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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 28, 2004

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 29, 2004

FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Spotty showers occurred over some central Peninsula areas during the week of March 21 through 27 while significant rains fell over the extreme southern Peninsula. Homestead, Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and Kenansville reported a quarter to an inch and a quarter rain for the week. However, most rainfall amounts in areas receiving showers totaled less than a tenth inch with most localities recording no measurable precipitation for the week. Temperatures in the major cities averaged from three degrees below normal at Jacksonville to one degree above at West Palm Beach. Daytime highs were mostly in the 70s while nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Several northern Peninsula and Panhandle localities recorded at least one low in the 30s while West Palm Beach reported no lows below 60.

FIELD CROPS: Some Panhandle and northern Peninsula producers are irrigating dry soils to ease land preparation for corn, peanut and cotton plantings. The dry dirt is hindering some germination of earlier plantings. Recent frost caused no significant damage to ornamental and non-citrus fruit trees in Jefferson County. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies continued to be depleted due to the lack of rain in most localities. Statewide, soil moisture is rated short to mostly adequate. Holmes, Washington, Jackson, Madison, Columbia, Baker and Broward counties reported spots of very short soil moisture while Seminole and Marion counties reported a few areas of surplus soil moisture

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	5	1	1	2	0	0
Short	35	19	8	33	25	8
Adequate	59	77	80	64	72	81
Surplus	1	3	11	1	3	11

VEGETABLES: Planting and harvesting continued at a normal pace in central and southern Peninsula areas. Jefferson County growers are starting to transplant watermelons. Oldest plantings of potatoes are at full flower around Hastings. Strawberry picking, celery cutting, radish digging and the harvesting of leafy green vegetables such as escarole, endive and lettuce in southern areas are slowing seasonally as warmer temperatures arrive. Other vegetables available include snap beans, cabbage, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, potatoes, squash and tomatoes.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern areas, winter grazing is stressed from drought and freezing temperatures. In the central counties, spring weather has been very favorable for pastures. However, pasture condition in the central and southwest is mostly fair. Statewide, cattle are in mostly fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	10	5	5	10
Fair	70	65	50	50
Good	15	30	40	35
Excellent	0	0	5	5

CITRUS: Cloudy and windy weather dominated this week in the citrus belt with daytime high temperatures in the mid 80s and lows only into the upper 50s. The only rainfall was associated with a cold front that passed through the State mid-week with light, scattered showers. Rainfall was variable, with most areas receiving less than two tenths inch. Most growers are returning to frequent irrigation as trees are in open to completed bloom. Growers are reporting abundant new growth. Petal drop is complete in lower interior areas with open bloom in most others. Cultural practices are continuing, including fertilizations and hedging following harvest. Some growers are beginning post bloom spray applications. Most fresh fruit packinghouses are packing all available varieties with emphasis on export grapefruit. Varieties being packed include Valencia oranges, white and colored grapefruit, and Honey tangerines. Processing plants are receiving and processing fruit with weekly volumes of early-mid oranges declining as grapefruit and Valencia orange amounts increase.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 14	Mar 21	Mar 28
Navel oranges	4,000	2,000	2,000
Early and Mid oranges	885,000	146,000	63,000
Valencia oranges	4,918,000	6,684,000	7,762,000
Grapefruit	2,426,000	2,108,000	1,960,000
Honey tangerines	184,000	177,000	214,000
Temples	140,000	52,000	46,000

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