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WEATHER & CROP NEWS



Week ending February 4, 2001

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February 5, 2001

WEATHER SUMMARY: Warmer temperatures aided crop growth during the week of January 28 through February 3. Temperatures at the major stations averaged one to five degrees above normal. Daytime highs were mostly in the 60s and 70s while nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Rainfall ranged from none at Miami and Immokalee to one and a third inches at Tallahassee. Parched localities in the central Peninsula area received from traces to almost an inch of rain which aided the control of wildfires.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Rains helped the moisture conditions in some areas. More rain is needed before drought conditions will change much. The winter pastures are under drought stress. Some ranchers have a problem getting hay due to short supply. Rains this past week reduced the wild fire hazard in some areas. Field preparations are under way for spring crops. Sugarcane is in poor condition. Growers are harvesting the frost damaged sugarcane as fast as possible.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	20	37	34	40
Short	70	47	63	48
Adequate	10	16	3	12
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, pasture condition is very poor to fair. In the Panhandle, winter pasture is short due to drought and freezing temperatures. In the north counties, winter small grain pasture is in very poor to poor condition. Rain at the weekend reduced fire hazards. Cattlemen are feeding hay but hay supplies are getting very short. In the central area, rainfall was good for the forage crop, but not enough to raise the water levels in stock ponds. In the West central and southwest counties, pasture condition continues poor to fair. Statewide, cattle condition is mostly poor to fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	25	35	0	10
Poor	50	50	15	30
Fair	25	15	85	55
Good	0	0	0	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: This week, most of Florida's citrus belt was cloudy and cool with occasional light scattered showers. Rainfall amounts were generally minimal. However, a few northern and coastal areas recorded up to a half inch. More rain is needed in all citrus counties. Growers and caretakers are continuing to irrigate to try to offset any adverse effects of January's cold weather. New growth and pin head bloom buds are starting to show in virtually all well-cared-for groves. This tender new growth could be quite vulnerable to frost or freezing temperatures should either arrive before spring. Harvesters are moving into the last of the largest early and midseason orange blocks. Some picking crews are going into the smaller less productive blocks of

fruit. There have been several thousand boxes of Valencia oranges picked with most going to the processors. Movement of all grapefruit is increasing with some of the juice plants taking field run fruit. Most fresh fruit packing houses are having no trouble finding quality fruit for shipments.

Caretakers are cutting cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. Growers have been cleaning drainage and irrigation ditches for the movement of water between groves and main canals. Dead tree removal continues along with some burning of trees, limbs and general grove debris. Burn permits are being limited due to the general drought conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Jan 21	Jan 28	Feb 4
Navel oranges	150,000	112,000	79,000
Early & Mid oranges			
Including Ambersweet	8,909,000	8,195,000	8,160,000
All grapefruit	1,084,000	1,152,000	1,443,000
Early Tangerines	124,000	9,000	5,000
Honey Tangerines	164,000	123,000	115,000
Tangelos	151,000	101,000	90,000
Temples	59,000	63,000	57,000

VEGETABLES: Potato digging started around Immokalee. Watermelon planting began in the Palmetto-Ruskin region. Vegetables available include snap beans, cabbage, cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, eggplant, sweet corn, peppers, endive, escarole, lettuce, and radishes.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Young fields are in very good condition. Planting is active. Picking continues with growers harvesting acreage hurt by the earlier freeze. Irrigation continues. East Coast--Young acreage is in good condition. Recent plantings are germinating well. Planting of a limited acreage continues. Southwest--Crop condition is fair. Young plant growth is normal. Growth of plants hurt by the earlier freeze is slow. Planting continues at a steady pace. West Central--Planting is expected to begin in mid to late February.

CABBAGE: Dade--Cabbage harvest is active with weekly plantings on schedule. Quality is good and the yield is normal. Cool weather is helping quality. West Central--Crop condition is good. Planting is complete. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is starting. Hastings, Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are actively harvesting cabbage.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Picking is active with good quality available. Crates are averaging 48 to 52 ears per crate. Planting is finished. Young plant growth is slow. Everglades--Planting is active. East Coast--Young plants are in good condition. Oldest plants are forming ears. Pulling is expected to begin in two to three weeks.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Harvest is complete for the fall season. East Coast--Crop is in generally good condition. Germination is improving from recent plantings this week. Plant growth increased and warmer temperatures are helpful. Plantings were very light this week. Southwest--Older plants are in poor to fair condition. Young plants are in fair condition. Growth and development are slow. Harvest is winding down. Fruit quality is fair.

PICKLES: West Central, Zellwood--Harvest is complete for the season. Dade--Cukes that survived the freeze are recovering and putting out runners. Planting of cukes is active.

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

EGGPLANT: Dade--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting is active. Quality is good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair. Planting is nearing the end. Cutting of a very small volume continues. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Cutting is active with mostly good quality and color available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Planting is expected to start over the next five to seven days.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting is active. Volume is light.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting of a light volume continues.

OKRA: Dade--Planting is expected to begin in late February.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is slowing seasonally. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Young plants show improved growth. Mid-growth plants have blooms forming and are starting to set fruit. Harvesting is steady with first picks of green Bells yielding very good quality and large sizes. Picking of yellow and red Bells is producing a very light volume. Transplanting is active. Workers are removing stakes, string and plants from acreage completely harvested. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Planting is gaining momentum.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Harvesting is active. Supply is light. Quality is good.

POTATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair. Digging is starting. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition.

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

SQUASH: Dade--The crop is in good condition. Planting continues. Harvesting is active. Quality is fair. Supply is expected to be good for the rest of the season. Workers are irrigating as needed. Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Harvesting of a very light amount is active. Quality is fair. East Coast--Plant

growth is good. Workers are picking the oldest plants then pulling them up. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is gaining momentum.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Floral City--Picking is increasing. Quality is fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking remains steady. Quality is fair to good. Color and sizes are good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting continues. Quality is good.

TOMATOES: Dade--The crop is in good condition. Young plants are making good stands and setting good hands. Planting is finished. Workers are picking pinks prior to the harvest of greens with picking increasing. Quality and yield are good. Sizes are running 6x6 and larger. Packout is good with some fruit showing cracks around the stem due to the earlier cold. Southwest--Condition is mostly fair to good. Plants hurt by the earlier freeze are making new sprouts and leaves. Fruit sizing is slow. Harvesting of greens is active with a reduced volume available. Quality is fair to good with all sizes available. Vine ripe picking is also active. Volume is expected to be below normal for the next four to six weeks. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Fruit sizing is good. Transplanting continues. Harvesting is active with mostly good quality available. Sizes are variable. Rain slowed some field activity on February 3 and 4. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is steady. Plant growth is slow. Staking is active. Quincy--Dry soils are hindering the laying of plastic.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is slowing seasonally. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is mostly steady.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting is steady. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is steady.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is gaining momentum. Palmetto-Ruskin--Planting is underway with the crop rated in good condition.

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