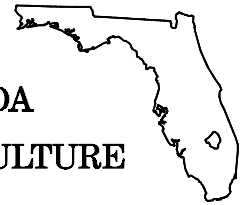




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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 22, 2002

Released 4:00 P.M.

December 23, 2002

**WEATHER SUMMARY:** A cold front crossing the State brought showers to many localities late in the week of December 15 through 21. Homestead and Okahumpka reported no rain; Jay and Ona reported about an inch. Temperatures average from one to five degrees below normal in the major cities. Daytime highs were mostly in the 60s and 70s. Nighttime lows were in the 30s, 40s and 50s with Tallahassee, Alachua, Bronson, Citra, Jay and Quincy recording at least one low in the 20s. Some northern Peninsula and Panhandle localities experienced frosts and freezes during the week.

**FIELD CROPS:** Drying conditions during most of the week lowered topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies, especially over most of the Panhandle and northern Peninsula. Moisture supplies are mostly adequate over the Panhandle and short to adequate over the northern Peninsula. Surplus supplies still exist in many central and southern Peninsula localities which received moderate to heavy rains this week. Pockets of very short to short moisture are reported for the southeastern coast. Some cotton and soybean acreage remains to be picked in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula. Recent heavy rains leached fertilizer from some small grain acreage with growth behind normal. Sugarcane harvesting continued in the Everglades.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	0	8	1	1	10
Short	4	5	33	9	4	31
Adequate	55	60	59	55	55	59
Surplus	40	35	0	35	40	0

**VEGETABLES:** Clear weather during most of the week allowed harvesting to proceed at a rapid pace with growers filling the holiday demand. Vegetables available include snap beans, cabbage, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and light supplies of celery and strawberries.

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle and north, the pasture ranged from very poor to good, with most pasture in poor to fair condition. Freezing and wet weather stopped the growth of the permanent pasture and slowed the germination and growth of the small grain winter forage. Small grains are not performing well due to fertilizer lost from heavy rains this fall. Some winter forage is still being planted. Hay feeding is active. Pasture in the central area is in poor to good condition. Heavy frost and freezing temperatures lowered the condition of

pasture. In the south, the condition of the range is fair to good. Statewide, cattle are in poor to good condition with most in good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	10	5	5	5
Fair	40	55	20	25
Good	45	40	75	70
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** Most of this week was cool and dry except for a fast-moving front Friday that moved through the State. Virtually all areas of Florida's citrus belt, except the high sand hills, are wet due to above average rainfall during December. Some of the groves on both coasts have standing water in ditch middles with no available drainage. All of the early and midseason fruit are generally well colored on the trees and there are even some Valencia oranges with beginning color break. All of the grapefruit are well colored with most showing good maturity tests. Harvest of fresh fruit was very active this week for the Christmas markets. Many of the processing plants worked around the clock to move the large quantities of field run fruit and some packing house eliminations.

Caretakers are still mowing, chopping, and discing cover crops so that they will not trap cold air should a freeze arrive. Dead trees are still being pushed out and burned. A few sprays are still being applied in the southern areas for fresh use crops. Hedging and topping continue in harvested groves. A few young trees are still being dirt banked in the coldest areas.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 8	Dec 15	Dec 22
Navel oranges	465,000	495,000	300,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	7,637,000	7,064,000	7,595,000
All grapefruit	921,000	845,000	704,000
Early tangerines	253,000	252,000	173,000
Honey tangerines	0	0	29,000
Tangelos	193,000	216,000	216,000

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