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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending April 8, 2001

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Spotty rains continued during the week of April 1 through 7. Most localities received from none to only traces of rain for the week. Heavier rain fell around Homestead and Ft. Lauderdale with up to two inches reported for the week. West Palm Beach, Orlando and Okahumpka received from a quarter to three quarters inch. Temperatures at the major stations averaged normal to two degrees above. Daytime highs were mostly in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Alachua, Jacksonville and Tallahassee recorded at least one low in the 30s, while Pensacola, Immokalee and several other northern and central Peninsula localities reported at least one low in the 40s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle is mostly adequate with scattered areas of surplus moisture. Moisture throughout the rest of the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Field preparation is underway for cotton and peanuts. Growers are actively planting corn and tobacco. Sugarcane harvest is complete with all the mills closed for the season.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	30	3	29	8
Short	37	68	44	66
Adequate	28	28	27	26
Surplus	5	1	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, light rains and warmer temperatures greened up the pastures and hay fields. Some ranchers fertilized hay fields and pastures. Stock ponds are beginning to fill. In the central area, dry weather returned, but pasture condition held good. In the west central area, the condition of pasture was good. Pasture is green, however grass growth is behind for this time of year. Some water holes are still low. Calving is active. In the southwest, recent rain helped grass growth. Statewide, most cattle are in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	50	45	45	15
Fair	40	40	35	65
Good	5	15	20	20
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There were a few light scattered showers in several areas of the citrus belt this week. Some of the caretakers were able to shut off their irrigation pumps for a few days. However, more rain is needed. There continues to be an abundance of new growth on most trees in the well-cared-for groves. This year's bloom period is over. The general physical condition of most citrus trees during the bloom cycle was enhanced by two to three good rains during March. Valencia orange harvest is increasing as many of these late orange groves in the southern part of the citrus belt are showing very good maturity tests. Both colored and white grapefruit are being shipped from virtually all east coast packing houses with very good quality fruit. Temple and Honey tangerine harvest is slowing as supplies are running low.

Caretakers are mowing, discing and chopping cover crops prior to

harvesting crews' arrival and for fire protection. Spring herbicides and post bloom nutritional sprays are being applied in all areas. Hedging, topping and burning of dead trees and branches continues. Young resets are being planted in all areas.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 25	Apr 1	Apr 8
Navel oranges	10,000	7,000	0
Early & Mid oranges	191,000	47,000	16,000
Valencia oranges	3,528,000	4,555,000	6,008,000
All grapefruit	2,763,000	2,665,000	2,626,000
Honey Tangerines	137,000	97,000	96,000
Tangelos	7,000	1,000	7,000
Temples	51,000	34,000	26,000

VEGETABLES: Mostly dry conditions allowed harvesting to progress seasonally in central and southern Peninsula areas. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, sweet corn, potatoes, cabbage, snap beans, squash, cucumbers, strawberries, lettuce, eggplant, radishes, escarole, endive, parsley and Chinese cabbage.

SNAPBEANS: Dade--Crop condition is rated very good. Recent rain boosted crop development. Harvesting is active with good quality available. Volume is expected to be good over the next five to six weeks. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking remains steady with fair to good quality available. East Coast--Plant growth is improving. Hand harvesting is active with a light volume available. West Central--The crop is in poor to fair condition. Spraying is active.

BLUEBERRIES: Central--Light harvesting is active.

CABBAGE: Dade--Harvest is slowing but growers are still cutting small weekly plantings with good quality available. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality is fair to good. Sizes and color are fair to good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Head quality is good. Hastings--The crop is in excellent condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is active. Zellwood--Head size is generally good. Harvest is winding down and will be complete in two weeks.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Harvesting is active. Quality is good with a good supply available over the next two weeks. Everglades--Harvesting continues with good quality available. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Picking is gaining momentum. Quality is good. Zellwood--Harvesting is expected to start in early May. East Coast--Picking is finished. Workers are mowing stalks and discing acreage.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Growth and development are slow but normal. The crop is in fair condition. East Coast--Crop conditions are fair to good. Dry conditions and gusty winds buffeted plants. Mid-growth plants are blooming, forming runners, and setting fruit. Limited acreage continues to be planted. Germination is mostly good. Harvesting is steady. Quality and color are good on the new fields coming into production. Workers are mowing and cleaning up old fields. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are good. Harvest is gaining momentum. Quality is fair to good.

PICKLES: West Central--Planting is winding down. The crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are slow but normal.

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

Dade--Picking continues with good quality available. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality is fair to good. Zellwood--Planting for the spring crop is active. The early crop is growing well.

EGGPLANT: Dade--Cutting remains active with a good volume available. Quality is good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Plant growth and fruit development continue to improve. Harvesting of regular and Italian types continues. Quality and color are mostly good. West Central--Crop condition is rated fair to good.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is active.

OKRA: Dade--Crop condition is good. Recent rains boosted crop development. Planting is active.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Youngest plants are in good condition. First picks of green Bells are providing large sizes and good quality. Limb picks are yielding variable sizes. Volume is steady. Transplanting is complete. Workers are removing stakes and strings, mowing plants and pulling plastic from acreage completely picked. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is good. Picking remains steady. Quality is good.

POTATOES: Southwest--Growers have killed all top foliage in preparation of digging. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Digging is gaining momentum. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are fair. Hastings--The crop is in very good condition. Digging of table stock is expected to start within the next five to seven days.

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

SQUASH: Dade--Picking continues with first picks yielding excellent quality. A good volume is available for the next four to five weeks. Southwest--Condition is rated good. Picking is steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Picking of a light volume of zucchini and yellow types continues. Quality and color are good with medium and small sizes available. Workers are pulling plants from acreage completely harvested. West Central--Crop condition is fair.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Floral City--Harvesting is near the end with most producers finished. Palmetto-Ruskin--Harvesting is virtually finished. Dade--U-Pic harvesting remains active. Quality is good.

TOMATOES: Dade--Condition is good. Harvesting continues with very good volume available. Quality and packout are good. Sizes are mostly 5x6 and larger. Good supplies are expected for the next two weeks. Southwest--The crop is in mostly good condition. Harvesting is active with supplies increasing seasonally. Quality and sizes are improving. East Coast--The crop is in fair to good condition. Warmer temperatures are accelerating fruit ripening. Growers are making first and second picks with some third picks curtailed due to a lower market. Quality and yield is improving for acreage starting to produce. Palmetto-Ruskin--Plant growth, fruit setting and fruit sizing are fair. Recent rains and cool temperatures slowed crop progress. Picking is expected to begin over the next seven to ten days. Spraying for the control of disease and insects is active. Quincy--Transplanting is virtually finished. Harvesting is expected to start in late May or early June.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is rated good. Picking remains steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is slowly increasing. Quality is fair.

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

WATERMELONS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Oldest plants are making runners with small fruit showing. Jefferson County--Transplanting is nearly complete.

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