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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 5, 2000

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Warm temperatures and mostly dry weather persisted during the week of February 27 through March 4. Temperatures at the major stations averaged three to six degrees above normal. Daytime highs were mostly in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. Tallahassee recorded at least one low of 39 degrees. Scattered showers brought from traces to over an inch of rain with many localities recording no rain for the week.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is mostly short with scattered areas of very short or adequate moisture. Growers are making preparations to plant spring crops. Field corn planting is starting in the Panhandle. Tobacco farmers are caring for tobacco beds. There is some disease in the tobacco beds. Sugarcane grinding is winding down with mills starting to close. The wild fire index is high and is increasing.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	6	17	8	12
Short	76	76	69	79
Adequate	18	7	23	9
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, the condition of pasture and range was mostly poor. Drought has reduced pasture condition in the Panhandle, north, and central counties. In the southwest, the condition of cattle is fair to good, and pasture condition is fair. Ranchers are burning old growth in pastures. Statewide, cattle condition is mostly fair to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	10	5	5	0
Poor	15	55	10	5
Fair	70	40	70	90
Good	5	0	15	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: All areas continue to be very dry. Rain is badly needed. Growers and caretakers are irrigating around the clock to maintain good tree condition. Some non-irrigated groves have trees showing leaf curl and some afternoon wilt. However, those well-cared-for irrigated trees are pushing out new growth and have bloom buds varying from pin head size to open bloom. Some growers have shocked their trees into bloom by irrigating following a prolong dryness. Harvest of early and midseason oranges is winding down as supplies are very low in many parts of the citrus belt. Valencia harvest is active for fresh fruit sales with the eliminations going to the juice plants. Grove-run grapefruit are being picked for the processors. Temple and Honey tangerine harvest continues strong in most areas.

Caretakers are cutting cover crops prior to harvest and for fire protection. Hedging, topping and chopping up of dead limbs is reported in all areas. Burn permits continue to be limited due to extreme dry conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 20	Feb 27	Mar 5
Navel oranges	84,000	67,000	17,000
Early & Mid oranges	7,182,000	8,451,000	6,573,000
Valencia oranges	188,000	227,000	347,000
All grapefruit	1,934,000	1,983,000	1,911,000
Early tangerines	19,000	84,000	3,000
Honey tangerines	119,000	125,000	139,000
Tangelos	42,000	66,000	15,000
Temples	158,000	126,000	106,000

VEGETABLES: Watermelon planting is becoming more active in northern Peninsula localities. Major vegetables harvested during the week include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, endive, escarole, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, lettuce, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, and eggplant.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Young fields are in very good condition with irrigation very active. Planting is nearly finished. Harvesting is active with a good supply available. Quality and yield are good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting and harvesting continue at a steady pace. Quality is good. East Coast--Crop condition is rated good. Warmer temperatures are helping plant growth and bean development. Hand picks are yielding a light supply. Quality and color are good. Everglades--The crop is in very good condition. Picking is expected to start soon. West Central--The crop is in good condition. Planting continues at a mostly steady pace.

CABBAGE: West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality is fair to good. Size is mostly medium with some large. Color is good. Hastings, North Central--Growth and development are normal. The crop is in good condition. Head size and quality are good. Harvest is steady. Dade--Cabbage quality and yield are good. Fields are being cut on schedule. Heads are sizing well.

CELERY: Everglades--Harvesting is active. Yield and quality are excellent.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Harvesting is active. Quality and yield are good. Good supplies are available for the rest of the season. Workers continue to irrigate as needed. Everglades--The crop is in very good condition. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Most of the younger acreage is tasseling and silking. Ear development is good. Pulling is increasing with crates averaging 48 to 52 ears each. Quality is good with yellow, white, and bi-color available. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Planting remains steady.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop is fair. Planting and harvesting are steady. Growth and development are normal. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--Cucumbers are being picked with good quality and average yield. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is gaining momentum. Growth and development are normal. East Coast--Crop condition is good at all stages of development. Initial harvest was this week, with mostly good quality and color. Older fields are forming runners, blooming, and setting fruit. Planting continues with good germination. Thinning of young plants is active.

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

PICKLES: Dade--Planting of a small acreage is active. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is steady. Growth and development are normal. North Central--Planting of spring crop is underway.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Cutting of a light volume of regular and specialty types is active. Quality, color, and sizes are good. Growers are mowing back some of the oldest plants to produce a second crop. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is finished. Cutting is steady with fair to good quality available. Dade--Crop condition is fair. Growers are cutting down some of the oldest plants to make a second crop with re-growth good. Picking remains active with fair quality available. Yield is good. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Plant growth and fruit development are normal.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is very active. Yield and quality are good.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting is active. Quality is good. East Coast--Recent transplants are in good condition. Laying of plastic and planting continue. First picks of green Bells are yielding good quality and volume. Sizes are mostly large. Picking of red and specialty varieties is producing a light volume. Workers are cleaning acreage completely picked. Dade--Harvesting of a small volume is active. Quality is fair. Yield is normal. Irrigation continues. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is winding down with some growers finished.

POTATOES: Dade--Young acreage is in very good condition. Digging is active with good quality available. Yield is good. Sizes are better than expected. The killing of plants prior to harvest is on schedule. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. Hastings--Crop condition is good. Planting continues. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Digging is expected to begin in about a month.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Crop condition is rated excellent. Harvesting continues. Quality is mostly good to excellent.

SQUASH: Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Planting of acreage to be harvested for the local market is

active. Picking of good quality continues. Supplies are good. Producers are irrigating as needed. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Recent seedings are germinating well. Picking of zucchini and yellow varieties remains active. Quality and color are good. Workers are clearing acreage completely harvested. West Central--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is winding down with some growers finished.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Lithia--Picking continues. Quality is variable ranging fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is mostly steady but starting to slow seasonally. Quality is fair to good. Color is mostly good. Dade--Cool nighttime temperatures are helping berry development. U-Pic harvesting remains active. Supplies are good.

TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Cool nights are slowing some plant growth. Fruit setting and fruit sizing are good. Planting is finished. Picking is steady. Quality, sizes, and yield are good. Some growers are packing vine ripens in the field. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Warmer temperatures are aiding plant growth and fruit development. Laying of plastic and transplanting continue. First, second, and some third picks are active. First picks are yielding very good quality and sizes. Some third picks are not being made. Dade--Crop is in good condition. Fruit setting is good and sizing is very good. Picking continues with the improved market helping to increase activity. First and second picks are yielding a good supply of 5x6 and 6x6 sizes. Yield and quality are good. Pinhooking remains very active. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated good to very good. Fruit setting is good. Planting is winding down. Harvesting is expected to begin in about four to five weeks. Quincy--Transplanting is expected to start within the next two weeks.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Transplanting is finished. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Transplanting is virtually finished. Picking is expected to start in two to three weeks.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is rated fair to good. Transplanting is completed. Harvesting remains steady with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down.

WATERMELONS: West Central--Condition is fair to good. Planting is slowing seasonally. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting continues at a steady pace. Citrus County--Planting is active.

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