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WEATHER & CROP NEWS



Week ending December 10, 2000

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December 11, 2000

WEATHER SUMMARY: Cool temperatures continued during the first part of the week of December 3 through 9 but warmed up in central and southern areas by the end of the week. Lows in northern and central localities were mostly in the 30s and 40s, respectively, while southern area lows averaged in the 50s and 60s. Alachua, Hastings, Okahumpka, Pierson, and Umatilla recorded at least one low in the 20s. Frost and hard freezes occurred in some central and most northern and western Panhandle areas. Highs at the major stations were mostly in the 60s and 70s. Most stations received no rain for the week with drought conditions continuing in several localities. A tropical disturbance brought significant rainfall around Homestead and to parts of the Everglades region on Sunday, December 10 with some fields flooded. Homestead reported getting fourteen inches in eastern parts and two to four inches in western parts. Some southeastern coastal localities received about three and a half inches. Rain from this disturbance also helped to replenish much needed soil moisture supplies in many southeastern and east central localities on Monday, December 11.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Small grains for winter grazing is delayed because of late planting due to drought. Cotton harvest is winding down. Sugarcane is in good condition with harvesting active.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	7	15	19	20
Short	77	83	69	64
Adequate	16	2	12	16
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, pasture condition is poor to fair due to drought and freezing temperatures. Freezing temperatures hurt winter forage and killed summer range in the Panhandle and northern counties. Early planted winter forage is also in poor condition because of drought. Later planted forage is just coming up. Supplemental feeding of hay to cattle has begun. In the west central counties, armyworms are damaging pasture grass. Cooler temperatures have grass growth at a standstill. In the southwest, some ranchers started mowing of over-growth. Statewide, cattle and calves are mostly in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	5	0	0
Poor	25	30	5	5
Fair	65	65	75	90
Good	5	0	20	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: This was another dry week in the books for Florida's citrus belt. There were a few scattered showers in the southern citrus producing counties on Sunday, December 10. Much more rain is needed. Surface moisture is in short supply in all areas. Growers and caretakers are running their irrigation systems around the clock to keep their trees in good condition. The cold temperatures the first part of

this week were very beneficial to most trees in that new growth has been limited. However, temperatures were near the 80 degree mark in many groves on Saturday and Sunday. The bright sunny days have greatly helped the coloring and advancing maturity of most early and midseason fruit. Fresh fruit packers are working long hours to meet the holiday shipping demands. Most juice plants have their yards full of fruit waiting to be processed.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. Most sprays are being limited to late season fresh crops. Dead tree removal continues along with the burning of general grove debris. There is limited resetting of older blocks in the southern counties.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Nov 26	Dec 3	Dec 10
Navel oranges	160,000	388,000	616,000
Early & Mid oranges			
Including Ambersweet	3,884,000	6,307,000	7,924,000
All grapefruit	546,000	707,000	748,000
Tangerines	169,000	231,000	273,000
K-Early Citrus Fruit	0	2,000	1,000
Tangelos	50,000	127,000	175,000

VEGETABLES: Harvesting is very active to meet the holiday demand. Vegetables available include snap beans, cucumbers, pickles, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, peppers, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, radishes, tomatoes and watermelons.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Crop condition is very good. Planting and harvesting were active until the weekend rain. Quality is good. The heavy rain on December 10 caused no significant damage to the crop. West Central--Crop condition is rated poor to fair. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality and color are fair. Sizes are variable. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting remains steady. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Hand picks are producing good quality and color. Volume is very light. Recent plantings are germinating well.

CABBAGE: Dade--Planting continues on schedule. Cabbage fields look good. Heading has started in early fields. West Central--Crop condition is good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is starting. Hastings--Growers are actively planting cabbage. Crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are making preparations to start harvest. Zellwood--Harvest is getting underway. The crop is in good condition.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Picking is gaining momentum as more growers begin harvesting. Quality and yield are good. Planting is active. Zellwood--Harvesting is finishing up. Ear size is good. Dade--Crop condition is good. Oldest plants are tasseling. Planting is slowing seasonally. Growers irrigated as needed until the weekend rain. The heavy rain on December 10 caused no significant damage to the crop. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Planting continues. Recent plantings are germinating well. Workers are cultivating and spraying as needed.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality is fair to good. Fruit size is variable. Color is fair. East Coast--Crop conditions are generally good. Growth and development slowed somewhat due to the cool temperatures. Harvesting is providing good quality and color. Growers are picking

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

super select and select sizes. Plants are blooming and setting fruit. Southwest--Planting is steady. Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are slow to normal. Harvest is steady and fruit quality and sizes are good.

PICKLES: West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality is fair. Zellwood--Harvest is active. Quality and yield are good. Dade--Pickles look good with light harvest active. Quality is good. Yields are expected to increase next week.

EGGPLANT: Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Planting of a small acreage is slow. Harvesting is steady with fair to good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Recent cool temperatures slowed some plant growth and development. Harvesting continues with good quality and color available. Producers are marketing super selects, selects and cartons. Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Planting is nearly done. Harvesting is getting underway with growers expecting good yields. The heavy rain on December 10 caused no significant damage to the crop. West Central--Cutting is nearing the end.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting continues. Volume is increasing seasonally.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting of Romaine is active while harvesting of head types is increasing. Quality is good. Supplies of leaf types are light.

OKRA: Dade--Young acreage is in fair condition. Cool weather continues to affect quality. Harvesting is slow.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting remains steady. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Planting is active. Harvesting of green and red types remains active with very good quality available. Workers are starting to clear acreage completely picked. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is mostly steady. Quality is fair to good. Color is good.

HOT PEPPERS: East Coast--Condition is good. Picking remains active. Quality is good. Southwest--Condition is rated fair to good. Planting continues at a steady pace. Harvesting is steady with good quality available.

POTATOES: Dade--Heavy rainfall on Sunday, December 10 flooded most acreage with growers hoping to replant. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Planting continues. West Central--The crop is in good condition. Planting is steady.

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

SQUASH: Dade--Planting and harvesting continued until the weekend rain. Quality is very good. Workers sprayed and irrigated as needed until the heavy rains arrived. The heavy rain on December 10 caused no significant damage to the crop. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting remains steady. Picking is steady with good quality available. East Coast--Condition is good. Picking continues as blocks reach maturity. Workers are clearing acreage completely harvested. West Central--Harvesting is nearing the end.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City--Recent cool temperatures caused no significant damage. Harvesting is increasing seasonally. Quality is mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated good. Harvesting is increasing with fair to good quality available. Sizes are fair to good. Dade--The crop is in very good condition. U-Pic harvesting is expected to start over the next ten days.

TOMATOES: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Planting remains active. Harvesting is getting underway. The heavy rain on December 10 caused no significant damage to the crop. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Harvesting continues at a steady pace with good quality available. First picks are yielding mostly 5x6 and 6x6 sizes. Second and third picks are producing mostly 6x6 sizes. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting is starting to slow seasonally. Fruit quality is good. Sizes are variable. Growers are preparing land for spring crop planting which is expected to start in three to four weeks. East Coast--Crop condition is good. First picks are producing good quality and sizes.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is rated fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality, sizes and color are good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting and harvesting are steady. Quality is good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is starting to slow seasonally. Quality is fair to good. Southwest--Condition is rated fair to good. Planting is active. Harvesting is steady with good quality available.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair. Picking is winding down. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting is slowing with some growers finished. Quality is fair with small and medium sizes available.

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