

Weather Crop Report

Week ending March 26, 2006

SCATTERED RAIN DOES LITTLE MORE THAN SETTLE DUST

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Scattered rains over some Peninsula and Panhandle areas brought minor relief to dry conditions during the week of March 20 through 26. Most central Peninsula localities received only traces of rain or recorded no measurable rain for the week with the probability for wild fire outbreaks increasing. The rain storms, especially those crossing the southern Peninsula, spawned tornadoes with some damage occurring. No rain was reported at Avalon, Brooksville, Dover, Okahumpka, and Tampa; almost two inches were received at Alachua, Immokalee and West Palm Beach. Daily temperatures at the major stations averaged from four degrees below normal at Jacksonville to one degree above at West Palm Beach. Daytime highs averaged in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows averaged in the 40s, 50s and 60s with several northern and central Peninsula and most Panhandle localities recording at least one low in the 30s. Cold temperatures brought freezes and frost to some Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities at the end of the week.

FIELD CROPS: Producers are assessing cold temperature damage to recent corn plantings with only light frosts reported for some Panhandle areas. Corn planting remained active in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula including a small acreage planted in Taylor County. Sugarcane harvesting continued to slow seasonally around Lake Okeechobee with most mills closed. Although the late week rains slightly increased topsoil moisture, dry conditions following the rain rapidly depleted supplies. Nearly all localities, statewide, need more rain. Most soil moisture is short to adequate. Washington, Okeechobee, Lee and Palm Beach counties reported spots of very short moisture.

| Moisture Rating | Topsoil | | | Subsoil | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | This week | Last week | Last year | This week | Last week | Last Year |
| | <i>Percent</i> | | | | | |
| Very short | 30 | 17 | 1 | 11 | 8 | 1 |
| Short | 43 | 45 | 4 | 45 | 42 | 5 |
| Adequate | 27 | 38 | 67 | 44 | 50 | 75 |
| Surplus | 0 | 0 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 19 |

VEGETABLES: Strong winds tossed plants and wind borne sand bruised some fruit when storms passed over southern Peninsula growing areas near the end of the week. However, no significant damage was reported. The rains washed away some pesticides but fields dried quickly after the storms and that may limit any increase in disease. Tomato transplanting for the spring crop harvest is underway around Quincy with recent cool temperatures causing no significant damage to the small plants. Tomato transplanting in the Quincy area is expected to continue through mid-April. Strawberry growers are starting to open fields to the U-Pick market as production in other states increases. Recent hot temperatures hindered berry development. Other vegetables and non-citrus fruit harvested during the week included snap beans, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, potatoes, peppers, radishes, squash, sweet corn and tomatoes.



United States
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National
Agricultural
Statistics
Service

Florida
Field
Office

Benjamin F. Klugh, Jr.
Director
407/648-6013

Florida Department
of Agriculture and
Consumer Services,
Division of Marketing
and Development

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and north, drought and near freezing temperatures have slowed grass growth. Pasture condition is poor to fair. Most of the cattle are in fair condition. Pasture condition in the Big Bend area is poor to fair, with the condition a little better at locations that received light showers. Pasture condition in the southwest is poor to good, with most in poor condition. Drought is limiting grass growth. Cattle condition is mostly good. Statewide, cattle condition ranges from poor to good with most in fair condition.

| Condition | Cattle | | Pasture | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | This week | Last week | This week | Last week |
| <i>Percent</i> | | | | |
| Very poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Poor | 10 | 5 | 35 | 10 |
| Fair | 55 | 35 | 50 | 60 |
| Good | 35 | 60 | 15 | 25 |
| Excellent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

CITRUS: Daytime temperatures were above average the beginning of the week reaching the mid 80s in all areas, and then cooling down over the weekend. Rainfall was minor in all areas except Immokalee, which had almost two inches on Wednesday. Most areas are still dry due to lack of rain for the past several weeks. Growers and caretakers are irrigating, fertilizing and applying nutritional sprays. Trees reached full bloom, with varieties progressing uniformly throughout the State. Early midseason harvest is almost over for the season, dropping off rapidly the last two weeks. Valencia harvesting has picked up significantly the last couple of weeks; however, weekly levels are not as high as last season. About nine processing plants are now open. Grapefruit harvest is still fairly strong, with the majority of both colored and white going to processing. Honey tangerine utilization is running about between 100,000 to 150,000 boxes a week being picked primarily for the fresh market, while the majority of Temples being picked are going to processing .

| ESTIMATED BOXES HARVESTED - WEEK ENDED | | | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Crop | Mar 12 | Mar 19 | Mar 26 |
| <i>In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes</i> | | | |
| Navel oranges | 11 | 6 | 2 |
| Early and Mid oranges | 2,570 | 1,132 | 365 |
| Valencia | 906 | 1,922 | 3,169 |
| Grapefruit | 1,003 | 939 | 1,060 |
| Honey Tangerines | 140 | 142 | 122 |
| Tangelos | 8 | 3 | 1 |
| Temples | 24 | 54 | 100 |

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