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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 17, 2000

Released 4:00 P.M.

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Temperatures were warmer than normal during the week of December 10 through 16. Highs at the major stations were mostly in the 70s and 80s. Lows were mostly in the 50s, 60s, and 70s with Pensacola reporting a low of 39. Most areas received varied amounts of rain during the week. Many areas received one to two inches with Miami getting almost five inches and Homestead getting from two to fifteen inches.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Small grains and cool season forages are under drought stress. Sugarcane is in good condition, harvest is making good progress.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	15	20	20	18
Short	83	66	64	80
Adequate	2	14	16	2
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, the range condition is mostly fair. In the Panhandle counties, the winter forage planting is complete. In the north, the cattle condition is fair. Despite light rain, the pasture condition is only fair due to continued drought. In the central area, prolonged drought reduced the pasture condition to poor. Lakes, ponds, and streams are very low. Statewide, the condition of cattle and calves is mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	30	15	5	5
Fair	65	85	90	95
Good	0	0	5	0
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Most of this week was warm to hot in virtually all areas of the citrus belt. Saturday there were a few isolated showers that only wet the surface soils. Rain is still badly needed in all areas. Lakes and ponds are very low and some are now too low to use for irrigation purposes. Salt water intrusion into some wells is starting to be a problem. However, most groves are in good condition due mostly to the constant utilization of irrigation. There is very little new growth due mostly to the short days and the general dry conditions. On-tree fruit color is very good at this time. Harvesting crews were very active this week moving fruit to both the fresh fruit houses and the processing plants. Most fresh fruit packing houses have been working long hours to meet the Christmas demands.

Caretakers are mowing, discing and chopping cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. A few sprays continue in the south and the coastal areas on fresh crops. Dead trees are being pushed and some limited burning of grove trash was reported. There are some restrictions on burning due to the current dry conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 3	Dec 10	Dec 17
Navel oranges	388,000	616,000	413,000
Early & Mid oranges			
Including Ambersweet	6,307,000	7,924,000	7,074,000
All grapefruit	707,000	748,000	903,000
Tangerines	231,000	273,000	266,000
K-Early Citrus Fruit	2,000	1,000	0
Tangelos	127,000	175,000	148,000

VEGETABLES: Harvesting continued to be active to meet the holiday demand. Vegetables available include snap beans, cucumbers, pickles, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, peppers, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, radishes, tomatoes, and watermelons.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Beans look very good with good quality and yield. Planting is active with second crops going in some fields that have been harvested. A good supply is available. West Central--Crop condition is poor to fair. Harvest is slowing. Quality color and sizes are variable. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting remains steady. Growth and development are slow to normal. East Coast--Crop conditions are good. Plants have good growth, are blooming and forming beans. Light harvest from hand picking is yielding good quality and color beans.

CABBAGE: Dade--Cabbage is growing good. Heads are forming with first harvest to start in the middle of January. West Central--Crop condition is good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is starting. Hastings--Growers are actively planting cabbage. The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are starting to harvest. Zellwood--Harvest is active. The crop is in good condition.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Picking is underway with good quality and yield. Planting is active. Zellwood--Harvesting is finishing. Dade--Corn was hurt by the excess rain in eastern parts but appears to be recovering. Corn in the north and south areas was not hurt. The corn looks good and is tasseling with some small ears in a few fields. Planting is complete. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Most fields are showing good stands. Recent plantings have good germination and are spiking through the ground. Growers are cultivating and spraying as needed. Planting continues for the winter crop.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality is fair to good. Fruit size is variable. Color is fair. East coast--Crop conditions are mostly good. The youngest plantings are forming runners and setting fruit. Older plantings are providing good quality and color. Super selects, selects, and cartons are available. Harvest is light to moderate from all picks. Harvested fields are being cleaned up and plastic is being pulled up. Southwest--Planting is steady. Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are slow to normal. Harvest is steady and fruit quality and sizes are good.

PICKLES: West Central--The Crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality is fair. Zellwood--Harvest is active. Quality and yield are good. Dade--Pickles are being harvested with good quality and yield.

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

EGGPLANT: Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Planting is light. Development and growth are slow to normal. Harvest is steady with fair to good sizes and quality available. East Coast--Crop conditions are good with the young and mid-growth plantings. Harvest includes fancy and some choice grades with good quality and color. Harvest volume is moderate for regular and Italian varieties. Light transplantings for the winter crop are active. Growers are staking and tying the younger crop. Dade--The crop looks good. Harvest is underway in a few fields. Quality and yield will increase in future pickings. Planting is complete.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvest is active with good quality available.

OKRA: Dade--Harvesting is slow with a low volume. Yield and quality are low. A few acres will come into production around the first of January.

PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are slow to normal. Harvest is steady with fair to good quality available. East Coast--Conditions remain good at all stages of growth. The younger plants' growth is slow with staking and tying underway. New fields are coming into production yielding large sized pods from the green bells. Harvesting volume is moderate on green bells and reds. Very good quality is available. Growers are removing stakes and string from the fall crop, transplanting, and laying plastic for the late winter crop. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is steady with fair to good quality. Color is good.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are slow to normal. Harvest is steady with good quality and sizes available. East Coast--Picking is active.

RADISHES: Everglades--Harvest is active. Quality is good.

SQUASH: Dade--Crop condition is good. Harvest is yielding good quality and volume. Young fields look very good. Planting is active. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is steady. Growth and development are slow to normal. Harvest is steady with good quality and sizes. East Coast--Plants have good growth, are blooming and setting fruit. Harvest is moderate from zucchini and yellow squash. There is good quality and color from the fancy grades. Older plants are being pulled up.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City--Harvest is increasing seasonally with volume increasing. Quality and color are good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Harvest is increasing with sizes fair to good available. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Crop is in good condition. A few fields of U-Pic will open next week with a small volume.

TOMATOES: Dade--The crop looks good. Planting is still active. Rains this week helped fields. Fruit is setting and sizing well. Harvest started on a few fields this week with good quality. A few beds are being made and plastic laid for future planting. Southwest--Crop conditions remain fair to good. Planting is steady. Plant growth is good. Fruit set and sizing are good. Warm temperatures have helped plant growth and sizing. Harvest is steady with good quality, size, and yield. A good supply of all sizes are available. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting is slowing. Fruit quality and sizes are variable. East Coast--Growers are harvesting from all picks to meet the holiday demand. New fields coming into maturity are providing good quality and yield from the crown picks. Mid-growth plants are blooming and setting fruit.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Development and growth are normal. Harvest is steady with good quality and sizes.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady with good sizes and quality available.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--The harvest is finished. Palmetto-Ruskin--Harvest is almost finished.

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