



Florida Agricultural Statistics Service
1222 Woodward Street
Orlando, Florida 32803
407 / 648-6013

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/fl>

WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 23, 2003

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 24, 2003

**FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Storms again increased soil moisture in many Panhandle and Peninsula areas during the week of March 16 through 22 with some localized flooding reported for a few northern and central Peninsula localities. Rainfall totaled from about a third inch at Live Oak and Tallahassee to around three inches at Bradenton and West Palm Beach. Rain fell in most localities during early to mid-week. Storms at the end of the week mainly crossed over the central Peninsula. Temperatures in the major cities averaged five to nine degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s while nighttime lows were in the 60s and 70s. Several central and southern Peninsula localities recorded at least one high in the 90s and several northern Peninsula and Panhandle areas, at least one low in the 50s. Many central Peninsula and a few southern localities received soaking rains on Sunday, March 23 with Dover, Tampa and Orlando reporting over an inch falling.

FIELD CROPS: Soil moisture supplies are mostly adequate with some short supplies reported for the southeastern Peninsula and surplus supplies reported for some Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities. Drier conditions in the Panhandle allowed field preparations for corn, soybean, peanut and cotton planting. Sugarcane harvesting remains active in the Everglades.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	15	7	1	10	2
Short	4	25	46	4	15	54
Adequate	80	45	47	80	65	44
Surplus	15	15	0	15	10	0

VEGETABLES: Dry weather during the middle of the week permitted planting and picking to continue although some harvesting slowed due to the rains, especially strawberry picking in the Plant City and Dover areas. Other vegetables available include cabbage, carrots, celery, cucumbers, sweet corn, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, tomatoes and light supplies of eggplant, endive, escarole and lettuce.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern Peninsula, pasture condition was fair to good. Stock ponds' water levels rose following ample rainfall. The condition of some pastures is low due to standing water. In the central areas, pastures are greening up quickly. The condition of pasture is mostly fair. Pasture in the southwest is mostly poor to fair. The condition of the pasture is seasonally low. Statewide, cattle are mostly in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	15	10	10	10
Fair	55	70	65	45
Good	30	20	25	45
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Temperatures throughout Florida's citrus belt climbed to the 90 degree mark this week for the first time in 2003. Surface soil moisture was generally adequate the first of the week as a result of the March 15 and 16 rains. Again, Friday through Sunday, March 21-23 rains covered most citrus counties at different times. This year's bloom cycle is just about complete as most of the trees had a lot of petal drop. Only a few of the older grapefruit and tangerine types are still showing significant quantities of open bloom. Harvest of Valencia oranges is increasing for fresh and processing. Both white and colored grapefruit are being picked mostly on the lower east coast with most of the whites going to the juice plants and only about half of the colored being processed. Movement of Temples and Honey tangerines is slowing as the supplies have just about run out.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops for fire protection and prior to the arrival of harvesting crews. Growers are still pushing out and burning dead and dying trees. Resets are being planted as soon as they can be obtained from the nurseries. Postbloom nutritional sprays are being applied in all areas as soon as the trees have petal drop. Hedging and topping continue in most harvested groves.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 9	Mar 16	Mar 23
Navel oranges	6,000	1,000	1,000
Early & Mid oranges	397,000	94,000	131,000
Valencia oranges	2,560,000	3,565,000	5,642,000
All Grapefruit	2,497,000	2,098,000	2,001,000
Honey tangerines	125,000	144,000	142,000
Tangelos	2,000	2,000	1,000
Temples	103,000	61,000	36,000

To receive this report via e-mail, send message to listserv@newsbox.usda.gov with the following message: **subscribeusda-fl-crop-weather your.name** An example: **subscribe usda-fl-crop-weather John Smith**. The report will be e-mailed automatically to your e-mail address each week.

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