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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending April 16, 2000

Released 4:00 P.M.

April 17, 2000

**FLORIDA
 AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Cool temperatures persisted during the week of April 7 through 15. Temperatures averaged one to six degrees below normal at the major stations. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s while nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. Alachua, Hastings, Jacksonville, Ocklawaha, Okahumpka, Pensacola, Pierson, Tallahassee, and Umatilla recorded at least one low in the 30s. Low pressure systems crossing over the southeastern States brought much needed moisture to many Florida localities. Rainfall for the week ranged from about a third inch at Tampa to almost three and a half inches at West Palm Beach with almost all localities recording measurable amounts.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Frost in some areas of the Panhandle and northern Peninsula early in the week burned corn, hayfields, and pastures. 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 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	21	33	28	18
Short	68	63	58	71
Adequate	10	4	13	11
Surplus	1	0	1	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, pastures were in poor to fair condition, and cattle condition was mostly fair. In the Panhandle, pastures were in poor to fair condition due to very dry soil and cool temperatures. Cattle condition was fair to good. A cold snap burned some Bermuda hayfields and pastures. Northern Peninsular counties, small grain forage season is about done. Frosts nipped the warm season forage. In the central region, the condition of the range is poor. The condition of the pasture grass was poor due to the dry soil condition. In the southwest, there were some bad brush fires. Ranchers were feeding supplemental hay.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	5	0	5	0
Poor	25	50	10	15
Fair	65	45	75	80
Good	5	5	10	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Irrigation was widely used until Friday morning when welcomed rains arrived and continued through Sunday, April 16. Some areas received scattered showers and others had hard, soaking rains. Most of the bloom cycle is over although some poorly cared for trees are still in bloom. The harvest of early and midseason oranges is finally over and movement of

Valencias is very active. Grapefruit harvest for the fresh market is declining seasonally but direct to processors movement is heavy. Harvest of temples and Honey tangerines is slow as supplies are running out.

Caretakers are busy cutting cover crops, post bloom spraying, spring herbiciding, and the hedging and topping of trees. Some burning of dead limbs and grove trash is underway.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Apr 2	Apr 9	Apr 16
Navel oranges	10,000	4,000	1,000
Early & Mid oranges	185,000	31,000	8,000
Valencia oranges	5,906,000	6,869,000	6,751,000
All grapefruit	2,942,000	2,637,000	2,547,000
Honey tangerines	155,000	149,000	145,000
Temples	125,000	57,000	13,000

VEGETABLES: Tomato, eggplant, and blueberry picking started in the West Central area. Strawberry picking is nearly done in the Plant City area. Major vegetables being harvested include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, endive, escarole, blueberries, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, lettuce, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, eggplant, and watermelon.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. Harvesting remains active with good quality available. Yield is good. Workers are irrigating young fields as needed. Everglades--Picking continues. Quality is good. West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Picking started. Quality is fair. Color is fair to good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting remains active. Quality is good. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Hand harvesting is yielding a light supply. Quality and color are good.

BLUEBERRIES: West Central--Harvesting is underway. Volume is light.

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 winding down. Dade--Cabbage harvest is complete.

CELERY: Everglades--Harvesting is winding down.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--The crop is in very good condition. Picking is active. Quality and yield are good. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. Dade--Harvesting is slowing seasonally with some growers to finish within the next seven days. Quality and yield are good. East Coast--Young acreage is in good condition. Workers continue to clean up fields completely picked. Zellwood--Plant growth and development are good. Picking is expected to begin by early May.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvesting is steady. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--Cukes are being picked with good quality and yield. Small supply is available. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and

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

development are normal. Harvest is starting. Fruit quality is fair. Size of fruit is small to medium. Color is fair to good. East Coast--Crop condition is good at all stages of growth and development. The young planting growth is good. Older fields are forming runners, blooming and setting fruit, and fruit is starting to size up. New fields are being picked and yielding fruit of good quality and color. Super selects and selects are being picked. Fields completely picked over are being cleaned up.

PICKLES: Dade--Pickle harvest is active. Supply will be limited. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is starting with fruit of fair to good quality. Fruit color is good. North Central--Harvest is getting ready to start. The crop is in good condition.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--Young plants are growing well. Mid-growth plants are blooming and setting fruit. Cutting of regular and Italian types continues. Quality and color are mostly good. Some scarred fruit is not meeting grade. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Cutting is getting underway. Quality is fair to good with small and medium sizes available. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Harvesting of a limited supply is active. Quality is good.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is winding down with supplies available for the next two to three weeks.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is slowing seasonally.

OKRA: Dade--Harvesting is increasing. Quality and yield are good. Supplies are increasing seasonally. Workers are irrigating as needed.

PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting continues with fair to good quality available. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is slowly increasing. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. Color is good. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. First picks of green Bells continue to produce good quality and yield, and large sizes. Other picks of green Bells are yielding variable sizes. Harvesting of red Bells and specialty types are producing a light volume. Rain at mid-week delayed some field activity. Workers are mowing and clearing acreage completely harvested.

POTATOES: Dade--Digging continues with good quality available. Yield is very good with good supplies available for the next two weeks. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting continues with good quality available. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Digging is increasing seasonally. Quality and color are good. Yield is

improving. Hastings--Most acreage is in good condition. Rainfall on April 15 and 16 helped plant growth and development. Killing of plants and digging is expected to start within the next two weeks.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting remains active. Quality is good.

SQUASH: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting continues with fair to good quality available. Dade--Picking is active. Supplies are increasing seasonally with good volume available over the next two weeks. Yield outlook is good for younger acreage. East Coast--Zucchini is in mostly good condition. Harvesting of a light volume is active. Quality and color are good with fancy and medium sizes available. West Central--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Picking continues to increase as more acreage reaches maturity. Quality and color are good. Sizes are variable.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Lithia--Picking is nearing the end with most growers finished. Palmetto-Ruskin--U-Pic harvesting is slowing seasonally. Dade--U-Pic harvesting is active with good quality available. Yield is good.

TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Fruit setting is improving. Picking started with a limited volume available. Fruit quality is poor to fair. Sizes are variable. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Young plant growth slowed due to cool, wet weather. Harvesting continues with first picks producing good quality and sizes. Mid-week rainfall delayed some field activity. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. The cool night temperatures are slowing plant growth and fruit sizing. Picking is steady with good quality and sizes available. Volume is decreasing seasonally. Dade--The crop is in fair condition. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality and sizes are good. Yield is fair. Good supplies are available for the next two weeks. Quincy--Rain and wind continue to affect plant and fruit development.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality remains fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is gaining momentum. Quality is fair to good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Picking is expected to begin over the next seven days.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Cutting is gaining momentum. Quality is good. Volume is light. West Central--Crop condition remains fair to good. Jefferson County--Oldest plants are forming runners. Washington County--Cold temperatures damaged some vines.

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