WEATHER SUMMARY: Widespread showers dropped from almost an inch to nearly nine inches of rain during the week of December 8 through 14 with heavier amounts falling across the central Peninsula. Temperatures in the major cities averaged from four degrees below normal in Pensacola to five degrees above in Miami. Daytime highs were in the 50s, 60s and 70s with Miami, West Palm Beach, Immokalee and Ft. Lauderdale recording at least one high in the 80s. Lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s with Alachua, Tallahassee and Pensacola recording at least one low in the 20s, hard freezes occurring in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula and frosts dipping into some central Peninsula localities.

FIELD CROPS: The frequent showers replenished topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies which are now rated mostly adequate to surplus with some very short to short supplies existing in the Panhandle and in a few southeastern localities. Most cotton harvesting was delayed by the rains. Oldest cotton has very poor quality with most being picked to satisfy insurance requirements. Small grain planting was interrupted by the rainfall with the moisture encouraging proper germination and plant growth of recent seedings. Sugarcane harvesting was slowed slightly by the rain in the Everglades.

VEGETABLES: The frequent rainfall over the major production areas interrupted planting and picking, and lowered the quality of some crops. Growers continue to harvest snap beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and very light supplies of cabbage, strawberries and watermelons.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, early planted oats were damaged by a virus. Planting for small grains for forage continues. In the north, the pasture condition is mostly fair due to cool weather. Pasture in the central area is in poor to fair condition. In the south area, the range is in fair to good condition with pasture in some locations in poor condition due to standing water from recent heavy rains. Statewide, cattle are in good condition.

CITRUS: There were scattered but heavy rains and thunderstorms on Monday and Friday depositing large quantities of moisture on most citrus groves. Many areas reported more than their average December rainfall during this week. Some of the caretakers had to deep plow grove middles to drain water away from the tree’s roots. Growers with bedded trees, are pumping water out of the groves into main ditches. The recent heavy rains had no significant affect on the high sand hill groves. Fresh fruit packing houses have had some disruption of their supplies due to the wet conditions. Many juice plants are now limiting the deliveries from the field so that the fruit does not sit too long before processing. Several processors are running around the clock to handle their supplies.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops to help dry out the wet soils. Hedging and topping of harvested groves continues in the southern areas. Dead trees are being pushed out and burned. Some resets are being planted in the warmer locations. Spot sprays are still being applied where necessary.

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