandle areas reported a third to about a half inch of rain for the week with most falling at the beginning of the period. Most temperatures in the major cities averaged normal to four degrees above. West Palm Beach temperatures averaged one degree below normal. Daytime highs were in the 60s and 70s with a few localities recording at least one high in the 80s. Nighttime lows averaged in the 40s, 50s, and 60s with several localities recording at least one low in the 30s. Alachua, Live Oak, and MacClenny recorded at least one low in the 20s.

FIELD CROPS: Producers prepared land for planting. Harvesting of sugarcane in the Everglades region was active. Tobacco growers started to prepare land for transplanting. Most topsoil and subsoil moisture is rated mostly short to adequate. Some areas of surplus moisture exist in Union County while spots of very short supplies were reported for St. Lucie and Broward counties. Soil moisture supplies in Dade County ranged from very short to adequate. As soil moisture levels continue to decrease the danger of wildfire increases in areas of the northern and central Peninsula as well as over most of the southern Peninsula.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	27	10	1	24	10	1
Short	48	50	14	30	40	14
Adequate	24	31	81	45	48	82
Surplus	1	9	4	1	2	3

VEGETABLES: Planting and harvesting proceeded at a normal pace. Strawberry growers are starting to prepare for the annual festival in Plant City which begins in early March. Cabbage harvesting is gaining momentum as the St. Patrick's Day holiday draws near. Vegetables and non citrus fruit marketed during the week include snap beans, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, strawberries and tomatoes. Producers also harvested very light amounts of cucumbers.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Recent rains over the western Panhandle kept pastures in good to excellent shape while eastern Panhandle pastures are fair to good. Due to mostly dry conditions over the northern and central Peninsula, pastures are mostly poor to fair with some good pasture available in wetter spots. Southwestern pastures are also poor to fair due to the dry weather. Statewide, pasture is mostly

poor to good. Cattle condition is rated mostly good to excellent over the Panhandle and poor to fair elsewhere. Statewide, cattle condition continues to vary from poor to excellent with most rated in good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	0	5	0	0
Poor	55	45	5	5
Fair	35	15	30	45
Good	10	35	60	45
Excellent	0	0	5	5

CITRUS: Last week was another dry, warm week in citrus producing counties. The only rainfall recorded was in Immokalee and it was less than one tenth of an inch. Temperatures were in the mid 40s to mid 50s at night, and low to upper 70s during the day for most of the week. Field representatives are reporting feathery new growth with pinhead bloom buds beginning to show on oranges and grapefruit. Cultural practices, in anticipation of abundant bloom include irrigation, fertilization, mowing and post harvest hedging. Late orange harvesting is picking up with early and mid oranges still going strong, and the large majority going to processing. Decreasing quantities of tangelos and increasing quantities of Temples are also being picked for processing. Fresh fruit packing houses are running nearly equal quantities of late oranges (Valencias) and early-mid oranges, increasing amounts white and colored grapefruit, and increasing amounts of Temples and Honey tangerines.

ESTIMATED BOXES HARVESTED WEEK ENDED

Crop	Feb 06	Feb 13	Feb 20
	<i>In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes</i>		
Early & Mid oranges	6,090	6,335	4,320
Navel oranges	58	27	16
Late oranges	23	42	61
Grapefruit	585	715	553
Tangelos	90	76	40
Sunburst tangerines	2	9	15
Honey tangerines	108	106	100
Temples	45	71	102

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