WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 26, 2000

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.

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 hazzard conditions are increasing due to dry conditions.

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. Harves 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.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Mar 12</th>
<th>Mar 19</th>
<th>Mar 26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navel oranges</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early &amp; Mid oranges</td>
<td>5,677,000</td>
<td>2,321,000</td>
<td>916,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valencia oranges</td>
<td>1,063,000</td>
<td>1,891,000</td>
<td>3,744,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>All grapefruit</td>
<td>2,040,000</td>
<td>2,510,000</td>
<td>2,951,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early tangerines</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey tangerines</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>144,000</td>
<td>177,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangelos</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temples</td>
<td>139,000</td>
<td>149,000</td>
<td>147,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
University of Florida
National Agricultural Statistics Service
Division of Marketing and Development
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
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, 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.

**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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