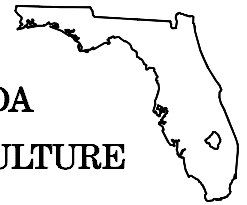




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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 24, 2002

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Mostly clear conditions prevailed during the week of February 17 through 23 until a storm system from the Gulf of Mexico brought soaking rains to most Panhandle and some northern Peninsula areas during mid-week, and to the rest of the Peninsula during the last two days. Rain from the storm system ranged from a third inch at Jacksonville to almost five inches at Ona. The rainfall eased the threat of wildfires in most localities. Temperatures averaged from two degrees below normal to one degree above at the major stations. Daytime highs were mostly in the 60s and 70s while lows ranged from the 40s to the 60s. Jacksonville, Tallahassee and Pensacola each recorded at least one low in the 30s.

FIELD CROPS: The rains replenished soil moisture in most areas. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are rated short to mostly adequate with a few northern Peninsula localities reporting very short supplies. Peaches, other low chill cultivars of fruit trees and azaleas are blooming in northern areas. Barley yellow dwarf virus is lowering oat yields in some northern localities. Land preparation for the planting of corn, tobacco and other field crops is gaining momentum in northern Peninsula and Panhandle localities. Growers are applying herbicides to some hay fields for weed control in northern areas.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	0	4	2	4
Short	31	22	35	34
Adequate	63	74	57	62
Surplus	6	0	6	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, permanent pasture grass is greening up. In the northern counties, cool season forages are growing. Some farmers are burning their pastures to fertilize. The central area's pasture is greening up after the recent rain. In the southwest, pasture condition varies from poor to good with most in good condition. Statewide, cattle and calves are in fair to good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	25	15	5	0
Fair	60	50	60	60
Good	15	35	35	40
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There were numerous daylong drenching and soaking rains Friday, February 22 and Saturday the 23rd. Many areas in Florida's citrus belt recorded 2 to 5 inches of rain in the two day period. The much needed moisture provided near excellent tree condition for the upcoming bloom period. There are many trees that currently have a lot of open bloom, however, most trees have swelling buds that range from pin head to pencil eraser size. Only those trees in the poorest condition show very little, if any, new growth and bloom formation. The early and midseason orange harvest is winding down as supplies are running low. Valencia orange harvest is increasing for both fresh and process use. Most of the grapefruit are coming from the lower east coast and a lot are being processed. Both Temples and Honey tangerines are being packed for fresh shipments and some are going to the juice plants.

Caretakers are busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops for fire protection and prior to harvesting. Lots of trees are being removed and burned in all areas. Resetting is very active in some of the larger groves in the warmer locations. Fertilizers are being applied in all areas.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 10	Feb 17	Feb 24
Navel oranges	92,000	41,000	29,000
Early & Mid oranges	8,562,000	6,800,000	5,148,000
Valencia oranges	243,000	275,000	575,000
All grapefruit	1,752,000	2,055,000	2,065,000
Early tangerines	16,000	14,000	7,000
Honey tangerines	133,000	134,000	147,000
Temples	149,000	142,000	192,000
Tangelos	115,000	86,000	59,000

VEGETABLES: Planting and harvesting continued at a normal pace for most of the week. The rain at the end of the week delayed fieldwork in the southern Peninsula vegetable regions, and lowered the quality of some vegetables with actual damage currently being assessed. Northern producers are laying plastic for the planting of spring crop watermelons. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, celery, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, parsley, potatoes, radishes, snap beans, squash, sweet corn and strawberries.

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