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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 8, 2002

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Cool and mostly dry weather prevailed during the week of December 1 through 7. Most temperatures in the major cities averaged four to seven degrees below normal. West Palm Beach and Miami temperatures averaged normal to three degrees above, respectively. Daytime highs were mostly in the 60s and 70s. Nighttime lows ranged from the 30s to 60s. Hard freezes occurred in some Panhandle and northern Peninsula areas. Rainfall varied from none to about an inch for the week. On December 8 and 9, a cold front crossing the state and a disturbance over the southeastern and extreme southern coast brought more rain totaling from a tenth to over two inches. Most localities received some rain from these systems.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are mostly short to adequate with some very short supplies reported for the southeastern coastal counties. The mostly clearer, drier weather over the Panhandle and northern Peninsula enabled producers to pick some cotton as well as dig a few peanuts. Sugarcane harvesting in the Everglades is progressing normally.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	5	10	2	10	13
Short	39	20	40	28	25	32
Adequate	60	70	50	70	64	54
Surplus	0	5	0	0	1	1

VEGETABLES: The cool and mostly dry weather in the major vegetable producing areas allowed field work to progress normally. Vegetables available include snap beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and very light supplies of Chinese cabbage and watermelons.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, small grain winter forages are emerging. Some forage was set back by heavy frosts but should recover with warmer weather. Some early planted oats were damaged by a virus. Small grain plantings need rain to promote germination. In the north, the pasture condition is poor as the warm season grass is gone and the cool season forage is too young. Small grain growth is hindered by short soil moisture in some localities. In the central area, pasture and range are in poor to fair condition due to heavy frosts and drought. Rainfall is needed for proper growth of the winter small grain forage. In the south, pasture is in poor to good condition. Statewide, cattle are in mostly good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	20	10	5	0
Fair	45	45	20	25
Good	35	45	75	75
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Most of this week was mild with a fast moving cold front moving through the State Wednesday night and Thursday morning. Low temperatures on Thursday and Friday were in the 40s, however highs Saturday and Sunday were in the upper to mid 70s. There were a few thunderstorms associated with the cold front. Growers and caretakers are irrigating where needed. Most well-cared-for groves are in very good to excellent condition. There is very little new growth except on some young trees in the southern part of the citrus belt. Harvest of early and midseason fruit is very active in all areas. Fresh fruit packers are shipping Navels, other early oranges, white and colored grapefruit, tangelos and tangerines. Most processors are working long hours to move some of the lower acid and higher ratio fruit.

Caretakers are very busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops for the winter season and for fire protection. Dead trees are being cut, pushed out and burned. Resets are still being planted in some of the warmer locations. Growers in the coldest pockets have fueled and placed heaters. A few resets have been dirt banked.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended			
Crop	Nov 24	Dec 1	Dec 8
Navel oranges	229,000	235,000	465,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	6,002,000	5,894,000	7,637,000
All grapefruit	713,000	568,000	921,000
Tangerines	230,000	194,000	345,000
Tangelos	74,000	77,000	193,000

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