



Florida Agricultural Statistics Service
 1222 Woodward Street
 Orlando, Florida 32803
 407 / 648-6013

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/fl>



WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 10, 2002

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Cool weather persisted for most of March 3 through 9. Near freezing temperatures dipped from the western Panhandle and northern Peninsula into central and southern Peninsula areas during the first half of the week. Temperatures at the major stations mostly averaged one to eight degrees below normal. Pensacola and Tallahassee reported at least one low temperature in the 20s while Daytona Beach, Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa recorded at least one low in the 30s. West Palm Beach, Belle Glade, Ft. Lauderdale, Ft. Pierce and Immokalee recorded at least one low in the 40s. Homestead and Miami reported at least one low in the 50s. Most daytime highs were in the 60s and 70s with nearly all localities recording at least one high in the 80s by the end of the week. Showers during the first half of the week dropped significant rain over many localities. Rainfall at the major stations ranged from traces at Jacksonville to over five inches at Tallahassee with several Big Bend localities receiving from five to nine inches.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are short to mostly adequate. Several northern and a few western Panhandle localities reported short supplies along with a few central and southern counties. A few northeastern coastal communities reported surplus topsoil moisture. The hard freezes during the first part of the week burned some rye and oats in northern areas. The heavy rains flooded and damaged some pine plantings in low areas of the northern Peninsula. Milder weather near the end of the week increased land preparation for the planting of field crops such as corn and tobacco.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	0	0	2	0
Short	13	34	26	39
Adequate	78	64	68	61
Surplus	9	2	4	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Freezing temperatures burned the clover and small grain forage crops in the Panhandle and north, and arrested the growth of permanent pasture grass. Stock ponds and ditches in parts of the Panhandle and northern counties filled following 5 to 9 inches of rain. Fire danger was reduced by the rain. The central area pastures are still threatened by drought and cattle owners are still providing supplemental hay for feed. Statewide, most of the cattle 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	15	15	20	5
Fair	65	75	30	55
Good	20	10	50	40
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There were very few light scattered showers this week. Moisture is generally adequate, however, growers on the high sand hills are running their irrigation to maintain good tree condition. Temperatures moderated late in the week where daytime highs were in the 70s to the low 80s. Bloom is progressing slowly as some trees are in full open flowers while many are still in the pinhead to swelling bud stages. Very few groves have had complete petal drop. Harvest of early and midseason oranges is down to the last few million boxes. Picking of Valencia oranges continues to increase with most of this fruit going to the processors. Temple and Honey tangerine harvest is active for both fresh and processing. Both white and colored grapefruit movement remains very strong with most of the volume coming from the lower east coast.

Caretakers are very active mowing, chopping and discing cover crops to promote new growth for the bloom period. Hedging and topping have been reported in all areas. Dead trees are being cut out, pushed and burned.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 24	Mar 3	Mar 10
Navel oranges	35,000	11,000	4,000
Early & Mid oranges	4,591,000	3,860,000	2,373,000
Valencia oranges	669,000	1,164,000	2,351,000
All grapefruit	2,315,000	2,151,000	2,980,000
Early tangerines	10,000	9,000	7,000
Honey tangerines	166,000	159,000	159,000
Temples	252,000	175,000	130,000
Tangelos	60,000	32,000	15,000

VEGETABLES: Hard freezes in some northern areas during the first part of the week killed some early watermelon transplants and burned some cole crops. Northern watermelon producers are planting spring crop acreage. The cold temperatures damaged the tops of potatoes in the Hastings area with older plants suffering the most harm. Some yield loss may occur with potato digging expected to start in the Hastings area during late April. The cold caused very little damage to cabbage around Hastings. Most planting and harvesting continued at a steady pace in the major southern Peninsula vegetable areas. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, celery, cucumbers, 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.