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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 25, 2001

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**FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Mostly dry weather prevailed during the week of February 18 through 24. Except for the extreme western Panhandle, scattered showers brought only traces to two tenths inches of rain to some localities with several reporting no measurable rain falling. Pensacola recorded about two and a quarter inches of rain for the week. Temperatures averaged from four to eight degrees above normal at the major stations. Most daytime highs were in the 60s, 70s and 80s while nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Several northern and north central localities, from Pensacola to Pierson, recorded at least one low in the 30s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture in the western Panhandle is adequate. Moisture throughout the rest of the State is very short to short. Dry weather keeps increasing the wild fire hazard in the State. Field preparation is underway for spring crops. Sugarcane harvest is making good progress.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	55	60	55	58
Short	44	32	45	42
Adequate	1	8	0	0
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, the winter pasture grazing condition improved to good following light showers and warm temperatures. Rain is needed to further improve the pasture condition. In the north counties, grass and forage growth is slow due to drought. In the central area, severe drought continues. Ponds, lakes and streams are low or dry. Some pasture grass is greening due to warm weather. In the west central and southwest areas, the pasture condition is still poor. Some new growth is showing, but growth is very slow due to drought. Brush fires and fire danger exist everywhere. Statewide, the condition of cattle and calves is mostly poor to fair. Some ranchers have a problem getting hay due to short supply.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	25	15	5	0
Poor	50	50	40	40
Fair	25	35	50	55
Good	0	0	5	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There were only a few scattered showers in isolated areas this week. The current dry conditions continue in virtually all of this State's citrus counties. Caretakers are using all types of irrigation to supply the much needed moisture. New growth and bloom buds of all sizes are present in all well-cared-for groves. The early and midseason orange harvest is slowing as most of the larger blocks have been picked. A few Valencia oranges are going to both the juice plants and fresh fruit packing houses. Field run grapefruit are moving very slowly to the processors because higher ratios are needed. There are plenty of white and colored grapefruit being shipped, along with a few midseason and Valencia oranges. Temples and Honey tangerines are going for both fresh and processed utilization.

Caretakers are chopping, disking and mowing cover crops for fire protection and prior to harvesting. Hedging and topping are active in all areas. Growers are removing harmful water weeds and plants from irrigation canals. Grove trash and tree limbs are being stacked for future burning due to the current dry conditions.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended

Crop	Feb 11	Feb 18	Feb 25
Navel oranges	37,000	40,000	38,000
Early & Mid oranges	8,007,000	7,877,000	6,044,000
Valencia oranges	175,000	284,000	339,000
All grapefruit	1,350,000	1,608,000	1,970,000
Early Tangerines	3,000	2,000	1,000
Honey Tangerines	93,000	115,000	93,000
Tangelos	83,000	70,000	55,000
Temples	80,000	82,000	133,000

VEGETABLES: The dry, warm weather is helping plant growth and fruit development with growers irrigating as needed. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, strawberries, potatoes, squash, snap beans, sweet corn, lettuce, radishes, escarole, endive, eggplant, cucumbers, Chinese cabbage, and parsley.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Crop condition is rated good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting continues to increase with good quality available. Growers continue to irrigate as needed. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Hand picking is active. Volume is light. Quality and color are good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting remains steady. Harvesting continues with fair to good quality available. Volume is light. Everglades--Plant growth is good. Planting is active. West Central--Crop condition is good. Planting is increasing slowly.

CABBAGE: Dade--Cabbage looks good. Harvesting is active with average yield and good quality. Irrigation is needed in all fields. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is gaining. Quality, size, and color are good. Hastings, Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are actively harvesting cabbage. Quality is good. Heads are smaller than normal.

SWEET CORN: Dade--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting is very active with volume near the peak. Quality is good. Good supplies are available through mid-to-late March. East Coast--Harvesting is gaining momentum with both white and yellow varieties available. Quality is good. Everglades--Growth is very good. Planting is active. Harvesting of acreage that survived the freeze is expected to begin in about three weeks. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Plant growth and ear development are normal. Zellwood--Planting is gaining momentum.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Planting is steady for the spring crop. Growth and development are normal. The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvest is light with quality fair to good. East Coast--Crop is in good condition. Older plantings are forming runners, showing blooms with a light setting of fruit. Planting is underway for the spring crop. Germination is good on recent seedings. Growers are irrigating when needed and thinning young plants. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Planting is gaining momentum. Growth and development are normal.

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

PICKLES: West Central--Planting is starting. Growth and development are normal. Dade--Planting is winding down. All are up to good stands and growing good with the warm weather. Irrigation is a must. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are slow to normal. Harvest is light and quality is good. Zellwood--Planting for the spring crop is underway.

EGGPLANT: Dade--Cutting continues. Quality is good. Workers are irrigating as needed. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is active with a light supply available. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting continues. Supplies are light with good quality and color available for fancy grades. Workers are removing stakes and strings and mowing acreage completely harvested.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting is steady. Yield and quality are good.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Plant growth is good. Harvesting is very active. Yield and quality are good with good supplies available.

OKRA: Dade--Planting is expected to begin within the next two weeks.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is finished. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Warm temperatures are aiding plant growth and pod development. First picks of green Bells are producing good quality and large sizes with steady supplies available. Harvesting of red and yellow Bells is yielding a light volume. West Central--Crop condition is good. Transplanting is mostly steady.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is almost completed. Picking is steady with good quality available. East Coast--Picking is active. Volume is very light. Quality is good.

POTATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is good. Harvesting is gaining momentum. Quality is good. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Hastings--Planting is starting to slow seasonally. Harvesting will start in mid-to-late April.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting remains steady. Quality is good with abundant supplies available.

SQUASH: Dade--Crop condition is good. Planting is decreasing seasonally. Picking continues with good quality available. Producers continue to irrigate as needed. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Planting remains steady. Picking is gaining momentum. Quality is good. East Coast--Young plant growth is good. Picking continues with good quality and color available for fancy grades. Supply is light. West Central--Crop condition is rated good. Planting is mostly steady.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Floral City--Harvesting is increasing. Quality is fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality and color are good. Yield is fair to good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting is active. Quality is good.

TOMATOES: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Harvesting is active. Quality is good. Sizes are running 6x6 and larger. Volume is good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to mostly good condition. Harvesting is steady. Volume is light. Quality is fair to good. Supplies are expected to increase over the next two weeks. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Older plants that were setting fruit during the freeze are now nearing maturity and show a lighter than normal volume of fruit. Transplanting is active. Picking continues with good quality available. Sizes are variable. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting continues to slow. Quincy--Transplanting is expected to start over the next seven to ten days.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is done. Picking remains steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is nearing the end.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is finished. Picking is steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is steady. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated good. Planting continues to increase. Jackson County--Planting is expected to start over the next seven to ten days.

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