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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending May 14, 2000

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FLORIDA AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Warmer temperatures arrived during the week of May 7 through 13. Temperatures at the major stations averaged one to four degrees above normal. Daytime highs were mostly in the 80s and 90s while nighttime lows were mostly in the 60s and 70s. Thunderstorms brought from traces to almost two inches of rain to many localities about mid-week.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Most farmers are delaying cotton and peanut planting due to dry soil. In some areas cotton has below average stands. Irrigated tobacco is in good condition. The corn crop is beginning to show drought stress. Small grain harvest is starting. There have been a number of wild fires in the center of the Peninsula due to the lack of rainfall. Growers reported 39 percent of the peanuts are planted, compared to 23 percent last week and 49 percent last year.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	55	60	23	47
Short	42	39	69	49
Adequate	3	1	8	4
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Pasture condition in most of the State was poor due to prolonged drought. In the Panhandle and central counties, ranchers in many locations are feeding hay to supplement the poor pasture. In the west central counties, cattle condition is going down and stock ponds are drying up. In the southern counties, ranchers are worried that poor cattle condition (due to poor pastures) will reduce the pregnancy rate for next year's calves. Remnants of winter pastures are gone and grass is short in permanent pasture. Statewide, cattle are in poor to fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	0	20	0	0
Poor	45	70	10	45
Fair	50	10	80	50
Good	5	0	10	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There were a few counties that had brief but hard rains this week. Some coastal counties and parts of the upper interior had up to two inches of rain. Some of that moisture soaked in and a lot ran off into the ditches. More rain is badly needed. Some of the west coast counties are very dry with non-irrigated groves in full afternoon wilt. Irrigation continues in all areas to help keep trees from going into stress and dropping foliage. Peak Valencia harvest continues in all areas. Grapefruit and Honey tangerine movement is slowing as fewer crops remain to be picked. Temple harvest is over except for a few later bloom crops.

Caretakers are cutting cover crops and herbiciding. Sprays and fertilizers are being applied in most areas. Hedging and topping continue along with limited burning of grove debris.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Apr 30	May 7	May 14
Valencia oranges	8,575,000	8,154,000	7,517,000
All grapefruit	1,641,000	1,579,000	1,429,000
Honey tangerines	105,000	94,000	66,000

VEGETABLES: Growers are harvesting to meet the Memorial Day demand. The dry, hot weather continues to stress plant growth. Major vegetables available include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, cucumbers, okra, squash, sweet corn, eggplant, and watermelon.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Harvesting is nearing the end with fair supplies available for another week. Quality is good. Workers continue to disc acreage completely picked and plant cover crops. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality is good. West Central--U-Pic harvesting is active. East Coast--Picking by hand of a small acreage continues. Quality and color are mostly good.

BLUEBERRIES: North, West Central--Picking is active. Quality is good.

CABBAGE: West Central, Hastings, North Central--Harvest is virtually complete. Dade--Cabbage harvest is complete.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Picking continues with ample supplies available. Quality is good. Zellwood--Harvesting continues. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Ear development is mostly good. Harvesting for local sales continues as acreage reaches maturity. Workers are cleaning winter crop acreage completely picked. Dade, Southwest--Picking is done.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Season is almost complete with only a small supply for the local market. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality and color are fair to good. Size of fruit is variable. East Coast--Crop is in fair to good condition. New blocks are being opened up. First picks are providing good quality, super selects and selects. Fruit of good color available. Harvesting was active with numerous picks from same planting. In most fields yields are good. Clean up from older plantings is active.

PICKLES: Dade--A small supply of pickles is available for local sale only. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit is of fair to good quality. Size is normal. The yield is fair to good. North Central--Harvest is active. The crop is in good condition. Yield and quality are good.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Cutting of regular and Italian types is producing mostly good quality and color. Blocks completely harvested are being cleaned. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is slowing seasonally with some acreage opened to the U-Pic market. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Cutting remains steady. Quality is fair to good. Dade--Hot temperatures are stressing plants. Harvesting of a small supply continues. Quality is fair.

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

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is nearly finished.

OKRA: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Harvesting is active with good supplies available for the next two months. Quality is good. Workers are irrigating as needed.

PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition is rated fair to good. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is fair to good. West Central--Crop condition is good. Harvesting is mostly steady. Quality and color are good. Sizes are variable. East Coast--Most of the spring acreage is in good condition. Some plants show stress from the dry weather. First picks of green Bells are providing mostly good quality and good sizes. Harvesting of green Bell limb fruit is active. Picking of red and yellow Bells and specialty varieties is yielding light supplies. Workers continue to clean up acreage completely harvested.

POTATOES: Hastings--Harvesting remained active but rain delayed some digging. Yields are very good. West Central, Southwest, Dade--Harvesting is finished.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is mostly good.

SQUASH: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality is fair to good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is slowing seasonally with some acreage opened to the U-Pic market. Quality and color are good. Sizes are normal. Dade--Picking of a very small acreage is active. Quality is good. Yield is low. East Coast--Crop condition is fair. Picking of a very light supply continues. Quality, size, and color are mostly good. Producers are cleaning acreage completely harvested.

STRAWBERRIES: Dade--U-Pic harvesting is virtually done with only a very small acreage still open. Plant City, Dover, Lithia, Palmetto-Ruskin--Harvesting is finished.

TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair. Dry, hot conditions are straining plant growth. Harvesting is active with first picks yielding good quality and 5x6 sizes. Second picks are providing good quality with sizes running 6x6 to 6x7. East Coast--Condition is fair to good. Plant growth is stressed due to the hot, dry weather. First and second picks are providing good quality and sizes. Growers are not making most third picks. Southwest--Crop condition is fair with plants declining due to the hot, dry weather. Picking is slow with a light supply available. Quality is fair. Packout is above normal due to fruit being sun-burned and blistered. Dade--Harvesting is virtually completed with some pinhooking still active. Quincy--Picking is expected to start after Memorial Day.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is starting to slow. Quality is good. Sizes are normal. Yield is fair to good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is good. Harvesting is mostly steady. Quality is good. Yield is fair to good.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is mostly steady. Quality, color and sizes are good. North--Light harvesting is expected to start within the next seven to ten days.

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