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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 1, 2002

Released 4:00 P.M.

December 2, 2002

**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Cool, dry conditions dominated during the week of November 24 through 30. Temperatures for the week averaged three to ten degrees below normal in the major cities. Daytime highs were in the 60s and 70s. Nighttime lows ranged from the 30s to the 60s with some northern and central Peninsula and most Panhandle areas reporting at least one low in the 20s. Rainfall ranged from none to less than a quarter inch. Most localities recorded no measurable rain for the week.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are short to adequate in most areas with a few localities reporting very short supplies. A few areas of the Panhandle reported surplus soil moisture. The dry conditions continue to dry out peanut and cotton fields in the Panhandle with producers expected to abandon some fields, especially older acreage. Peanuts are 99 percent picked. The quality of some older cotton, especially acreage defoliated prior to the wet weather, is below marketable grades and has brittle or decayed boll attachments with bolls falling off stalks as pickers move down the rows. Some cotton seed has little feed value due to deterioration. Sugarcane harvesting in the Everglades is active.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	5	1	6	10	1	5
Short	20	9	39	25	19	30
Adequate	70	80	55	64	70	59
Surplus	5	10	0	1	10	6

**VEGETABLES:** Cooler temperatures aided strawberry development with supplies increasing slowly. Most growers slowed fieldwork for the holiday observance. Producers are harvesting snap beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and very light supplies of Chinese cabbage. Quality is mostly good.

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle, the planting of small grains for winter pasture is active. Planting is behind schedule due to recent wet weather. Acreage of small grain pasture is reduced by the increased cost of small grain seed and wet weather. Hay feeding is active. Supplies of cottonseed for cattle feed are reduced due to the late cotton harvest reducing seed quality. In the north and central Peninsula areas, frost and seasonal cold halted the production of warm season grasses. Hay feeding is active. Pasture condition was hurt in some locations by drought. In the southwest, pasture condition is poor to good. Statewide, the condition of cattle is mostly good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	10	5	0	0
Fair	45	40	25	25
Good	45	50	75	75
Excellent	0	5	0	0

**CITRUS:** The first of the week was mild and dry. Friday through Sunday was cold and dry. Two cold fronts brought little, if any, rain to Florida's citrus belt. However, moisture levels during November were adequate and just about average for most areas. Groves are in very good to excellent condition depending on cultural care. There is very little new growth except on some young trees in the southern part of the State. Virtually all of the early and midseason fruit have turned color to some degree on the trees so that degreening time at the packing houses is now considerably shorter than it was a few weeks ago. All processing plants are up and running with several going around the clock. Fresh packers are going full speed trying to meet the demand for the holidays. Fund raisers are utilizing a lot of fresh navels and grapefruit.

Caretakers are busy mowing, chopping and discing all cover crops for the winter season. Some harvested groves are being hedged and topped. A few late season fresh crops are still being spot sprayed. Young tree groves in the colder northern areas are being dirt banked for freeze protection. Some heaters were fueled and placed in the coldest locations.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Nov 17	Nov 24	Dec 1
Navel oranges	172,000	229,000	235,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	3,980,000	6,002,000	5,894,000
All grapefruit	542,000	713,000	568,000
Tangerines	208,000	230,000	194,000
Tangelos	76,000	74,000	77,000

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