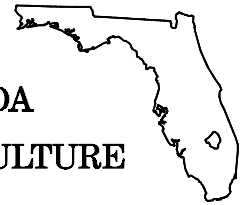




Florida Agricultural Statistics Service
 1222 Woodward Street
 Orlando, Florida 32803
 407 / 648-6013

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



WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending September 29, 2002

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September 30, 2002

WEATHER SUMMARY: Rain bands crossed the Peninsula as Tropical Storm Isidore moved northward in the Gulf of Mexico during the week of September 22 through 28 with abundant rains falling over the Panhandle as Isidore made landfall about 20 miles south of New Orleans on September 26. Rainfall for the week ranged from traces in localities missed by the rain bands to over nine inches in Pensacola. This storm spawned at least three tornadoes in Jackson, Putnam and Walton Counties. Temperatures in the major cities averaged one to four degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 80s and 90s. Nighttime lows were in the 60s and 70s with Pierson recording at least one low in the 50s.

FIELD CROPS: Rains from Tropical Storm Isidore interrupted peanut digging in many Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities with harvesting 35 percent finished. Last year 47 percent of peanuts were harvested by this date while the five year average is 46 percent finished. Some reports show peanut yields to be below normal with most of the crop rated in fair to good condition. The storm's rains improved topsoil moisture conditions in some Panhandle and northern Peninsula areas and flooded a few localities. Most topsoil and subsoil moisture is adequate with surplus supplies reported in areas receiving rains and short supplies reported for localities that the rains skipped. The rains hurt the quality of cotton that has open bolls with baling slowed by the recent rains. Some hay producers are delaying harvesting due to the uncertainty of the weather, especially the track that Tropical Storm Lili may take.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	0	5	0	5	5	1
Short	10	5	6	10	10	8
Adequate	55	65	56	55	60	55
Surplus	35	25	38	30	25	36

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and north counties, planning and land preparation are underway for cool season forage planting. There is heavy damage from armyworms in pasture and hay. Statewide, the cattle condition ranges from poor to excellent, with most cattle in good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	5	5	5	5
Fair	5	10	5	10
Good	80	75	80	75
Excellent	10	10	10	10

CITRUS: There were fewer rain showers and thunderstorms this week in most areas. However, some coastal and southern groves got at least three or four days of good soakings. Virtually all areas in Florida's citrus belt have received above average rainfall this summer and early fall. Most lakes, ponds and streams are still at or above their high level marks. Water control districts are trying to keep their main canals and major ditches at low levels so that growers can drain off standing water from their groves. There is a lot of new growth on trees of all ages on well drained land. Some of the wetter and heavier soils have a little less new growth due to the soggy soils with less oxygen. Most new crop fruit continues to show advanced maturity levels. Many early crops of fruit have lower than average acid, higher pounds solids and pounds of juice per box. Fresh fruit packers and shippers have moved some Navels, Ambersweet and Hamlin oranges, Fallglos tangerines, white and colored grapefruit.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops that have grown tall and out of control. Vines are being cut out of trees in all areas. Growers are spraying fruit that is going to the fresh markets. Fall fertilizations and herbicides are being applied in all areas. Dead trees are being pushed and cut out of groves and burned. Some resets are being planted in the larger groves.

VEGETABLES: The rains interrupted tomato picking around Quincy. Okra harvesting remains active in Dade County. Fall and winter crop planting is active in many southern Peninsula localities with very light supplies of Bell peppers, squash, cucumbers and eggplant available.

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