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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending April 23, 2000

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**FLORIDA
 AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Mostly dry conditions continued during the week of April 16 through 22. Most stations reported from none to traces of rain for the week. Orlando recorded a little over an inch falling on Sunday April 16 while Homestead reported about a half inch for the same day. Most temperatures were normal. Daytime highs averaged in the 80s while nighttime lows averaged in the 50s and 60s. Alachua and Tallahassee recorded at least one low in the 40s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate or surplus moisture. Lack of adequate rainfall continues to be a factor for all non-irrigated crops. Growers are making preparations to plant spring crops. Farmers are starting to plant cotton and peanuts but many farmers are waiting for rain before planting. Tobacco and corn are in good condition. The wild fire index has increased in some areas due to the lack of rainfall. Growers reported 15 percent of the peanuts are planted.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	33	14	18	18
Short	63	73	71	65
Adequate	4	11	11	15
Surplus	0	2	0	2

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, pasture condition improved slightly from the previous week. In the Panhandle, cool temperatures and drought limited grass growth. Bahia pasture is showing severe drought wilt. In the central Peninsula counties, pasture conditions are fair following scattered rainfall. Warm season pasture growth is slow. In the southwest, pasture condition is poor and the cattle condition fair. Scattered rainfall over the weekend produced immediate improvement in the pasture condition. Statewide, the condition of cattle and calves is mostly fair, improved from the previous week.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	50	30	15	10
Fair	45	65	80	65
Good	5	5	5	25
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There was no appreciable rain anywhere in the citrus belt this week. Temperatures were in the mid to upper eighties with drying winds on most days. Growers and caretakers are irrigating around the clock to maintain good tree condition during this all important fruit set period. Most well-cared-for groves are showing an abundance of new growth on trees of all ages. Harvesting crews are rapidly moving Valencia oranges with the largest portion going to the processors. Movement of grapefruit is slowing as supplies are running low in most areas. Temple harvest is just about complete for this season. Honey tangerine movement continues for both fresh and process utilization.

Caretakers are very active mowing, chopping, and disking cover crops to help preserve surface moisture levels. Hedging and topping continues. Post bloom sprays are being applied in all areas. Burn permits are still limited due to the current dry conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Apr 9	Apr 16	Apr 23
Navel oranges	3,000	1,000	0
Early & Mid oranges	23,000	8,000	4,000
Valencia oranges	7,266,000	6,751,000	7,397,000
All grapefruit	2,846,000	2,547,000	1,601,000
Honey tangerines	152,000	145,000	128,000
Temples	46,000	13,000	2,000

VEGETABLES: Harvesting of most crops is slowing seasonally in Dade County with growers expecting to finish over the next one to two weeks. Major vegetables being harvested include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, cabbage, cucumbers, okra, snap beans, squash, sweet corn, eggplant, and watermelon.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Young fields remain in good condition. Recent rain helped ease dry soil conditions. Picking continues with good quality available. Supplies are expected to be good over the next two weeks or more. Everglades--Harvesting is active. Quality is mostly good. West Central--Condition is rated fair. Harvesting is slowly gaining momentum. Quality, color, and sizes are fair. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly fair to good. Plant growth is fair. Plantings are limited. Recent abundant moisture caused stress to some plants.

BLUEBERRIES: North, West Central--Picking is active. Supplies are increasing.

CABBAGE: West Central--Crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality and color are good. Size is variable. Hastings, North Central--Growth and development are normal. The crop is in good condition. Head size and quality are good. Harvest is winding down. Dade--Cabbage harvest is complete.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Harvesting continues. Quality is good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking remains steady. Quality is good. Dade--Picking continues to slow as growers finish for the season. Quality and yield are good. A fair volume is available for the next two weeks. East Coast--Young plants are in good condition. A small acreage remains to be picked for the local market. Growers are disking acreage completely harvested. Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting is expected to start over the next two to three weeks.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvesting is steady. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--Cukes are being picked with good quality and yield. A small supply is available. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is gaining momentum. Fruit quality is fair to good. Size of fruit is improving. Color is good. East Coast--Crop is in mostly fair to good condition. Plants are

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

recovering from earlier adverse weather conditions. Plant growth slowed. Older fields continued to be picked out as newer fields come into production. Quality and size are mostly good.

PICKLES: Dade--Pickle harvest is active. The supply is limited. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is gaining momentum. Fruit is of good quality. Fruit color is good. Size is normal. Volume is increasing as the season progresses. North Central--Harvest is starting. The crop is in good condition.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--The crop is in fair to good condition. Plant growth of younger acreage is slow with plants blooming and setting fruit. Harvesting of regular and Italian types is active. Quality and color are mostly good. West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting is increasing slowly. Quality is fair. Sizes are variable. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Condition is good. Cutting continues with good quality available. Yield is good with a fair supply available over the next two weeks.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is slowing seasonally with supplies available for the next seven to fourteen days.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is nearing the end.

OKRA: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Harvesting continues to increase with good supplies available.

PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition remains fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is fair to good. West Central--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is gaining momentum. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. East Coast--Crop condition is fair to mostly good. Hot temperatures are causing some plant stress. First picks of green Bells are yielding mostly good quality. Harvesting of specialty types is yielding light supplies. Growers continue to clear fields completely picked.

POTATOES: Dade--Harvesting remains active. Quality and yield are good with all sizes available. Most growers expect to make the last digging over the next seven to ten days. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Hastings--

Growers expect digging of table stock to start over the next seven to ten days.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is active. Quality is generally good.

SQUASH: West Central--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is mostly steady. Quality and color are good. Sumter County--Harvesting is active. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking remains steady. Quality is good. Dade--Crop condition is fair. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is mostly good. Producers delayed some harvesting due to the low market. Growers are discing acreage completely picked. East Coast--Young plant growth is slow. Picking of light supplies continues. Quality is mostly good with fancy and medium sizes available.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Lithia, Palmetto-Ruskin--The season is virtually finished. Dade--U-Pic harvesting continues. Volume is decreasing seasonally.

TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Plant growth and development are fair to good. Harvesting is gaining momentum. Quality is fair with 5x6 and 6x7 sizes available. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Recent abundant rains caused some stress to oldest plants. First picks are yielding large sizes of mostly good quality. Yield is improving. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Cool nighttime temperatures continue to slow fruit sizing. Harvesting is starting to slow seasonally. Quality is fair to good with all sizes available. Dade--Hot, windy weather is affecting plants. Harvesting is decreasing seasonally. Fruit quality is fair. Quincy--The crop is in good condition. Picking is expected to begin in late May.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is increasing. Quality, color and sizes are good.

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

WATERMELONS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Cutting is expected to start soon.

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