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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending May 21, 2000

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Warm weather continued during the week of May 14 through 20. Temperatures at the major stations averaged normal to three degrees above. Daytime highs were mostly in the 80s and 90s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 60s and 70s with several northern and central localities recording at least one low in the 50s. Scattered showers brought from traces to about an inch of rain to some areas with many stations recording no measurable rain for the week.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Farmers are delaying cotton and peanut planting due to dry soil. In some areas cotton is up but not to a full stand. Irrigated tobacco is in good condition. The sugarcane crop is being irrigated and is in good condition. Even irrigated corn is beginning to show drought stress because of the heat and drying winds. Small grain harvest is progressing at a rapid pace. There have been a number of wild fires on the Peninsula due to the lack of rainfall. Growers reported 61 percent of the peanuts planted.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	60	47	47	42
Short	39	52	49	32
Adequate	1	1	4	26
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, pasture condition decreased as drought continued, with only isolated locations getting rain and showers. In the northern and central part of the State, cattle condition continues to fall off due to lack of grass. Water holes are drying up and pastures are really going down. Grass is very dry and brittle. Brush fires are active. Cattlemen in the Panhandle, north and central counties are feeding hay. However, in the southwest, cattle are in fair to good condition, with pasture and range in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	20	30	0	5
Poor	70	55	45	15
Fair	10	15	50	75
Good	0	0	5	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There was very little if any rain this week. There were a few isolated and scattered rains in the southern and coastal areas. Rain is desperately needed. Ponds, canals and water reservoirs are drying up. Growers and caretakers are irrigating, where possible, around the clock to help prevent trees from going into wilt. Those non-irrigated groves on the high sand hills have trees that are wilting and losing leaves. Some stressed trees are dropping an abnormal amount of next year's fruit. Harvesting crews are rapidly moving the Valencia crop to the processors. Grapefruit harvest is near the end as supplies are running out. Very few Honey Tangerines remain to be picked.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops

for fire protection. Herbiciding continues along with hedging and topping. Growers are fertilizing and spraying both this year's and next year's crops.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	May 7	May 14	May 21
Valencia oranges	8,447,000	7,517,000	6,584,000
All grapefruit	1,622,000	1,429,000	1,158,000
Honey tangerines	92,000	66,000	44,000

VEGETABLES: Watermelon harvesting is getting underway in northern areas. Producers continue harvesting other crops to meet the holiday demand. Major vegetables available include potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, cucumbers, okra, squash, sweet corn, eggplant, and watermelons.

SNAP BEANS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is nearing the end. Quality is good. Dade--Picking is virtually finished with some small acreage being harvested for local sales. West Central--The season is over. East Coast--Harvesting of a small supply is active. Quality is mostly good.

BLUEBERRIES: North, West Central--Harvesting continues. Quality is good.

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

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Harvesting is active with good supplies available for the holiday. Quality is good. Zellwood--Picking is very active. Quality is very good. East Coast--Harvesting of a small volume for local sales is active. Ear quality is mostly good. Dade, Southwest--Harvesting is finished.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvesting is winding down. Fruit quality is fair to good. Dade--Harvest is complete. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality is fair to good. Size of fruit is variable. Fruit color is fair. North Central--Harvest is active. There is a good supply of fruit for fresh market. East coast--Crop remains in fair condition. Fruit is setting and sizing. Harvest fruit quality and color are mostly good. New blocks provide good quality and size. Harvest volume is moderate as older fields are picked over and cleaned up.

PICKLES: Dade--Harvest is complete. West Central--Crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit is of fair to good quality. Size is normal. North Central--Harvest is active. The crop is in good condition. Yield and quality are good.

EGGPLANT: 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 in fair to good condition. Growers continue harvesting of a light volume of regular types and a very light supply of Italian types. Workers continue to clean up acreage completely harvested. West Central--Condition is fair. Cutting is nearing the end. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. Dade--Cutting of a small acreage continues. Quality is fair. Supplies are very limited. Growers are discing acreage completely harvested.

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

LETTUCE: Everglades--The season is finished.

OKRA: Dade--Crop condition is rated very good. Rainfall early in the week aided crop development. Harvesting continues with good quality and supplies available.

PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting remains steady. Quality is fair to good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Hot temperatures are stressing plants. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. The dry, hot weather is affecting plant growth. Growers are making first and second picks of green Bells. Quality is mostly good. Sizes are variable. Workers are removing strings, stakes and plastic from acreage completely harvested.

POTATOES: Hastings, other North--Digging continues.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting of a small acreage is active as the season nears the end. Quality is mostly good.

SQUASH: North--Harvesting is active. Quality is mostly good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady with fair to good quality available. West Central--The crop is in good condition. Picking is winding down with some acreage open to the U-Pic market. Quality and color are good. Sizes are normal. Dade--Harvesting of a small acreage for local sales is active. Quality is fair. Yield is low. Producers are clearing acreage completely picked and planting cover crops. East Coast--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting of a light supply of zucchini and yellow types continues. Workers continue to clean up acreage completely picked.

STRAWBERRIES: Dade--The season is finished.

TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting is slowing with some picks not yet made due to low prices. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable, running 6x7 to 6x6 with first pick sizes mostly 5x6. Pinhooking is very active. Picking is expected to end around mid-June. East Coast--The hot, dry weather is accelerating fruit maturation. Growers are making first, second, and third picks. Southwest--The season is virtually finished with some picks not made due to the low market. Dade--Picking is nearly completed with only a small acreage being pinhooked. Quincy--Growers are preparing for the start of harvesting which is expected to begin within the next two weeks.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is nearing the end. Quality, sizes, and color are fair to good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting remains steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is rated fair to good with heat and dry weather affecting plant growth. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality is good.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Cutting remains steady. Quality is good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is steady. Quality and color are good. Sizes are running medium to large. Harvesting is expected to continue through mid-June. North--Cutting is getting underway.

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