



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

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

# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending January 30, 2000

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**FLORIDA**  
**AGRICULTURE**



**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Scattered showers helped ease dry conditions in some localities during the week of January 23 through 29. Rainfall mostly ranged from about three quarters of an inch to about two and a half inches. Temperatures dipped to freezing levels in many areas as a cold front passed over during mid-to-late week. However, the cold temperatures were not cold enough for a long enough period to cause major damage to crops. Dade County reported frost during the early morning hours of Thursday, January 27 with crops suffering no significant damage. Temperatures at the major stations averaged five to eight degrees below normal for the week. Daytime highs were mostly in the 50s and 60s while nighttime lows were mostly in the 30s and 40s.

**FIELD CROPS:** There was no damage to field crops from freezing temperatures this past week. Topsoil moisture throughout the State is mostly short to adequate with scattered areas of very short or surplus moisture. Tobacco farmers are caring for tobacco beds. Pine tree planting is active. Sugarcane grinding and planting are active. Wild fire hazard rating continues to increase due to freezing temperatures and dry conditions.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	12	2	3	1
Short	56	45	50	51
Adequate	32	48	47	48
Surplus	0	5	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle counties, pasture condition improved, the area received good rain but the ponds and water table are still low. In the north, cool season forages were severely stunted from recent frosts and earlier dry conditions. Central counties, cool season forages were growing and frost lowered quality of pasture in many locations. In the West-Central area, cattle condition decreased due to continued grass shortage. Pastures were hurt by some frost. Grass growth stopped due to cool temperatures. In the south, ranchers fed supplemental hay. In the southwest, frost hurt condition of pasture grass. Statewide, the overall cattle condition was mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	0	0	5
Poor	30	5	10	25
Fair	55	80	65	65
Good	10	15	25	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** Wednesday night and Thursday morning, January 26-27, were the coldest temperatures recorded this season. Early Thursday morning there were recordings in all areas of the citrus belt in the upper 20s. Durations were very short followed by a warming trend. Damage was insignificant due to the limited time that temperatures were below freezing. Very little new growth was out and only those groves in the coldest

pockets showed the slightest leaf burn. The cold and rain on two or more days this week were beneficial. It supplied the needed moisture and restricted the advancement of new growth and bloom buds. Harvest was slowed but still active between the rains.

Caretakers were cutting cover crops prior to harvesting. There were a few hedgers and toppers working along with the bush hoppers which were cutting up the debris. Sprays and fertilizers were limited during the cold and rainy days this week.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Jan 17	Jan 23	Jan 30
Navel oranges	173,000	125,000	137,000
Early & Mid oranges	9,281,000	7,949,000	8,163,000
Valencia oranges	0	4,000	17,000
All grapefruit	1,591,000	1,082,000	1,437,000
Early tangerines	189,000	64,000	30,000
Honey tangerines	83,000	98,000	103,000
K-Early Citrus Fruit	3,000	6,000	3,000
Tangelos	197,000	166,000	158,000
Temples	85,000	64,000	62,000

**VEGETABLES:** Cold winds burned the leaves of some crops with some fruit damaged by blowing sand. However, plants are expected to recover with no significant damage to production anticipated. Major vegetables harvested during the week include tomatoes, peppers, endive, escarole, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, pickles, lettuce, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, and eggplant.

**SNAP BEANS:** Dade--Crop condition is rated very good. Planting continues. Producers continue to replant acreage completely harvested. Picking is active with good quality available. Yield is good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Cold winds caused some wind burn on leaves. Planting continues at a steady pace. Harvesting is active with good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is fair to mostly good. Young plants show leaf damage from the light frost with plants expected to recover. West Central--Producers are preparing land for spring crop planting. Everglades--The cold caused some light leaf burn with no major loss expected.

**CABBAGE:** West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is gaining momentum. Fruit quality is fair to good. Size is variable. Hastings, North Central--Transplanting is active. Growth and development are normal. The crop is in good condition. Heads are smaller than normal in some areas. Harvest is gaining momentum. There was no damage from the freezing weather.

**CELERY:** Everglades--Harvesting continues. Yield is good. The cold caused no damage.

**SWEET CORN:** Dade--Crop condition is very good. Planting is finished. Picking is active with volume increasing seasonally. Producers are hauling the crop to other areas for marketing. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Cold temperatures slowed plant growth with some leaves burned. However, plants are expected to recover. Oldest plants are tasseling and silking. Everglades--A portion of the west side of some of the oldest fields

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

was severely damaged by the cold. Young fields suffered no damage. Planting continues. Winter crop harvesting is expected to begin in February. Southwest--Spring crop planting started.

**CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market:** Southwest--The crop is in poor to fair condition. Planting and picking are steady. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Picking of a very limited acreage is active. Quality is good. Volume is low. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Producers used freeze covers and straw to protect the crop from the cold temperatures. Planting is active. Harvesting is virtually done.

**PICKLES:** Dade--Planting of spring crop acreage is slow.

**EGGPLANT:** East Coast--Cold winds caused light leaf burn on younger plants with plants expected to recover. Growth and development slowed. Planting of a limited acreage is active. Cutting of regular and specialty varieties continues. Quality and color are good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting of a very limited acreage continues. Picking is steady with good quality available. Dade--The crop is in good condition. Strong winds tossed plants with some fruit scarred by blowing sand. However, the crop is expected to recover. Harvesting continues with good quality and volume available. West Central--Planting is expected to begin over the next five to seven days.

**ENDIVE/ESCAROLE:** Everglades--Harvesting continues. Some leaves were burned by the cold with recovery expected.

**LETTUCE:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is active. The cold caused minor leaf burn with no significant damage expected.

**OKRA:** Dade--The season is over.

**PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting and picking are steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Wet, cold conditions slowed field activity. The cold winds caused some leaf burn with no significant damage expected. The cold temperatures slowed plant development. Harvesting of a limited volume of green Bells continued with crown picks yielding good quality and sizes. Picking of a light volume of specialty varieties continues with good quality available. Laying of plastic and transplanting slowed due to the inclement weather. Dade--Picking of a limited volume is active. Quality is good. West Central--Planting of spring crop acreage started.

**POTATOES:** Dade--Potatoes are looking very good. Planting is complete. Harvest should start the last of February. Irrigation is needed in some fields. Spraying is active and fields are free of disease. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Southwest--Planting is complete. The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are starting harvest. Hastings--Planting is active. The crop is in good condition. No damage to the potato crop from the freezing temperatures this past week.

**RADISHES:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting continues to gain momentum. Quality is mostly good. The cold singed the tops of some plants with no major loss expected.

**SQUASH:** Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting and harvesting are steady. Quality is good. Dade--Crop condition is good. Strong winds blew plants early in the week with some fruit scarred by wind-borne sand. Planting of a limited acreage is active. Harvesting is active with a good volume available. Quality is good. Growers continue to irrigate as needed. East Coast--The cold temperatures slowed plant development and caused some foliage to burn with no significant damage expected. Oldest plants are blooming and setting fruit with fruit gaining size. West Central--Spring crop planting started.

**STRAWBERRIES:** Plant City, Dover, Lithia--The cold temperatures continue to slow berry maturation. Growers ran overhead sprinklers to protect plants and immature berries from freeze damage. Harvesting continues. Quality is mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is steady with fair to good quality available. Sizes are good. Color is fair to good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting continues with good quality available. Volume is good. Cold temperatures are increasing the sweetness.

**TOMATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Cooler temperatures are slowing plant growth and fruit sizing. Cold winds during mid-to-late week caused some leaf burn with no significant damage expected. Planting is slowing seasonally. Harvesting of greens is steady with good quality and sizes available. Picking of vine ripens and pin hooking are very active. East Coast--Rain and cold temperatures slowed field activity. The cold temperatures caused some foliage damage with plants expected to recover. Harvesting continues with growers making the first and second picks. Quality and yield are improving. Laying of plastic and transplanting are active. Dade--Crop condition is good. The cold temperatures caused no significant damage to the crop. Harvesting of greens slowed due to the low market with sizes running 5x5 to 5x6. Quality is very good. Volume is below normal. Growers are spraying, staking, tying, and irrigating as needed. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair. Planting slowed due to the threat of cold weather. Wind and frost damaged a limited amount of plants with growers resetting some rows.

**CHERRY TOMATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting and harvesting are steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Transplanting is active with some producers done.

**PLUM TOMATOES:** Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is steady. Picking of good quality fruit continues. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Planting is increasing seasonally.

**WATERMELONS:** West Central, Southwest--Planting started.

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