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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 18, 2001

Released 4:00 P.M.

February 20, 2001

FLORIDA  
AGRICULTURE



**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Warm and mostly dry weather continued during the week of February 11 through 17. Temperatures at the major stations averaged seven to eleven degrees above normal. Most daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s while nighttime lows were mostly in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Most stations reported no rainfall. Tampa reported less than one half inch. Jacksonville recorded about an inch. Spotty showers on February 18 brought additional amounts to some Peninsula localities. Dry, breezy conditions are hampering efforts to control fires in the central Peninsula.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Moisture throughout the Peninsula is very short to short. Dry weather is increasing the wild fire hazard in the State. Field preparation underway for spring crops. Sugarcane harvest is making good progress. Growers are harvesting the frost damaged sugarcane as fast as possible. The State's winter pastures are under drought stress. Some ranchers have a problem getting hay due to short supply.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	48	55	50	55
Short	47	44	50	45
Adequate	5	1	0	0
Surplus	0	0	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle, the condition of winter forage improved somewhat due to mild temperatures, spotty rains, and fog. Some prescribed burns were undertaken where it was not too dry. In the north counties, the condition of winter pasture is fair due to drought. The cattle condition is good. In the central area, the pasture and cattle conditions continue fair. Stock ponds are low or dried up. In the west central counties, the condition of the cattle declined. The pasture condition is very bad with no grass growth due to drought. Water holes are drying up. In the southwest area, the condition of the pasture is poor. Some permanent grass is starting to sprout. Statewide, the cattle condition is mostly poor to fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	30	25	0	5
Poor	60	50	30	40
Fair	10	25	65	50
Good	0	0	5	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** It remains very dry in all areas. High temperatures in most of Florida's citrus belt were in the mid to upper 80s on two or more days this week. Rain is badly needed. Growers are irrigating with all types of equipment, including flooding the middles of groves. Good, clean irrigation water is limited due to salt intrusion and low water levels. In spite of the current drought conditions, most well-cared-for groves are in good

condition with new growth and pin head bloom buds showing. All of the newly flushed growth continues to be extremely vulnerable to frost or freezing conditions should either arrive before spring. Most picking crews are winding down their early and mid orange harvest. Some crews are moving over to field run grapefruit for processing. A few cold damaged Valencias continue to be delivered to the juice plants. Fresh fruit packing houses are shipping oranges, grapefruit, Temples, tangelos and tangerines.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and disking cover crops prior to harvest for fire protection. Hedging and topping have been reported in all areas. Some resets are being planted in the warmer locations. Burning of grove debris and dead trees has been restricted due to the dry conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 4	Feb 11	Feb 18
Navel oranges	64,000	38,000	40,000
Early & Mid oranges			
Including Ambersweet	8,066,000	8,040,000	7,877,000
All grapefruit	1,645,000	1,621,000	1,608,000
Early Tangerines	8,000	4,000	2,000
Honey Tangerines	119,000	96,000	115,000
Tangelos	93,000	69,000	70,000
Temples	74,000	77,000	82,000

**VEGETABLES:** The dry weather is aiding planting and harvesting progress but increasing the need for irrigation. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, sweet corn, squash, potatoes, strawberries, snap beans, radishes, eggplant, lettuce, escarole, endive, Chinese cabbage, and parsley.

**SNAP BEANS:** Dade--The crop is in good condition. Planting is slowing seasonally. Picking is increasing as growers start to harvest acreage not affected by the earlier freeze. Quality is variable but mostly good. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Plants continue to bloom and form pin beans. Hand picks are producing a very light volume of good quality. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is steady. Picking of a very light volume is active. Quality is fair to good. Supplies are expected to increase over the next two weeks. Everglades--Planting continues. West Central--The crop is in good condition as planting gets underway.

**CABBAGE:** Dade--Scheduled cuttings continue with good quality and average yield. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is gaining. Quality, size, and color are fair to good. Yields are improving. Hastings, Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are actively harvesting cabbage.

**SWEET CORN:** Dade--Picking is active. Quality and yield are good. Everglades--Planting continues. East Coast--Crop condition is rated mostly good. Picking started with a light supply available. Quality is good. Zellwood--Planting continues. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is completed.

**CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market:** West Central--Planting is starting for the spring crop. Growth and development are

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

normal. Crop is in good condition. East Coast--Crop is in good shape at all stages of growth. Oldest plantings increasing in growth. Germination was good in recent plantings. Thinning active in young plantings. Southwest--Crop in fair condition. Planting is steady. Harvest is light. Fruit quality is fair.

**PICKLES:** West Central, Zellwood--Harvest is complete for the season. Dade--Few cukes are being picked with fair quality and yield. Planting active this week. Cukes planted last week up to a good stand. Southwest--Crop is in fair condition. Planting is light. Growth and development are slow. Harvest is light and quality is fair.

**EGGPLANT:** Dade--Harvesting is active. Quality is good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Cutting of a light volume continues with fair to good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Cutting continues. Volume is very light. Quality and color are good.

**ENDIVE/ESCAROLE:** Everglades--Harvesting continues.

**LETTUCE:** Everglades--Harvesting is active.

**OKRA:** Dade--Planting is expected to start in late February or early March.

**BELL PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearly done. Harvesting is steady with fair to good quality available. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Transplanting continues. Harvesting of green, yellow and red Bells is active. Quality is good. West Central--The crop is rated in fair to good condition. Transplanting is steady.

**HOT PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting remains steady. Quality is good.

**POTATOES:** Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Digging is increasing seasonally. Quality is good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Hastings--Plantings active. Digging is expected to begin in mid to late April.

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

**SQUASH:** Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Planting is starting to slow seasonally. Harvesting is active with good quality available. Yield is fair. Workers are irrigating as needed. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Harvesting of a light volume is active. Quality is good. East Coast--Plant growth is improving. Harvesting of zucchini and yellow types is active. Supply is light. Quality and color are good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting continues to increase seasonally.

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

**TOMATOES:** Dade--Condition is very good. Plants are setting good hands. Fruit is sizing well. Picking continues with volume increasing. Sizes are running 6x6 and larger. Quality is good. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Warm weather is improving plant growth and fruit sizing. Fruit set is good. Picking is active. Volume is light. Quality is fair. East Coast--Young plants are in very good condition. Oldest plants are showing an uneven fruit set. Transplanting continues. Harvesting is active with mostly good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Warmer temperatures are aiding plant growth and fruit development. Transplanting is slowing seasonally. Quincy--Growers are preparing beds for transplanting which is expected to begin in a couple of weeks.

**CHERRY TOMATOES:** Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is finished. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting continues to slow seasonally.

**PLUM TOMATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is nearing the end. Harvesting remains steady with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Planting continues to slow seasonally.

**WATERMELONS:** Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting remains steady. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in good condition. Planting is increasing seasonally.

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