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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 24, 2000

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December 26, 2000

**FLORIDA  
AGRICULTURE**



**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Cold weather dipped in some southern Peninsula localities during the week of December 17 through 23 with frost and hard freezes reported in some central areas. Lows were recorded in the 30s in the Immokalee area on at least one day. Temperatures at the major stations averaged four to thirteen degrees below normal. Lows averaged in the 20s at Jacksonville, Pensacola and Tallahassee; in the 30s at Tampa, Orlando and Daytona Beach; and in the 50s at Miami and West Palm Beach. Alachua reported a low of 17 to 18 degrees on at least one day. Tallahassee recorded at least one low at 19. Highs were mostly in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Rainfall ranged from traces to about a half inch for the week. Winds up to 30 miles per hours buffeted crops in the Homestead and Immokalee areas as a cold front passed near the end of the week.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle is mostly adequate. Topsoil moisture throughout the Peninsula is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Freezing temperatures nipped back some of the oats and rye for temporary pasture but they should recover. In the Panhandle, rains have helped small grains and cool season forages. The Peninsula winter pastures are under drought stress. Sugarcane harvest is making good progress and is in good condition.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	20	25	18	23
Short	66	58	80	69
Adequate	14	17	2	8
Surplus	0	0	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** Statewide, range is mostly in fair to poor condition. Growers are feeding hay because of poor forage growth due to the cool temperatures and drought. Freezing temperatures in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula nipped back some of the oats and rye for temporary pasture but they usually respond quite well when days warm up. Statewide, cattle are mostly in fair to poor condition. The cold temperatures have also been very stressful on livestock in the northern areas of the State.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	0	15	0	0
Poor	15	55	5	15
Fair	85	25	95	75
Good	0	5	0	10
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** Freezing temperatures the night of December 19 and the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> in the northern citrus producing counties produced some slush ice in some of the fruit remaining to be picked. A limited amount of tender new leaves in the coldest locations may drop due to the freezing temperatures and frost in some of the areas. It is too early to tell if there will be any wood damage to the trees in the colder locations. There were a few scattered showers on Tuesday and in East Coast areas later in the week. However, much more rain is needed. Many lakes, ponds, and reservoirs are at or near all-time low levels. Irrigation is being used, where and when available, to keep trees in good condition and for firming and sizing the fruit. Fresh fruit packing houses were working long hours at the first of the week to

meet the Christmas demands. Most of the larger processing plants have been running around the clock.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping, and discing cover crops prior to harvest and for fire protection. There is a little hedging and topping being done in the southern counties. Burn permits have been issued on a limited basis due to current dry conditions. Large growers are still planting resets in older groves. A few clean-up sprays are being applied on late season fruit. Dead tree removal continues in all areas.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 10	Dec 17	Dec 25
Navel oranges	616,000	413,000	227,000
Early & Mid oranges			
Including Ambersweet	7,888,000	7,074,000	7,343,000
All grapefruit	748,000	903,000	982,000
Tangerines	273,000	266,000	242,000
Tangelos	175,000	148,000	92,000

**VEGETABLES:** Strawberry growers ran overhead irrigation to save plants and immature fruit from cold damage about mid-week. The strong winds tossed plants in some southern localities with recovery expected. Vegetables available include snap beans, cucumbers, pickles, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, peppers, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, radishes, and tomatoes.

**SNAP BEANS:** Dade--The crop is in good condition with only minor damage from the strong winds. Planting continues. Picking of a good volume is active. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Some plants show wind burn damage with recovery expected. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Strong winds and cool temperatures slowed plant growth and bean development. Hand picks are providing good quality and color. West Central--Condition remains poor to fair as the season nears the end. U-Pic harvesting continues.

**CABBAGE:** Dade--Condition is good. Harvest is expected to start by the first of January. Planting should be complete by January 1. West Central--The crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is starting. Hastings--Growers are planting. The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are harvesting. Zellwood--Harvest is active. The crop is in good condition.

**SWEET CORN:** Everglades--Harvesting continues. Quality is mostly good. Dade--The crop is in good condition. Acreage affected by recent heavy rains is recovering well. Picking is expected to begin by the new year. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Most fields contain very good stands. The recent plantings continue to germinate well. Cultivation and spraying are active. Zellwood--Picking is virtually finished.

**CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market:** West Central--Crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality is fair. Fruit size is variable. East Coast--Crop condition is fair to good. Cooler temperatures, strong winds slowed growth and fruit development by mid-week. Limited acreage was covered for protection from strong winds and cool temperatures. Harvest was moderate on super-selects, selects, and cartons. Quality and color are good. Southwest--Planting is slow to light. Crop condition is fair. Growth and development are slow. Harvest is steady and fruit quality and sizes are fair to good.

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

**PICKLES:** West Central--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. Pickles harvested have good quality and yield.

**EGGPLANT:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Cutting remains steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Condition is good. Cooler temperatures are slowing plant growth. Fruit sizing is good. Harvesting continues with fancy, medium and some choice grades available. Quality and color are good with an adequate supply of regular types. The volume of Italian and other specialty varieties is lighter. Tying is active. Dade--The crop is in good condition. The strong winds scarred some fruit and blew plants with recovery expected. West Central--Harvesting is finished.

**ENDIVE/ESCAROLE:** Everglades--Harvesting is active. Growers are discarding any leaves damaged by strong winds prior to marketing.

**LETTUCE:** Everglades--Harvesting continues. Strong winds caused some minor damage with recovery expected.

**OKRA:** Dade--Harvesting of a low volume continues. Gradeout is high.

**BELL PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Picking is steady with good quality available. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Strong winds and cool temperatures slowed plant growth. Transplanting slowed to avoid predicted cold temperatures. Picking also slowed for the holiday observance with good quality available. Spraying is active. West Central--Crop condition is fair. Harvesting is starting to slow seasonally. Quality is fair to good. Color is good. Sizes are variable.

**HOT PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting and harvesting are steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Harvesting continues.

**POTATOES:** Dade--Land is too wet to replant acreage destroyed by the recent heavy rain. The drier acreage contains discolored potatoes which are not gaining proper size. Most growers are hoping insurance will cover losses. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Planting is steady. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is starting to slow seasonally.

**RADISHES:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is steady. Quality is good.

**SQUASH:** Dade--Strong winds tossed vines and scarred some fruit. The plants are recovering and are in good condition. Planting continues. Picking is active with gradeout above normal. Volume is good. Southwest--Strong winds lowered condition which is rated fair to good. Planting and picking are steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Cool temperatures slowed plant growth and fruit development. Harvesting is active with fancy and medium grades of good quality and color available. West Central--U-Pic harvesting is active.

**STRAWBERRIES:** Plant City, Floral City--Growers provided overhead irrigation to save plants and immature fruit from freeze damage about mid-week. Some fruit losses occurred due to water damage. Harvesting is expected to resume over the next few days in the Plant City area. Volume is low but is expected to increase seasonally over the next month. Floral City producers sustained significant losses from the cold and water damage due to irrigating with recovery expected to take two to three weeks. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Frost caused no significant damage to the crop. Picking continues with good quality, color and sizes available. Dade--U-Pic harvesting started. Volume is light.

**TOMATOES:** Dade--Crop condition is rated good. Strong winds tossed vines with recovery expected. Fruit set and sizing are good. Laying of plastic and transplanting are active with most beds made. Picking of a small acreage continues with volume to increase in January. Quality and yield are good. Sizes are running large to extra large. Southwest--The crop remains in fair to good condition. The cold temperatures slowed plant growth and fruit sizing but caused no significant damage to the crop. Transplanting is slowing seasonally. Picking is steady. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Strong winds and cool temperatures slowed plant growth. Transplanting is active but was delayed slightly by the threat of cold weather. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Sizes are mostly large. Palmetto-Ruskin--Growers finished harvesting with the cold temperatures bringing most activity to a halt. Fruit quality was fair to good.

**CHERRY TOMATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting remains steady. Picking continues at a steady pace with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. The cold temperatures brought most harvesting to a halt.

**PLUM TOMATOES:** Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Picking is nearing the end with some growers finished. Quality is fair to good. Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting continues. Picking remains steady. Quality is good.

**WATERMELONS:** Southwest, Palmetto-Ruskin--Picking is over.

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