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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending April 9, 2000

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Cold fronts crossing the Peninsula brought cooler weather to most areas and significant rainfall to some localities during the week of April 2 through 8. Temperatures at the major stations averaged normal to three degrees below. Most daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Most nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. Alachua, Apopka, Hastings, Jacksonville, Okahumpka, Ona, Pensacola, Pierson, Tallahassee and Umatilla recorded at least one low in the 30s. Rainfall over most Peninsula localities ranged from none to a quarter inch. However, some parts of the western Panhandle and northern Peninsula received significant rains which helped ease drought conditions.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula is short to adequate. Topsoil moisture in central and southern Peninsula is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Growers are making preparations to plant spring crops. Field corn planting is active. Farmers are starting to plant cotton and peanuts. Tobacco farmers are actively transplanting tobacco. Sugarcane grinding is virtually complete. The wild fire index has increased in some areas due to freezing temperatures in the north and lack of rainfall.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	8	21	10	28
Short	73	68	70	58
Adequate	19	10	20	13
Surplus	0	1	0	1

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, poor pasture condition is pulling down the condition of cattle. In the Panhandle, light frost and continued dry weather reduced pasture condition. Many stock ponds are dry in the north. There is good early growth of permanent pasture grass. In the northern counties, pasture and range was mostly in poor condition. Rainfall was barely enough to keep down the fire danger. Small grain forage condition declining seasonally, but permanent pasture condition improved following light showers. In the central area, pastures greened-up but mole crickets were active. In the southwest, pasture condition was improving in most areas.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	5	0	5
Poor	15	25	5	10
Fair	80	65	85	75
Good	5	5	10	10
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Dry weather continues in most areas. There were a few showers during the week on the lower east and west coasts. The rainfall amounts were very limited and scattered. Growers and caretakers are irrigating around the clock to maintain good tree condition during the current drought. This year's bloom

cycle is nearly complete. Most groves have had petal drop, while some are still in open bloom. The recent warm weather has produced an abundance of new growth on trees of all ages. Harvest of Valencia oranges is increasing and very active in all areas. Movement of grapefruit for both fresh and process used is most active on the lower east coast. Picking of Honey tangerines and Temples is slowing as supplies are running low.

Caretakers are cutting cover crops and applying spring herbicides. Hedging and topping have been reported in most areas. Post bloom nutritional sprays continue. Burn permits are still limited due to the dry conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 26	Apr 2	Apr 9
Navel oranges	2,000	2,000	4,000
Early & Mid oranges	916,000	296,000	31,000
Valencia oranges	3,744,000	5,133,000	6,869,000
All grapefruit	2,951,000	3,027,000	2,637,000
Early tangerines	22,000	21,000	1,000
Honey tangerines	177,000	132,000	149,000
Tangelos	8,000	0	0
Temples	147,000	148,000	53,000

VEGETABLES: Watermelon harvesting started around Immokalee with a very light volume available. Major vegetables being harvested include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, endive, escarole, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, lettuce, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, eggplant, and watermelon.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Growers are irrigating young acreage as needed. Picking continues. Quality is good. Good supplies are available for the next three weeks. Everglades--Harvesting is active with mostly good quality available. Supplies are increasing seasonally. Southwest--Crop condition remains fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Picking is steady with good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Recent seedings germinated well. Hand picks are producing good quality and color. Supplies are light. West Central--Crop condition is fair.

CABBAGE: West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality and color are 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 active. Dade--Cabbage season is about over with a few acres to cut this week with good quality.

CELERY: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is mostly good. Dade--Picking continues. Quality and yield are good. Volume is expected to be good for another week, then will start declining seasonally. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking is steady with good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Harvesting of a limited acreage for local sales is active. Producers are mowing and discing acreage completely picked.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--Cukes are being

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

picked with good quality and yield. A small supply is available. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Growth and development are good. Growth was slowed slightly by cooler temperatures midweek. Harvest is active from all picks. New fields coming into production are providing fruit of good quality, size and color. Fields that are completely picked over are being mowed down and cleaned up.

PICKLES: Dade--Pickles are being picked with good yield and quality. There is a good volume this week as new fields come into production. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. North Central--Planting of the spring crop is underway. The crop is in good condition.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Cool temperatures are slowing some young plant growth. Harvesting of a light volume of all types is active. Regular types have mostly good quality and color. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Dade--The crop is in fair condition. Quality is fair. Yield is normal. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting continues.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is active.

OKRA: Dade--Crop condition is good. Harvesting continues with a small volume available. Quality is good.

PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition remains fair to good. Picking of fair to good quality is steady. West Central--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is underway. Quality is fair to good. Yield is above average. East Coast--Cooler temperatures are slowing young plant growth. First picks of green Bells are yielding good quality and sizes. Later picks of green Bells are producing variable sizes and mostly good quality. Harvesting of a light volume of red and yellow Bells remains active. Picking of specialty types continues with a very light volume available. Producers continue to clear acreage completely picked.

POTATOES: Dade--Crop condition is very good. Harvesting is on schedule with good quality and sizes available. Volume is expected to remain good for the next three weeks. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Digging remains steady. Quality is good. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is gaining momentum. Quality is fair to good. Yield is above average. Hastings--Crop condition is variable depending on the amount of rain received recently. Heavy showers severely damaged some acreage, especially in Flagler County. Losses are currently being assessed.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Digging continues at a steady pace. Quality is mostly good.

SQUASH: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. The youngest plants are making good stands. Harvesting is active with good quality available. Volume is down but is expected to increase over the next two weeks as more acreage reaches maturity. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Picking continues with a light volume available. Quality and color are good with fancy and medium sizes available. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is increasing seasonally. Quality is fair to good. Color is good. Sizes are variable. Sumter County--Picking is active.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Lithia--Harvesting continues to slow seasonally. Quality remains mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--U-Pic harvesting remains active. Dade--U-Pic harvesting is slowing seasonally. Volume remains good.

TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Cool temperatures are slowing some plant growth and fruit sizing. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. Grade-out is about normal. Yield is good. Supplies are decreasing seasonally. East Coast--The crop remains in mostly good condition. Some plants nearing maturity that suffered earlier wind damage are showing a lighter set of fruit on the lower hands. Growers are making first through fourth picks. Quality is mostly good with variable sizes available. Dade--Crop condition is rated good. Some plants are showing effects of recent hot, dry weather with irrigation needed in all fields. Fruit setting and sizing are good. Picking is active with a good volume of good quality fruit available. Packout is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Cooler temperatures are slowing plant development. Winds are drying some blooms. Fruit setting is nearly done. Fruit sizing is fair to good. Harvesting is expected to begin within the next two weeks. Quincy--Intermittent rainfall and strong winds are affecting development of some plants.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is underway with fair to good quality available. Color is good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is expected to start within seven to ten days.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting started. Quality is good. Volume is light as the season gets underway. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition.

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