WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 26, 2004

WEATHER SUMMARY: A cold front passing over the State at the end of the week of December 20 through 26 brought much needed rain to most areas. Rainfall for the week in the major cities ranged from none in Homestead to over three and a half inches in Pensacola. The Panhandle and Big Bend areas received two to three inches with some coastal localities recording over four inches. Northern Peninsula localities received a half inch to two inches. Most central and southern Peninsula areas reported a half inch to over three inches with some west central localities saturated and the extreme southern Peninsula recording none or only traces for the week. Temperatures plunged below normal with the weekly average temperature two to nine degrees below normal. Daytime highs averaged in the 50s, 60s and 70s with a few southern Peninsula areas recording at least one high in the 80s. Nighttime lows averaged from the 30s to the 60s. Several Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities recorded at least one low in the 20s. Some frosts occurred in a few central Peninsula areas with several Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities reporting frost and a few hard freezes.

FIELD CROPS: Sugarcane harvesting was active in the Everglades region. Soil moisture supplies were short to mostly adequate in most areas prior to the late week rainfall. The end of week rains saturated some low lying areas and caused surplus soil moisture supplies, especially in the Panhandle and west central Peninsula. In the extreme southeastern Peninsula, soils remained dry with no significant rain falling over the area during the week.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern areas, freezing temperatures slowed the growth of small grain winter forage. Supplemental hay feeding was active in the north and central areas. In the central areas, pasture condition is poor to fair due to cold temperatures. Standing water is receding in flooded pastures. In the southwest areas, cold weather and drought limited grass growth. Statewide, the condition of cattle is mostly fair.

VEGETABLES: Some planting and harvesting slowed as the rain spread southward and growers observed the holidays. Cooler temperatures slowed the maturation of some crops but aided the development of strawberries. Vegetables and non citrus fruit marketed during the week included snap beans, cabbage, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, radishes, strawberries, squash and tomatoes. Celery harvesting is getting underway in the Lake Okeechobee area.

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