WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending October 13, 2002

WEATHER SUMMARY: Scattered showers dropped varying amounts of rain during the week of October 6 through 12. Several central and southern Peninsula localities reported no rainfall for the week; almost an inch and a half was reported in Immokalee and Pensacola. A few central and northern Peninsula localities also recorded over an inch of rain for the week. Temperatures at the major stations averaged two to eight degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 80s and 90s. Nighttime lows were in the 60s and 70s.

FIELD CROPS: Rains over some Panhandle areas improved soil moisture conditions. However, most Panhandle and northern Peninsula soil moisture is rated short to adequate with a few localities reporting surplus supplies. Central and southern Peninsula soil moisture is rated mostly adequate with pockets of short moisture in areas not receiving recent rains. Recent rains reduced the quality of some cotton in the Panhandle with heavy showers causing some cotton to fall to the ground. High humidity delayed some peanut digging until mid day or later in most Panhandle areas. Peanut harvesting is 70 percent done compared with 78 percent finished by this date last year and the five year average of 76 percent completed. Sugarcane is in good condition. Sugarcane harvesting is expected to get underway this week after the threat of tropical storms passes. Small grain planting is slowly increasing. The rainfall delayed some hay harvesting with peanut hay making gaining momentum in the Panhandle.

CITRUS: The rainfall this week was generally of a light scattered nature that was hit and miss in most areas. Due to the limited rains the past few weeks some growers and caretakers have started irrigating in spite of the heavy rains all summer long. Groves and trees are generally in very good condition. Some of the early foliage is starting to turn darker green as the days get shorter and the average daily temperature gets lower. A lot of the early fruit is showing fairly good on-tree color break. Harvest of Navel, Ambersweet and Hamlin oranges, early tangerines and white and colored grapefruit continues to increase in all areas. Virtually all of this early fruit is going to the fresh packing houses. There are just a few small processors taking packing house eliminations. Several of the larger processors are planning to open in the next few weeks.

VEGETABLES: Strawberry planting is 40 percent completed with growers to transplant late maturing varieties this week. Strawberry picking is expected to begin in early November with increased supplies available for the Thanksgiving holiday. Harvesting is slowly increasing in southern Peninsula areas. Tomato harvesting continues around Quincy while picking is getting underway in southern Peninsula localities. The cutting of okra is active in Dade County. Growers are marketing very light supplies of watermelons, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, and squash.

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

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