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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 16, 2003

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Most temperatures at the major stations averaged within a degree or two of normal during the week of February 9 through 15. Daytime highs were mostly in the 60s and 70s while nighttime lows were mostly in 40s, 50s and 60s. Showers during the first part of the week brought needed moisture to many areas but dry weather followed for most of the period. No rainfall was reported at Ft. Lauderdale, Homestead, Immokalee, Miami and West Palm Beach; nearly two inches were reported at Tavares and Umatilla. A strong storm system passing over the eastern part of the nation brought significant rains to some Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities at the end of the week and continued over the central and some southern Peninsula areas on February 16 and 17.

FIELD CROPS: Rains replenished soil moisture in many areas during the week but left some localities very dry. Both topsoil and subsoil moisture are rated short to mostly adequate with very short supplies reported for the southeastern coast and some Panhandle localities. Sugarcane harvesting continues in the Everglades region. Tobacco producers continue to care for transplants. Corn, soybean and cotton growers are preparing land for spring planting.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	1	1	1	0	2
Short	39	64	33	20	43	38
Adequate	60	35	61	79	57	55
Surplus	0	0	5	0	0	5

VEGETABLES: The rain missed most of the areas of production with planting and harvesting very active. Vegetables available include snap beans, carrots, cabbage, celery, cilantro, cucumbers, sweet corn, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, miscellaneous herbs, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, strawberries, tomatoes and a very light supplies of potatoes.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, the condition of pasture is poor and the condition of cattle is mostly fair. Grass growth is poor as soil is much colder than normal. Hay feeding is active, and the poor quality of hay harvested during the wet haying season contributed to poorer cattle condition. In the Big Bend area, drought is hindering grass growth. In the northern counties, hay feeding is active, the condition of pasture is poor and cattle condition is fair. Cool season forage production has some disease problems limiting production. In the central area, pasture is mostly fair, while in the southwest, range condition is mostly poor. Statewide, cattle condition ranges from poor to good, with most in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	5	0	0
Poor	50	30	10	5
Fair	40	50	55	60
Good	5	15	35	35
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Ideal weather covered most of Florida's citrus belt this week. Daytime temperatures ranged from the upper 60s at the beginning of the week to lower 80s on Saturday and Sunday. Nighttime temperatures were generally in the 40s. Light rains on Sunday started on the west coast and gradually moved across the state during the night. Most areas got minimal rainfall. The weather has been ideal for the upcoming bloom period. Trees in all areas are showing feathery new growth and pinhead bloom buds. This new foliage is very vulnerable to frost or freezing temperatures should either arrive before the spring weather. Growers are irrigating in all areas to maintain good tree condition. It has been several weeks since the last good soaking rain. Most of the fruit remaining to be picked is in very good condition. Harvesting crews are winding down on the early and midseason orange harvest as supplies are running low. Some Valencias are now being picked for both fresh and process utilization. Temple and grapefruit harvests are increasing as most of these crops are now passing maturity tests. Several juice plants have completed their early orange processing and are waiting for higher Valencia ratios.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. Hedging and topping continue in all areas. Dead trees are being cut out and burned. Prebloom fertilizing continues in most areas to promote new growth and bloom buds. New trees, mostly resets, are being planted in the warmer locations.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 2	Feb 9	Feb 16
Navel oranges	100,000	80,000	72,000
Early & Mid oranges	7,086,000	6,346,000	4,669,000
Valencia oranges	65,000	132,000	257,000
All grapefruit	1,357,000	1,779,000	1,843,000
Early tangerines	6,000	3,000	2,000
Honey tangerines	125,000	93,000	88,000
Tangelos	87,000	33,000	16,000
Temples	125,000	165,000	170,000

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