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WEATHER & CROP NEWS



Week ending January 7, 2001

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Freezing temperatures dipped down in the southern Peninsula during the week of December 31 through January 6. The lowest readings came on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and late in the week. Homestead readings ranged from 31 to 36. Immokalee reported at least one low at 27; Hastings, 21 to 22; Dover, 27; Ft. Pierce, 30; and Bradenton, 26 to 29. The major stations recorded most of the lowest temperatures in the 20s except for 30 at Tampa, 36 at West Palm Beach and 39 at Miami. Lows at the major stations averaged in the 20s for northern and western Panhandle areas, in the 30s over central localities, and in the 40s for southern Peninsula areas. High temperatures were mostly in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. Traces of rain were reported by a few southern Peninsula localities. Elsewhere, no measurable rain fell with drought conditions continuing into the new year.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Freezing temperatures in the north are slowing the growth of temporary pasture and small grains. Peninsula winter pastures are under drought stress. Freezing temperatures and drought are increasing the wild fire hazard throughout the State. Sugarcane harvest is making good progress. Sugarcane was damaged by freezing temperatures on December 31 and January 1. The leaves and growing points were killed on most of the standing crop. New crop plantings were killed back to the ground but they will recover. The extent of the damage is being assessed.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	19	55	27	35
Short	61	33	64	55
Adequate	20	12	9	10
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, pasture condition is mostly poor due to the drought and freezes. The cattle condition is mostly fair. In the Panhandle, recent cold snaps stopped small grain winter forage growth. Ranchers are feeding supplements and hay. The fire danger increased. Hay supplies are short in some locations. Cattle condition is fair. In the north counties, pasture and cattle conditions are fair. In the central area, cattle condition is fair and pasture is poor due to extreme drought and frost. Streams and stock ponds are extremely low. In the west central counties, permanent pasture is brown with growth stopped by below freezing temperatures. Small grain forage was coming on but the condition is poor due to drought. Cattle condition is poor to fair. In the southwest, pasture condition is poor due to freezing temperatures and drought. Cattle condition statewide is poor to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	10	35	0	0
Poor	55	55	5	15
Fair	35	5	85	75
Good	0	5	10	10
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: A large mass of cold air covered virtually all of Florida's citrus belt from the last of December to January 5. Early morning temperatures on several days ranged from the low 20s in the coldest locations to the upper 20s along the east coast. It was also very cold in the interior citrus growing counties. There were varying degrees of slush ice found in some of the fruit in the colder groves. It is too early to determine any relative degree of fruit damage. It appears that tree and wood damage will be minimal due to the quasi-dormancy of most trees. Tender new growth will suffer some damage in the coldest areas. Also, there will be some defoliation in the historically coldest locations. There was very little if any rain this week in Florida's citrus belt. Rain is still badly needed in all areas. Irrigation was used extensively this week in all areas. Harvesting crews moved rapidly into the coldest locations picking the early and midseason fruit that showed some slush ice. Most all of this fruit will be used in processing. These harvesting practices will minimize fruit loss. Fresh fruit packing houses are being cautious in selecting fruit for fresh shipments.

Caretakers were very active this week running their irrigation equipment for cold protection.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended

Crop	Dec 24	Dec 31	Jan 7
Navel oranges	227,000	69,000	102,000
Early & Mid oranges			
Including Ambersweet	7,347,000	6,123,000	7,783,000
All grapefruit	982,000	545,000	801,000
Early Tangerines	242,000	124,000	96,000
Honey Tangerines	5,000	17,000	40,000
Tangelos	92,000	101,000	102,000
Temples	0	1,000	26,000

VEGETABLES: The cold temperatures caused frost and freeze damage to some southern Peninsula acreage. Freeze covers and irrigation limited damage to a lot of the acreage. Vegetables available include snap beans, tomatoes, squash, eggplant, sweet corn, peppers, and cucumbers.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Cold temperatures burned the tops of some plants with young acreage expected to recover. Some of the older acreage may recover but yield will be below normal for the season. Early reports show about a 30 percent loss of yield. Picking of decreased supplies continues. East Coast--The very cool temperatures continue to slow growth. Cold winds burned some leaves with recovery expected. Hand harvesting is yielding a very light volume. Southwest--The crop is in poor condition due to cold temperature damage. Actual losses are currently being assessed.

CABBAGE: Dade--Cabbage harvest started with a small supply available. Quality and yield are good. Young fields are growing well. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is starting. Hastings--Crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are actively harvesting cabbage. Zellwood--Harvest is active. The crop is in good condition.

SWEET CORN: Dade--The crop came through the cold without too much damage. Harvesting increased with good quality available. East Coast--Growth slowed due to the cool weather. Plants in low lying areas received some frost damage. Other acreage was only minimally

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

affected by the cold. Actual loss is currently being assessed. Everglades--Cold temperatures caused some major losses with actual damage currently being evaluated.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Harvest is complete for the fall season. East Coast--Crop covers were used on a limited acreage for weather protection, this acreage in mostly good shape. Older fields were picked over prior to cold temperatures. Recent plantings have not germinated. Older plantings are being cleaned up. Southwest--Crop condition is poor to fair. Plants that survived the freeze were covered. Harvest has stopped temporarily because of crop condition after the freeze.

PICKLES: West Central--Harvest is complete. Zellwood--Harvest is complete. Dade--Pickles show wind burn and are growing slowly due to cold weather.

EGGPLANT: Dade--Cold temperatures singed some leaves. Harvesting continues with some scarred fruit grading out. Quality is good. Yield is fair. Southwest--Crop condition is poor with damages from the cold currently being assessed. East Coast--The crop is in fair to good condition. Freeze covers protected some acreage. Uncovered foliage at the top of plants was burned by the cold. Cutting of regular types is producing good quality and color with fancy grades available. Supply is light.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--The cold weather singed outer leaves with salvage harvests continuing.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Salvage harvesting is active with outer leaves singed by cold temperatures.

OKRA: Dade--The cold weather reduced crop prospects with significant loss expected.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--Young plants are in fair condition. Freeze covers protected a lot of the acreage from damage. Picking is active. East Coast--Acreage with freeze covers is in fair to mostly good condition. Growers delayed transplanting until the threat of hard freeze passed. Some plants show foliage damage to the tops with actual loss currently being measured. Picking is slow with a very light volume available.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is poor to fair with some acreage protected from the cold by freeze covers. Harvesting is active with a light volume available. East Coast--Most acreage will recover from any cold damage. Harvesting is slow with a reduced volume available.

POTATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair condition with the top half of some plants frozen. Actual damage is currently being assessed. Planting stopped until the cold weather passed. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Some plants show cold damage with actual loss currently being analyzed. Planting is finished.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Growers continue to plant for February harvest. Digging is active with steady supplies and good quality available.

SQUASH: Dade--Cold temperatures burned the tops of some plants with young acreage expected to recover. Some of the older acreage may recover but yield will be below normal for the season. Early reports show about a 30 percent loss of yield. Picking of decreased supplies continues. Quality is good. Southwest--Late reports show that some growers used freeze covers to protect acreage from the cold. Condition is rated fair. Picking of reduced supplies is active. East Coast--The crop is in fair condition. Producers used freeze covers to protect young and mid-growth plants. Acreage not covered shows some foliage and stem damage.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Floral City--Growers irrigated plants and immature fruit as protection from the cold. Wet fields are slowing harvesting. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growers used overhead irrigation several times during the week to ice plants and immature fruit as protection from the cold. Picking continues with fair to good quality available. Dade--U-Pic harvesting is active with good quality available. The crop came through the cold with very little damage.

TOMATOES: Dade--Growers ran irrigation to protect plants from freeze damage. Transplanting continues. Picking is active with good quality available. Sizes are running 6x6 and larger. Volume is increasing slowly. Southwest--Producers are picking fruit from fields damaged by the cold. Damage to foliage is significant with younger plants receiving less damage than older plants. Producers are keeping fields as wet as possible to aid plant recovery. Some acreage with heavy damage will produce only one pick. Other acreage located in warmer areas will be picked three or more times. East Coast--Some plants show cold damage to the tops of plants. Other plants in warmer areas were not affected. However, yield prospects were reduced by strong, cold winds increasing bloom drop. Planting and harvesting were delayed until the threat of cold temperatures passed. Palmetto-Ruskin--Growers delayed the start of spring crop planting due to the threat of cold temperatures. Workers laid plastic in preparation of planting.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in poor condition due to significant cold damage to both old and young plants. Actual loss is currently being evaluated. Palmetto-Ruskin--Growers are preparing land for spring crop planting.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is poor to fair with both young and old foliage showing damage from the cold. Actual damage is currently being analyzed. Palmetto-Ruskin--Producers are getting land ready for spring crop transplanting.

WATERMELONS: Palmetto-Ruskin--Growers are preparing for spring crop planting.

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