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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



Week ending March 18, 2001

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 19, 2001

WEATHER SUMMARY: Rains came to most western Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities, and to some central Peninsula areas during the week of March 11 through 17. Some heavy rains and strong winds accompanied the showers with no significant crop damage reported. Precipitation for the week ranged from none at Immokalee and Miami to about three and a quarter inches at Tallahassee. Temperatures for the week averaged three to nine degrees above normal. Most daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Most nighttime lows were in the 50s, 60s and 70s with several localities recording at least one low in the 40s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula is mostly adequate. Moisture throughout the rest of the State is very short to short. Field preparations are underway for spring crops. Growers are starting to plant corn. Sugarcane harvest is winding down with mills starting to close for the season.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	44	54	45	59
Short	46	25	47	33
Adequate	10	21	8	8
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, summer pasture is starting to grow following several general rains and warmer temperatures. Small grain forages have responded well to recent rains. Strong winds on March 14th blew down some fences. Some stock ponds have standing water after two years of being dry. In the northern counties, rains reduced fire danger and pastures are greening up. Supplemental hay is still being fed due to short pasture. In the central area, pastures greened up following scattered showers and warmer temperatures. In the west central and southwest, pastures are getting greener but most locations had a dry week. Mole crickets are active. Ranchers are still putting hay out. Some rangers are mowing their range. Statewide, cattle and calves are mostly in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	15	20	5	10
Poor	55	50	25	15
Fair	30	20	65	65
Good	0	10	5	10
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Some much needed rain arrived in many parts of Florida's citrus belt on Sunday the 18th. However, most of the week was hot, dry and windy. There were a few spotty showers in the upper interior and on both coasts on Tuesday. More rain is needed and irrigation continued most of the week. Bloom is in all stages at this time. There are more and more irrigation wells that have salt water intrusion. Many growers on the west coast and the Indian River area are limiting their watering due to high salt content of the water. Some trees in stress in the drier areas have lost a lot of leaves and a good portion of their recent bloom. Harvest of early and midseason oranges is in the clean-up stages. Some young tree Valencia oranges are being picked

for both fresh and processed use. Grapefruit utilization is increasing in all areas. Honey tangerine and Temple harvest remain active.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvest and for fire protection. Hedging and topping continue in all areas. A few growers have started their post bloom nutritional sprays. New wells are being prepared for the dry spring months.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended

Crop	Mar 4	Mar 11	Mar 18
Navel oranges	14,000	19,000	15,000
Early & Mid oranges	3,534,000	2,236,000	1,077,000
Valencia oranges	799,000	1,483,000	2,261,000
All grapefruit	2,306,000	2,278,000	2,407,000
Honey Tangerines	104,000	111,000	117,000
Tangelos	21,000	11,000	1,000
Temples	152,000	121,000	74,000

VEGETABLES: Dry conditions over the southern Peninsula continue to increase the need for irrigation. Vegetables available include tomatoes, cabbage, strawberries, potatoes, peppers, snap beans, sweet corn, squash, cucumbers, radishes, lettuce, escarole, endive, eggplant, parsley and Chinese cabbage.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Warm temperatures are speeding the growth of plants with condition rated good. Planting is almost done. Picking continues with good quality available. Producers are irrigating as needed. East Coast--The crop is in fair to good condition. Plant growth and bean development are improving. Hand picks are producing mostly good quality. Volume is very light. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Plant growth and bean development are normal. Planting is winding down. Everglades--Picking is active. West Central--Crop condition remains fair to good. Plant growth and development are normal.

CABBAGE: Dade--Cabbage is being cut on a weekly schedule with good quality and yield. Hot weather is not helping the cabbage crop. West Central--The crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality and color are good. Sizes are medium to large. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Head quality is good. Hastings, Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is very active. Head size has improved.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. Picking continues with a good volume available. Quality is good. Everglades--Harvesting of a low volume is active. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Ear development is improving but some blocks show uneven growth. Pulling remains active with yellow, white and some bi-color types available. Workers are cleaning acreage completely harvested. Southwest--Crop condition is rated good. Zellwood--Plant growth is good. Planting continues. Picking is expected to begin in late April.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Growth and development are normal. The crop is in fair to good condition. East Coast--The crop condition is mostly good. Harvesting super select, selects, small, and cartons. Quality and color are good. Planting is slowing down. Germination is good from recent plantings. Plants are blooming, forming runners, and setting fruit. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are good. Harvest is light. Quality is fair to good.

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

PICKLES: West Central--Planting is winding down. The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Dade--Cukes are growing fast. Fields planted three weeks ago are blooming. Southwest--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is light and quality is good. Zellwood--Planting for the spring crop is active. The early crop is growing well.

EGGPLANT: Dade--Hot temperatures are affecting fruit development. Harvesting is slow. Volume is down. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Cutting continues with fair to good quality available. Supplies are light. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. First picks are yielding good quality and color. Volume is light. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Plant growth and fruit development are normal.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting is active.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

OKRA: Dade--Plants are making good stands in most fields. Growers are irrigating to ensure proper moisture supplies.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Plant growth is good. Transplanting is slowly winding down. Crown picks are yielding good quality and large sizes. Harvesting of limb fruit is producing mostly good quality and variable sizes. Supplies are down slightly. Workers continue to drench plants with water to ensure good moisture supplies. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is virtually done.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good.

POTATOES: Southwest--Condition remains good. Digging is steady. Quality is good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting will begin in late March or early April. Hastings--Digging is expected to begin in mid to late-April.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Digging continues with good quality available.

SQUASH: Dade--Young fields are in good condition. Planting is virtually complete. Harvesting continues. Quality is good. Workers are irrigating as needed. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Plant growth is good. Planting is finished. Harvesting is gaining momentum. Quality is good. East Coast--Recent plantings are germinating well. Harvesting of zucchini and yellow varieties is producing mostly good quality and color. Volume is light. Workers are pulling up plants completely picked. West Central--Crop condition remains good.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Floral City--Picking remains active. Volume is down slightly. Quality is variable and ranges fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Picking is winding down seasonally. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting continues. Quality and volume are good.

TOMATOES: Dade--Crop condition is good. Fruit sizing is good. Picking continues with good sizes and quality available. Packout is normal. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Plant growth, fruit set and fruit sizing are good. Picking continues with light supplies of all sizes available. Quality is fair to good. Packout is below normal. Picking of acreage planted after the New Year's freeze will start in about two weeks. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Fruit setting is improving. Transplanting is slowing. Crown picks are providing good quality with yields starting to increase. Sizes are variable. Supplies are steady. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Recent strong winds tossed plants. Planting is almost finished. Plant growth is fair. Picking is expected to start in three to four weeks. Quincy--Transplanting is active between showers.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is expected to start soon.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting remains steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Planting is finished. Picking is expected to begin soon.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is nearing the end. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is rated fair to good. Planting is complete.

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