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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 26, 2000

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March 27, 2000

**FLORIDA**  
**AGRICULTURE**



**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Widely scattered showers dropped varying amounts of rain during the week of March 19 through 25. Rainfall ranged from none in a few localities to almost two inches at Ft. Pierce with heavier amounts recorded in some isolated areas around Palmetto-Ruskin and Homestead. The danger of wildfire remains high over most northern Peninsula counties and many southern Peninsula areas due to the continued dry weather. Most temperatures for the week averaged within two or three degrees of normal. Most highs were in the 70s and 80s while most lows were in the 50s and 60s. Some northern localities recorded at least one low in the 40s.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula is short to adequate. Topsoil moisture in the central and southern Peninsula is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Growers are making preparations to plant spring crops. Field corn planting is gaining momentum. Tobacco farmers are starting to transplant tobacco. Sugarcane grinding is winding down with most of the mills closed. The wild fire index is high and increasing.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	37	9	36	12
Short	60	68	57	68
Adequate	3	23	7	20
Surplus	0	0	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** Statewide, range and pastures are in poor to fair condition. Limited rains during the week helped the winter pastures in some areas of the State. In the northern Peninsula and Panhandle counties rain helped growth of spring permanent pastures. Supplemental feeding of hay is active. Grazing crops have not fully recovered from previous dry period. In the south, cattle and pastures are mostly in fair condition. Fire hazard conditions are increasing due to dry conditions.

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

**CITRUS:** This was another dry and warm week. Growers and caretakers are continuing to irrigate except where there have been sufficient isolated rains. New growth and bloom buds are very prolific. Virtually all areas are near full open bloom. Some trees have had petal drop and there are those few groves that are lagging behind with only swelling bloom buds. Picking of early and mid oranges is nearly over except for a little scrapping of scattered groves. Valencia movement is increasing as many processors want late oranges to blend with their higher ratio early and mid orange juice. Grapefruit harvest is also on the increase due to the additional labor made available from the

completed orange crews. Most of the Temples are going to the processor, while the majority of the Honey tangerines are being packed for fresh utilization.

Caretakers are active cutting cover crops and applying spring herbicides. Hedging and topping continue. However, there is very little burning of debris due to the current dry conditions causing limited burn permits. Post bloom-nutritional sprays have started.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 12	Mar 19	Mar 26
Navel oranges	58,000	5,000	2,000
Early & Mid oranges	5,677,000	2,321,000	916,000
Valencia oranges	1,063,000	1,891,000	3,744,000
All grapefruit	2,040,000	2,510,000	2,951,000
Early tangerines	2,000	1,000	22,000
Honey tangerines	160,000	144,000	177,000
Tangelos	24,000	5,000	8,000
Temples	139,000	149,000	147,000

**VEGETABLES:** Continued dry weather is increasing irrigation. Major vegetables available include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, endive, escarole, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, lettuce, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, and eggplant.

**SNAP BEANS:** Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Youngest plants are making good stands. Picking continues. Quality and yield are very good with a good volume available for the next five weeks or more. Irrigation is active. Everglades--Harvesting is active. Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is active. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. East Coast--Plant growth and bean development are good. Youngest plants are blooming. Hand harvesting is active. Volume is light. Quality and color are good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good.

**CABBAGE:** West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality is good. Size is variable. Color is good. Hastings, North Central--Growth and development are normal. The crop is in good condition. Head size and quality are good. Harvest is active. Dade--Cabbage season is winding down with a couple more weeks of harvest left. Quality is good and the yield is normal.

**CELERY:** Everglades--Harvesting continues.

**SWEET CORN:** Dade--Picking is steady. Quality is good with a good volume available over the next two weeks. Everglades--Harvesting continues. East Coast--Condition remains good. Picking is winding down. Quality is good. Growers continue to clear acreage completely harvested. Southwest--The crop is in good condition.

**CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are normal. Harvesting is steady. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--A few cucumbers are being picked with good quality and average yield. West Central--Crop conditions are fair

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

to good. Growth and development are normal. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. New fields are coming into production and providing good quality and color. Germination of recent plantings is mostly good. The mid-growth planting is forming runners, blooming, and starting a light setting of fruit. Planting continues for spring. Old fields are being cleaned up.

**PICKLES:** Dade--Pickles look good. Harvest is gaining. West Central--The crop is in fair to good conditions. Growth and development are normal. North Central--Planting of the spring crop is underway.

**EGGPLANT:** East Coast--The crop is in very good condition. Warmer temperatures are aiding fruit setting and sizing. Harvesting continues with a light volume available. Quality and color are good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Dade--The crop is in fair condition with hot temperatures hindering plant growth. Picking is active. Quality and yield are fair. Volume is light. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good.

**ENDIVE/ESCAROLE:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting continues.

**LETTUCE:** Everglades--Harvesting is active.

**PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking remains steady with fair to good quality available. East Coast--Young acreage is in good condition. First picks of green Bells are yielding very good quality and large sizes. Volume is good. Harvesting of red Bells and specialty types is producing a lighter volume. Producers continue to clear acreage completely picked. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition.

**POTATOES:** Dade--Harvesting is active with the killing of plants on schedule. Yield and supplies are very good. Southwest--Condition is rated fair to good. Digging is steady. Quality is good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting of table varieties continues. Digging of chippers started with fair quality available. Hastings--The crop is in good condition.

**RADISHES:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Digging is steady. Quality is mostly good.

**SQUASH:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is steady with good quality available. Dade--Crop condition is good. Young fields are in very good condition. Harvesting continues. Supplies dipped slightly but will increase as producers start harvesting more acreage over the next two weeks. Workers are irrigating as needed. East Coast--Warmer temperatures are boosting plant growth and development. Picking of a light volume continues with fancy and medium grades available. Quality and color are good. West Central--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting of a light volume is active.

**STRAWBERRIES:** Plant City, Dover, Lithia--Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair. Harvesting is winding down with growers opening fields to the U-Pic market. Quality is good. Sizes are variable. Dade--U-Pic harvesting remains active. Quality is good.

**TOMATOES:** Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting continues with good quality and sizes available. Yield is good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. First picks are producing good quality and sizes. Other picks are providing mostly good quality and sizes. Dade--The crop is in good condition. Fruit sizing is good. Harvesting is active. Volume is good with all sizes available. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated good. Plant growth is fair to good. Harvesting is expected to begin in two to four weeks. Quincy--Showers are helping plant and fruit development. Transplanting is nearing the end.

**CHERRY TOMATOES:** Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is steady with fair to good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is good.

**PLUM TOMATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in good condition.

**WATERMELONS:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is finished. West Central--The crop remains in fair to good condition. Sumter County--Transplanting is active.

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