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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 11, 2001

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Welcomed rains fell in most areas at the beginning of the week of March 4 through 10. Totals for the week at the major stations ranged from traces at West Palm Beach to over an inch and two thirds at Tampa. Homestead received an inch and a half. The Immokalee area recorded from a quarter inch to almost two inches. The Palmetto-Ruskin region recorded only traces for the week. Temperatures averaged three to five degrees below normal with some northern and a few central Peninsula localities recording temperatures near freezing after the rain front passed. Daytime highs were mostly in the 60s and 70s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 40s, 50s and 60s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture in the western Panhandle is adequate. Moisture throughout the rest of State is very short to short. Wild fire hazard is high throughout the State. Field preparation is underway for spring crops. Growers are starting to plant corn. Sugarcane harvest is active.

| Moisture Rating | Topsoil | | Subsoil | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Last week | This week | Last week | This week |
| Percent | | | | |
| Very short | 64 | 44 | 65 | 45 |
| Short | 33 | 46 | 33 | 47 |
| Adequate | 3 | 10 | 2 | 8 |
| Surplus | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Rains statewide had a minimal effect on pasture condition as rainfall was slight and high winds followed the rain. In the Panhandle, the pasture condition is fair due to drought. Cattle in some areas are in very poor condition. In the north counties, the pasture condition is poor while the cattle condition is good. Recent rain reduced the fire danger. In the central area, the pasture condition is fair due to drought. In the west central counties, pastures are greening up following the rain and warmer temperatures. Cattle are looking a little better. In the southwest, the range is in poor condition and the condition of the cattle is fair to good. Statewide, the cattle condition is mostly poor to fair.

| Condition | Range | | Cattle | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Last week | This week | Last week | This week |
| Percent | | | | |
| Very poor | 35 | 15 | 0 | 5 |
| Poor | 45 | 55 | 55 | 25 |
| Fair | 20 | 30 | 40 | 65 |
| Good | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Excellent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

CITRUS: The first of the week was picture perfect with cold nights and cool days. There were several scattered showers and a few thunderstorms Friday night and Saturday morning in most of the citrus groves. The late week rainfall varied from a trace to nearly a half inch in some of the coastal groves. However, growers and caretakers are still irrigating in all areas to maintain good tree condition during this all important bloom period. Some Navel and Valencia trees have had petal drop and are now showing pin head new fruit. There are still some groves that have not had full open bloom at this time. Harvest of early and midseason oranges is nearing completion with only a few clean-up groves remaining to be picked. A few Valencias are being picked for both fresh use and for processing. A few field run

grapefruit with higher ratios are being picked for the juice plants. Temples and Honey tangerines are being picked for both the fresh and processed markets. Tangelo harvest is winding down for this season.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops in all areas for fire protection and prior to harvesting. Hedging and topping are active in all areas. Dead tree removal continues with some replanting in the larger groves. Burning of dead trees has been limited due to the dry conditions.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended

| Crop | Feb 25 | Mar 4 | Mar 11 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Navel oranges | 37,000 | 14,000 | 19,000 |
| Early & Mid oranges | 5,661,000 | 3,534,000 | 2,236,000 |
| Valencia oranges | 488,000 | 799,000 | 1,483,000 |
| All grapefruit | 2,014,000 | 2,310,000 | 2,278,000 |
| Early Tangerines | 1,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Honey Tangerines | 91,000 | 104,000 | 111,000 |
| Tangelos | 51,000 | 21,000 | 11,000 |
| Temples | 140,000 | 152,000 | 121,000 |

VEGETABLES: Recent rains boosted growth and development of most vegetables. Strong winds damaged some foliage with most plants recovering well. Vegetables available include tomatoes, strawberries, peppers, cabbage, potatoes, snap beans, sweet corn, squash, lettuce, escarole, endive, radishes, cucumbers, parsley, eggplant and Chinese cabbage.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. Planting is near the end. Harvesting is active with good quality available. Volume is good. East Coast--Crop condition is fair to good. Cool temperatures are affecting plant growth. Strong winds tossed plants. Hand picks are yielding a light volume. Quality is mostly good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Some foliage shows wind burn damage. Planting is steady. Picking continues to increase with a light volume available. Quality is good. Everglades--Harvesting is getting underway. Yield outlook is good. West Central--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is slowing seasonally.

CABBAGE: Dade--The crop is being cut on a weekly schedule with good quality and yield. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality and color are good. Size is improving. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Growth and developments are normal. Harvest is steady. Head quality is good. Hastings, Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers continue to harvest. Quality is good.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Harvesting is active with good quality available. Supplies are good. East Coast--The crop remains in mostly good condition. Fields nearing maturity show good ear development. Harvesting of white, bi-color and yellow types continues. Ear quality is good. Workers continue to mow and disc acreage completely picked. Everglades--Planting is winding down. Picking of a limited acreage that escaped severe damage from the January freeze is starting. Quality is good. Yield prospects are below normal. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Some foliage shows wind damage. Planting is complete. Zellwood--Planting remains active.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Planting is winding down for the spring crop. Growth and development are normal. The crop is in fair to good condition. East Coast--Fields that were nearing

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

maturity were covered March 3 through 7 with frost protective covers. Covers have been removed and initial harvest started with good quality and color available from first picks. The youngest plantings were not covered. Planting of the spring crop continues. Strong winds reduced pollination for a few days. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is light. Quality is fair to good.

PICKLES: West Central--Planting is steady. The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Dade--The crop is growing well and young fields starting to put out runners. A few acres are being picked with good yield and fair quality. Volume is light. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is complete. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is light and quality is good. Zellwood--Planting for the spring crop is steady.

EGGPLANT: Dade--Cutting continues with a good volume available. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting of a light volume is active. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Planting of a small acreage is active. Harvesting of a light volume continues. Quality and color are good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is finished.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Plant growth is good. Harvesting continues.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is active. Quality is good.

OKRA: Dade--Plant growth is good. Planting is active.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Cool temperatures slowed the growth of young plants with warmer weather now aiding development. Transplanting continues with growers drenching recent sets with water to ensure good stands. Harvesting is active with good quality available. Crown picks are yielding large sizes while limb picks are producing variable sizes. Volume is steady. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is finished.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is over. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. East Coast--Harvesting is active. Volume is light.

POTATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is good. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Digging is expected to start in about four to five weeks. Hastings--Planting is virtually done. Harvesting is expected to start in mid-to-late April.

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

SQUASH: Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. Planting is virtually done. Picking remains active with good quality available. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Some foliage shows wind damage. Planting is nearing the end. Picking is increasing. Quality is good. East Coast--Recent strong winds damaged some foliage with some stems broken. Planting and picking continue. Quality and color are mostly good with small and medium sizes of zucchini and yellow types available. Volume is light. West Central--The crop is in good condition.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Floral City--Harvesting is steady. Quality is variable and ranges from fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting continues to slow. Quality is fair to good. Color is good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting is active. Quality is good.

TOMATOES: Dade--The crop is in good condition. Fruit sizing is good. Harvesting is active with fair quality available. Packout is improving. Sizes are running 6x6 and larger. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Strong winds damaged some foliage with some leaves and stems broken and some fruit scarred. Bloom drop increased. Fruit sizing is good. Harvesting of a light volume is active. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Young plants show very good growth and fruit development. Transplanting is active. Picking continues with mostly good quality available. Sizes are variable. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair. Planting is virtually done. Cooler temperatures are slowing plant growth. Strong winds damaged some foliage with some growers resetting a few plants. Most plants are recovering well. Quincy--Transplanting is underway. Some growers used cups to protect the earliest plantings from cold temperatures with most plants surviving. Recent rains are boosting growth of earlier sets.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Picking remains steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is expected to begin in early to mid-April.

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

WATERMELONS: Southwest--Condition remains fair to good. Planting is slowing seasonally. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is mostly steady with some growers finished.

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