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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 9, 2001

Released 4:00 P.M.

December 10, 2001

WEATHER SUMMARY: Warm temperatures continued during the week of December 2 through 8. Temperatures at the major stations averaged six to ten degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 50s and 60s. Western Panhandle and some northern localities reported lows in the 40s. Homestead, West Palm Beach and Miami recorded from about a half inch to almost two inches of rain for the week. Jacksonville, Ft. Pierce and Lake Alfred reported about a third inch. Elsewhere, most localities remained dry with very little, if any, rain reported.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are mostly short to adequate. Scattered rains improved supplies in some Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities but most remain very short to short. Hay making is active in some central and southern Peninsula areas. Cotton harvesting is nearing completion. Sugarcane planting and harvesting are active in the Everglades region.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	5	11	4	15
Short	42	40	33	32
Adequate	53	49	58	53
Surplus	0	0	5	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Recent scattered rains improved some Panhandle and northern Peninsula pastures but most remain in poor condition. Elsewhere, pasture condition is rated fair to good. Dry soils are slowing the growth of cool season forages in some Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities. Most cattle are in fair to good condition with producers feeding supplemental hay as needed.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	5	0	5	0
Poor	15	20	5	10
Fair	50	60	35	60
Good	30	20	55	30
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: The dry and unseasonably warm weather patterns continued in most areas of the citrus belt this week. Again, the upper east coast did receive spotty showers the last of the week. However, virtually all of the major citrus producing counties are reporting constant irrigation use to prevent trees from wilting and to maintain good fruit condition. Some harvested groves actually look like they are wilting due to the stress of having their fruit removed and some leaf loss caused by the picking operation. Harvesting crews are moving large quantities of early and midseason oranges to the processors. There are also a few loads of field run white grapefruit and tangelos going to the juice plants along with a lot of packing house eliminations. Fresh fruit shippers are very busy moving Navels, other early oranges, white and colored grapefruit, tangerines and tangelos.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops for fire protection and prior to harvesting. Growers on the high sand hills are running and maintaining their irrigation equipment. Dead trees are being removed and burned in all areas.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Nov 25	Dec 2	Dec 9
Navel oranges	186,000	424,000	633,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	5,963,000	7,948,000	7,988,000
All grapefruit	540,000	699,000	835,000
Tangerines	156,000	304,000	371,000
Tangelos	49,000	106,000	175,000

VEGETABLES: Producers are picking to satisfy the increased demand caused by the upcoming holidays. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, pickles, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries and sweet corn.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Crop condition remains very good. Planting and harvesting continue with a good volume available. Quality is good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Planting is steady. Harvesting is active with good quality available. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is active with fair to good quality available. Color is good. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Hand harvesting continues. Volume is very light. Quality is good. North--Harvesting is active.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Picking continues to gain momentum. Quality is good. Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Oldest plants are tasseling. Planting continues. East Coast--Ear development is good. Planting continues. Picking of a light volume continues. Quality is good. Zellwood--Picking is nearly finished.

CABBAGE: Dade--Harvesting is increasing seasonally. Quality is good. Zellwood--Cutting is active. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Hastings--Planting is active.

CUCUMBERS, fresh market: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting of a small acreage is active. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Planting of a small acreage is active. Picking continues. Quality and color are good with super select and select sizes available. Workers continue to mow acreage completely harvested. Palmetto-Ruskin, Plant City--Condition is fair. Picking is winding down. Quality is fair to good. Color is fair. Sizes are variable. Zellwood--Harvesting of pickle varieties for fresh market is virtually over.

CUCUMBERS, pickles: West Central--Condition is fair. Picking is nearing the end. Quality is fair. Southwest--Harvesting continues. Dade--Picking of a small volume continues. Quality is good. Planting is active.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--Condition is good. Planting is active. Picking continues with very good quality available. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Planting of a small acreage is active. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is mostly good. Dade--Crop condition is good. Planting is finished. Harvesting is increasing seasonally with good quality available. North--Harvesting is active with mostly good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair to good. U-Pic harvesting continues. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

LETTUCE: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is active.

OKRA: Dade--Harvesting is nearly finished. Quality is good.

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

BELL AND OTHER SWEET PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to mostly good condition. Planting remains steady. Picking is active with good quality available. East Coast--Plant growth is good. Transplanting continues. Picking of Bell varieties is active with green and some red and yellow types available. Quality is good for first picks. Harvesting of cubanelles is yielding good quality. Growers are removing strings and stakes, mowing plants and pulling plastic from fields completely picked. West Central--Crop condition is fair. Harvesting is mostly steady with some progress starting to slow seasonally. Quality is fair to good.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition is good. Planting and harvesting are steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Harvesting is active. Quality is good.

POTATOES: Dade--Plants are making good stands. Planting is active and is expected to continue until early January. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Planting is mostly steady. West Central--Condition is good. Planting is steady.

RADISHES: Everglades--Digging continues with volume increasing seasonally. Quality is very good.

SQUASH: Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Planting and picking are steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Young plants are in very good condition. Picking of a light volume is active. Quality and color are good. Dade--Planting is active. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Volume is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. Color is good. Sizes remain variable. North--Picking is active. Quality is mostly good.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Floral City, Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in good condition. Cooler temperatures are needed to aid berry growth and maturation. Picking continues to gain momentum. Quality and sizes are fair to good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting started with a very light volume available. Most acreage will mature in late December. Quality is good.

TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop remains in fair to good condition. Planting and harvesting are steady. Quality is good with a very good volume of all sizes available. Workers continue to spray, stake, prune and tie as needed. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Transplanting continues. Harvesting remains active. Quality is good. Workers are staking, tying, pruning, leveling land and laying plastic as needed. West Central--Crop condition is fair. Picking continues with fair to good quality available. Volume outlook is below normal with most growers getting only two normal picks. Volume from third picks is expected to be low. Spraying for the control of disease and insects continues. Dade--Crop condition is good. Planting continues. Harvesting is expected to start in late December. Quincy--Harvesting is done.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting remains steady. Picking is steady with good quality available. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is winding down. Quality is fair to good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Picking is active. Quality is good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is winding down. Quality and sizes are fair to good. Color is good.

WATERMELONS: Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair. Harvesting is winding down. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are small to medium.

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