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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending May 7, 2000

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FLORIDA  
AGRICULTURE



**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Dry conditions persisted during the week of April 30 through May 6. A few west central and southwestern coastal localities recorded traces to over an inch of rain falling mid-week. Ft. Pierce, Jacksonville and Pensacola reported traces for the week. Elsewhere, no measurable rain fell. Temperatures averaged normal to three degrees below at the major stations. Highs were in the 70s and 80s while lows were in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Some northern localities recorded at least one low in the 40s.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle is very short to adequate. Moisture throughout the Peninsula is very short to short. Farmers are actively planting cotton and peanuts in fields where moisture is adequate. Tobacco and corn are in good condition. Corn will be hurt as crop develops and demand for water increases if there is no rain soon. Small grain crops are beginning to dry with harvest to start in the next 2 weeks. There have been a number of wild fires in the central Peninsula area due to the lack of rainfall. Growers reported 23 percent of peanuts are planted.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	29	55	24	23
Short	57	42	65	69
Adequate	14	3	11	8
Surplus	0	0	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** Statewide, pasture condition is poor to fair. Cattle are in poor to good condition. In the Panhandle, pastures, cattle and calves are in very poor condition. In the central counties, pasture and cattle are in poor condition due to the prolonged drought. Grass is short and very brown. Ranchers are having to feed and water cattle. In the west central area, the condition of cattle has fallen off and water holes are drying up. Pasture is very brittle and dry. In the southwest, grass lies dormant, with the condition poor due to drought. In the southwest, pasture and cattle are in fair to good condition.

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

**CITRUS:** Most areas of Florida's citrus belt were warm and dry with some occasional gusty winds out of the southeast. There were a few scattered showers on both coasts. Rain is needed in all citrus producing counties. Caretakers are irrigating with all types of equipment to try to prevent their trees from going into stress or wilt during this all important fruit setting period. Many water reservoirs are dry or just too low for irrigation purposes. Harvest of Valencia oranges for processing remains very active. Grapefruit harvest continues to slow with most of the fruit

coming from the lower east coast. Very few crops of Honey Tangerines remain to be picked. Temple harvest is virtually over for the year.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops. Herbiciding continues along with hedging and topping. Most post bloom nutritional sprays have been completed. There are some second sprays being applied to grapefruit being grown for fresh use. New plantings and resetting are active where there is adequate irrigation.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Apr 23	Apr 30	May 7
Early & Mid oranges	4,000	1,000	0
Valencia oranges	7,397,000	8,069,000	8,154,000
All grapefruit	1,601,000	1,647,000	1,579,000
Honey tangerines	128,000	103,000	94,000
Temples	2,000	0	0

**VEGETABLES:** Dry soils are increasing the need for irrigation with some plants wilting in the daytime heat. Major vegetables being harvested include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, cabbage, cucumbers, okra, snap beans, squash, sweet corn, eggplant, and watermelon.

**SNAP BEANS:** Dade--The crop is in good condition. Picking is slowing seasonally with fair supplies available over the next two weeks. Quality is good. Producers are planting cover crops in fields completely harvested. Everglades--Picking continues. Quality is mostly good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Picking is slowing seasonally with U-Pic harvesting very active. Quality is fair to good. Color is good. East Coast--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting of light supplies is active. Quality and color are mostly good.

**BLUEBERRIES:** North, West Central--Harvesting continues. Quality is good.

**CABBAGE:** West Central, Hastings, North Central--Harvest is virtually complete. Dade--Cabbage harvest is complete.

**SWEET CORN:** Everglades--Harvesting is very active. Supplies are near the peak level. Yield and quality are good. Zellwood--Picking is active. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Plant growth is good. Picking of limited supplies for local sales is active. Growers are clearing acreage completely picked. Dade--The season is completed. Southwest--Harvesting is finished.

**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--Season is almost complete with only a small supply for the local market. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality and color are fair to good. Size of fruit is variable. East Coast--Crop remaining is in fair to good shape for spring. Plant growth and fruit development are in fair to good condition. Drier conditions are affecting vines and slowing fruit development. A lighter volume is being harvested. Fruit quality and color are good. Older fields are being mowed down.

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

**PICKLES:** Dade--Small supply of pickles available for local sale only. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit is of fair to good quality. Size is normal. The yield is fair to good. North Central--Harvest is active. The crop is in good condition. Yield and quality are good.

**EGGPLANT:** East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Harvesting of a light volume of regulars and Italian types is active. Quality and color are mostly good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Cutting is mostly steady. Quality is fair. Sizes are variable. Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. Dade--Harvesting remains active. Volume is light. Quality is good.

**ENDIVE/ESCAROLE:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is virtually done.

**LETTUCE:** Everglades--Harvesting of a very light supply is active.

**OKRA:** Dade--The crop is in mostly good condition with all fields needing rain or irrigation. Harvesting is increasing seasonally. Quality is good.

**PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. West Central--The crop is in good condition. Picking is increasing seasonally. Quality, color, and size are fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in fair to good condition. Dry weather is causing some plants to wilt. Harvesting of green Bells continues. First picks are yielding good quality and sizes. Volume is moderate. Harvesting of a light supply of red and yellow Bells and specialty types is active. Workers are removing stakes and strings from acreage completely picked and mowing down plants.

**POTATOES:** Hastings--Producers are digging both table and chipper types. Yields are very good. West Central--Digging is nearing completion with a light supply of reds being harvested. Quality is fair to good. Southwest--Harvesting is finished. Dade--Digging is complete.

**RADISHES:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting continues. Quality is mostly good.

**SQUASH:** West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is steady. Quality and color are good. Sizes are variable. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is winding down. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Harvest of a very limited acreage continues. Quality is good. Yield is below normal. Growers are clearing most acreage for the planting of cover crops. East Coast--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting of light supplies is active. Quality and color are mostly good with fancy and medium sizes available. Workers continue to clear acreage completely picked.

**STRAWBERRIES:** Dade--U-Pic harvesting is nearly finished with only a few fields remaining open. Quality and sizes are good. Plant City, Dover, Lithia, Palmetto-Ruskin--The season is done.

**TOMATOES:** Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Fruit setting is finished. Picking is very active. Quality is good. Volume is heavy. East Coast--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking continues with volume declining due to market conditions. Most growers are not making a third pick. Quality and yield are good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting of a light volume is active. Quality is good. Gradeout is about normal. Dade--The season is virtually finished. Some pinhooking is still active. Quincy--Harvesting is expected to begin in late May.

**CHERRY TOMATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is good with normal sizes and color.

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

**WATERMELONS:** Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is good. West Central--Crop condition is rated good. Harvesting is underway with good quality and color available. Sizes are running small to medium with some large sizes available. Jefferson County--The crop is progressing well.

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