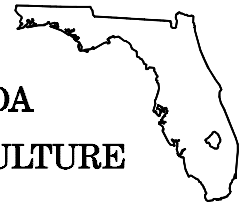




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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 23, 2003

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Significant rain fell in most areas, except for some west central and extreme southern Peninsula localities, at the beginning of the week of February 16 through 22, and again at the end. Most areas received at least an inch with Pensacola and Tampa recording nearly two inches for the week. A few Big Bend and a few other northern Peninsula localities recorded higher amounts of up to four inches for the week. Temperatures at the major stations averaged from one to seven degrees above normal except for two degrees below at Pensacola. Daytime highs were in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s with Jacksonville, Pensacola and Tallahassee reporting at least one low in the 30s.

FIELD CROPS: Statewide, soil moisture supplies are mostly adequate to short. The extreme northeastern Peninsula and some Big Bend localities reported surplus soil moisture while some southeastern coastal localities reported very short soil moisture. Panhandle and northern producers continue to prepare land for corn, soybean and cotton planting. Tobacco growers are starting to prepare land for transplanting. Sugarcane harvesting remains active in the Everglades region.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	5	1	3	10	1	4
Short	30	39	23	25	20	34
Adequate	63	60	73	64	79	61
Surplus	2	0	1	1	0	1

VEGETABLES: Mostly dry conditions in Dade County and the Immokalee area allowed planting and harvesting to proceed at a normal pace. Some field activity slowed in the East Coast region due to showers. Supplies of strawberries are increasing with growers preparing to meet the demand from the Strawberry Festival which gets underway in a few days. Vegetables available include snap beans, carrots, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, sweet corn, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, strawberries and tomatoes.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern counties, pasture condition is low due to cold temperatures and extremely low rainfall. Prescribed pasture burns were delayed due to continued drought. Pasture condition somewhat improved in many areas following rain and warmer temperatures. Oats for winter grazing are severely affected by a virus. Condition of pasture in the Big Bend area is lower due to drought. In central areas, grass grew as temperatures reached summertime levels. Haying is active. Disease in cool season forages is slowing production. In

southern areas, pasture conditions are mostly fair. Statewide, condition of cattle is mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	5	0	0
Poor	25	50	5	10
Fair	60	40	70	55
Good	10	5	25	35
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Most of this week was mild to warm with sun-filled days. There was a fast-moving cold front that passed through the state Saturday night. Needed scattered rains covered most of the citrus belt. Rainfall accumulations in the citrus regions were generally in the three quarters to an inch and a half range. This new moisture along with the current warm temperatures will help produce more new growth and pin head bloom buds. Virtually all citrus trees are showing feathery new growth. Harvest of early and midseason oranges is just about completed for this season as very few crops remain to be picked. Some growers have started picking Valencia oranges for fresh utilization and also to keep their pickers busy. Grapefruit movement is increasing for both fresh and processing. Fresh packing houses are also shipping Honey tangerines and Valencia oranges. Some processors are closed waiting for better acid to sugar ratios.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. Growers are hedging and topping harvested groves. Dead trees are being cut out and burned. Prebloom fertilizing continues in most areas to promote new growth and bloom buds. New trees are being planted in some of the larger groves with permanent irrigation. Spring herbicides are being applied in all areas. Bee hives have been placed waiting for the open citrus blooms.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 9	Feb 16	Feb 23
Navel oranges	80,000	72,000	36,000
Early & Mid oranges	6,346,000	4,669,000	3,972,000
Valencia oranges	132,000	257,000	661,000
All grapefruit	1,779,000	1,843,000	1,950,000
Early tangerines	3,000	2,000	2,000
Honey tangerines	93,000	88,000	109,000
Tangelos	33,000	16,000	9,000
Temples	165,000	170,000	116,000

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