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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 19, 2000

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 20, 2000

WEATHER SUMMARY: Storms at the end of the week of March 12 through 18 helped ease dry soil conditions throughout the State. Rain amounts from these storms ranged from traces to over two inches through Sunday, March 19 with some localities around Homestead and Palmetto-Ruskin receiving three to six inches, respectively. Temperatures at the major stations averaged normal to five degrees above. Daytime highs were mostly in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. Pensacola, Tallahassee and Jacksonville each recorded at least one low in the 30s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. 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 most of the mills closed.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	21	37	7	36
Short	79	60	88	57
Adequate	0	3	5	7
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, range and pasture are in poor to fair condition, unchanged from last week. In the central and Panhandle counties, extended dry weather is beginning to slow growth of spring permanent pastures. Supplemental feeding of hay is active. Grazing crops have not fully recovered from previous dry period. In the southwest, some pastures are showing signs of drying up. Statewide, the condition of the cattle is mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	5	0	0
Poor	40	40	20	15
Fair	55	55	75	65
Good	5	0	5	20
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Limited rains fell in most areas of the citrus belt. A fast moving cold front that came through the State on Thursday with scattered showers reversed itself and covered most counties the second time on Sunday and Sunday night. Rainfall accumulations were generally less than one inch except in the lower east coast where totals were in the one to two inch levels. Up to the weekend, growers and caretakers were irrigating around the clock to keep their trees in good condition for the current bloom period. Most groves are in the various stages of open bloom. Many trees have already had petal drop, while some are just showing swelling buds. Some of the Navels and Valencia trees are literally covered with open bloom flowers. On an industry wide basis, this years bloom is much more uniform and prolific than last year's bloom which lasted through

May. Harvest of early and mid oranges is just about over as supplies are running out. Harvesting crews are moving to the Valencias and grapefruit. Fresh fruit packing houses are shipping Temples and Honey tangerines.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and disking cover crops. Post bloom nutritional sprays have started in some groves. Hedging and topping are active in all areas. There are only a few burn permits being issued due to the dry conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested weeks ended		
	Mar 5	Mar 12	Mar 19
Navel oranges	21,000	58,000	5,000
Early & Mid oranges	7,161,000	5,677,000	2,321,000
Valencia oranges	483,000	1,063,000	1,891,000
All grapefruit	2,068,000	2,040,000	2,510,000
Early tangerines	3,000	2,000	1,000
Honey tangerines	161,000	160,000	144,000
Tangelos	22,000	24,000	5,000
Temples	183,000	139,000	149,000

VEGETABLES: Sweet corn picking is active in the Belle Glade area. 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--Warm temperatures are speeding the growth of young fields. Harvesting is active. Yield and quality are good. Growers continue to irrigate as needed. Everglades--Picking is increasing. Quality and yield are good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting remains steady. Harvesting is active with good quality available. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Hand picks are producing good quality and color. Volume is light. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is virtually finished.

CABBAGE: West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality is fair to good. Size is variable. 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 active. Dade--Cabbage is looking good with normal yield and good quality.

CELERY: Everglades--Harvesting is active. Yield is very good.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Harvesting continues with good quality available. Yield and volume are good. Everglades--Plant growth and ear development are good. Picking is active. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is good. Workers are mowing acreage completely picked. Southwest--Plant growth and ear development are good.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are normal. Harvesting is steady to light. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--A few cucumbers are being picked with good quality and average yield. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. East Coast--Crop

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

conditions are mostly good. Recently seeded fields are mostly good with good germination. Overhead irrigation is being used. Planting continues for the spring crop. Harvest is active with good quality and color. The crop is making good growth and development.

PICKLES: Dade--Pickles are doing well. Harvest of pickles is light at this time. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. North Central--Planting of the spring crop is underway.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--Crop condition is good. Cutting of a light volume is active. Quality and color are good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Cutting is steady with fair to good quality available. Dade--Crop condition is rated good. Harvesting continues. Quality and yield are good. Supplies are fair. West Central--Condition is fair to good.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is active. Quality is good.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting Romaine, head, and leaf types continues. Quality is good to very good.

PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--The crop is progressing well. Transplanting is winding down. Harvesting of green Bells continues with good quality and large sizes available from first picks. Other picks are yielding good quality and variable sizes. Picking of a light volume of red Bells and specialty varieties continues. Growers are removing strings and stakes from acreage completely picked and cleaning fields. West Central--Crop condition remains fair to good. Sumter County--Plant growth is excellent. Workers are irrigating as needed.

POTATOES: Dade--Digging continues with good quality available. Yield and size are good with a good volume available through April. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting continues at a steady pace with good quality available. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Chipper harvesting is expected to start over the next seven to fourteen days. Hastings--Condition remains good.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is very active. Quality is good with good supplies available.

SQUASH: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting is active with fair to good quality

available. Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. Picking continues with good quality available. Yield is good with good supplies available through April. East Coast--Young plant growth and fruit development are good. Picking of yellow and zucchini types continues. Volume is light. Quality, color, and sizes are good. Workers are cleaning acreage completely harvested. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is slowly increasing. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are fair. Color is good.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Lithia--Picking continues. Quality is fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is slowing. Quality, sizes, and color are good. Dade--Cool nighttime temperatures are aiding fruit development. U-Pic harvesting is active. Supplies are good.

TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Transplanting is complete. Cool nighttime temperatures are slowing some plant growth and fruit sizing. Fruit set is good. Picking is steady. Quality is good with a good supply of all sizes available. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Young plants are showing abundant blooms. Fruit set and sizing are good. Transplanting is nearly done. Harvesting is active. First picks are yielding excellent quality and good sizes. Dade--The crop remains in good condition. Plant growth and fruit development are good. Picking is increasing due to a better market. First and second picks are yielding a good volume of 5x6 and 6x6 sizes. Quality is good. Packout is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in good condition. Plant growth is good. Fruit sizing is variable. Transplanting is done. Picking is expected to begin in about four to five weeks. Quincy--Recent rainfall is aiding plant growth. Transplanting is active.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is active. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition remains fair to good. Planting is virtually done.

WATERMELONS: Southwest, West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is slowing seasonally. Sumter County--Plant growth is excellent. Growers are irrigating as needed.

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