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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 12, 2000

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Dry conditions continued during the week of March 5 through 11. Most rainfall amounts ranged from none at most stations to traces. West Palm Beach recorded about two-thirds inch for the week. A cold front passing over the State on March 11 and 12 brought light showers to some localities with most amounts totaling a half inch or less. The continued dry conditions are increasing the number of brush fires with drought conditions existing in several northern Peninsula counties. Temperatures for the week averaged two to five degrees above normal at the major stations. Most highs were in the 70s and 80s. Low temperatures were mostly in the 40s, 50s, and 60s with some western Panhandle and northern localities recording at least one low in the 30s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short. Growers are making preparations to plant spring crops. Field corn planting is gaining momentum. Tobacco farmers are caring for tobacco beds. Sugarcane grinding is winding down with mills starting to close. The wild fire index is high and increasing.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	17	21	12	7
Short	76	79	79	88
Adequate	7	0	9	5
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Pastures and ranges are in poor to fair condition due to extremely dry conditions throughout the State. In the Panhandle, there is limited forage availability due to critically dry soil conditions. In the north, small grain forage is in fair condition. In the central counties, pasture is in poor condition. There is a hay shortage in some areas. Permanent pasture is greening up with the warmer weather. In the west-central area, grass is not growing due to very short moisture conditions. Brush fires are active. In the southwest, ranchers are burning and mowing permanent pasture. They are moving cattle from pasture to pasture as grass gets ready. Statewide the condition of cattle is poor to fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	55	40	5	20
Fair	40	55	90	75
Good	0	5	5	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: This was another hot and mostly dry week. There were a few light showers associated with a cold front that passed through the citrus belt Saturday. Rainfall amounts ranged up to half an inch. Caretakers and growers were irrigating to maintain good tree condition during the current blooming period. Trees of all ages are showing various stages of bloom from pin head buds to open flowers. There is an

abundance of new growth on most well-cared-for trees. Harvest of early and midseason oranges continues to slow down as most of these crops have been picked. Valencia harvest is increasing for both fresh and process use. Grapefruit movement is very active with most of the fruit coming from the lower east coast. Temple and Honey tangerines continue active in all areas.

Caretakers are busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvest and for fire protection. Hedging and topping continue with the burning of the debris where permits are available. Spring herbiciding is underway in many areas.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 27	Mar 5	Mar 12
Navel oranges	72,000	17,000	58,000
Early & Mid oranges	8,145,000	6,573,000	5,677,000
Valencia oranges	237,000	347,000	1,063,000
All grapefruit	2,270,000	1,911,000	2,040,000
Early tangerines	3,000	3,000	2,000
Honey tangerines	123,000	139,000	160,000
Tangelos	39,000	15,000	24,000
Temples	176,000	106,000	139,000

VEGETABLES: Tomato planting is underway in the Quincy area. Bean harvesting is starting around Belle Glade. 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--The crop is in very good condition. Young fields are making good stands. Planting is virtually done. Picking continues with good supplies available. Quality is good. Workers are irrigating as needed. Southwest--Condition remains fair to good. Planting is steady. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Young acreage shows good plant growth and blooming with pin beans forming. Hand harvesting is active with good quality and color available. Volume is light. Everglades--Harvesting is getting underway. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is slowing seasonally.

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 variable. 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 harvest is steady with good quality and average yields.

CELERY: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Picking remains active with a good supply available. Quality and yield are good. Everglades--Crop condition is very good. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Pulling of yellow, white, and bi-color varieties continues. Ear quality is good. Yield is mostly good. Workers are cleaning acreage completely picked. Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is finished.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are

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

normal. Harvesting is steady to light. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--A few cucumbers are being picked. The quality is good and the yield is average. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. East Coast--Crop conditions are mostly good. Mid-growth plants are forming runners, blooming with fruit setting. Germination is good in recently seeded fields with overhead irrigation being used to ensure good moisture. Harvest is active with new fields coming into production. Fruit of good quality and color are available in all sizes. Planting continues for spring.

PICKLES: Dade--Harvest of pickles is about ready to start. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. North Central--Planting of spring crop is underway.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Planting is active. Germination of recent seeding is good with overhead irrigation providing adequate moisture. Harvesting continues with good quality and color available for all sizes. Volume is light for both regular and specialty varieties. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is done. Harvesting is slow. Dade--The crop is in good condition. Plants mowed to make a second crop are starting to bloom. Harvesting is active with good quality available. Yield is fair. Supply is good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting continues with good quality available.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting remains active.

PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is finished. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Young plant growth is good. Transplanting is starting to slow seasonally. First picks are yielding excellent quality and large sizes. Limb picks are providing good quality with variable sizes available. Workers are cleaning acreage completely harvested. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Planting is virtually done.

POTATOES: Dade--Crop condition is rated very good. Growers are killing foliage on schedule. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Yield is good with a good supply of all sizes available. Southwest--Crop condition is rated good. Digging is steady with good quality available. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting of reds and creamers is active. Quality is fair to good. Digging of chippers is expected to begin within the next two to three weeks. Hastings--The crop is in good condition.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Digging remains active.

SQUASH: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting continues to slow seasonally. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. Dade--Crop condition is good. Young fields are making good stands. Planting is virtually done. Harvesting is active. Quality and yield are good. East Coast--Crop condition is rated good. Youngest fields are starting to set fruit. Harvesting of zucchini and yellow types is providing a light volume of good quality and color. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Planting is virtually finished. Harvesting is starting with fair to good quality available. Sizes and color are good.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Lithia--Harvesting is active. Quality is fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is slowing seasonally with warmer temperatures affecting fruit development for some varieties. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. Color is good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting continues with ample supplies available. Quality and yield are good.

TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition remains fair to good. Fruit set is good. Plant growth and fruit sizing are slow. Planting is finished. Harvesting of mature greens is slow due to a low market. Picking of vine ripens is very active. Fruit quality, size, and yield are good. East Coast--Condition is good. Planting is slowing seasonally. First picks are providing very good quality and sizes. Second and third picks are producing good quality with all sizes available. Dade--Crop condition is good. Plant growth and fruit sizing are good. Harvesting is active. Quality and yield are good. Volume varies according to price. A good supply of all sizes is available. Growers are getting a good packout. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is good. Planting is near the end. Plant growth and fruit development are good. Staking is slowing. Workers are making first and second ties as needed. Quincy--Planting started. Warm weather is boosting plant growth.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is finished. Picking is steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is virtually done. Harvesting is expected to begin within the next seven to fourteen days.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is done. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is nearing the end.

WATERMELONS: Southwest, West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Sumter County--Oldest fields are forming runners. Jackson County--Planting is active.

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