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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 4, 2001

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FLORIDA  
AGRICULTURE



**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Warm temperatures continued to aid irrigated crop growth during the week of February 28 through March 3. Temperatures at the major stations averaged from four to thirteen degrees above normal. Most daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 60s and 70s. Tallahassee recorded most lows in the 50s while most Panhandle and northern Peninsula, and some central Peninsula localities also recorded at least one low in the 50s. Several sites reported no rainfall; others reported amounts up to one-half inch. Pensacola reported almost two inches falling through March 3 while Tallahassee recorded almost an inch with both receiving rain from a storm system that passed over the Peninsula on Sunday, March 4. The March 4 rain totaled from traces at West Palm Beach to almost two and a half inches at Homestead with most localities recording significant totals except for only minor amounts recorded in some East Coast localities.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil moisture in the western Panhandle is adequate. Moisture throughout the rest of the State is very short to short. Wild fire hazards are high throughout the State. Field preparation is underway for spring crops. Sugarcane harvest is active.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	60	64	58	65
Short	32	33	42	33
Adequate	8	3	0	2
Surplus	0	0	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle, the pasture condition improved following light rain. Small grain forage is growing and permanent pastures are greening up. In the north Peninsula counties, the condition of the cattle is good. The pastures are greening up but growth is slow due to cold and frost. The fire hazard is still high due to drought. In the central counties, grass is very short and the condition of pasture is very poor due to continued drought. Ranchers are feeding hay, with some hay being brought in from northern areas. In the southwest, the pasture condition is very poor to poor due to drought and the fire danger is very high. Statewide, the condition of the cattle is poor to fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	15	35	0	0
Poor	50	45	40	55
Fair	35	20	55	40
Good	0	0	5	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** All of this week was hot and dry except Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup>, when a fast moving cold front came through the State with scattered rains and a few thunderstorms. Rainfall amounts were generally one inch or less. Some heavy citrus areas got very little rain. More moisture is needed in all areas. Irrigation continues where there is adequate usable water available. Some wells and water sources have varying degrees of salt water intrusion limiting the amounts of irrigation that can be applied. New growth and all sizes of bloom buds

are progressing very well with the help of recent warm temperatures. Early and midseason orange harvest is slowing as supplies are limited. Valencias are being picked for fresh shipment and a few are going for processing where there was cold damage. Grapefruit harvest is very active for fresh use with limited field run supplies going to the juice plants because of lagging maturity levels. Picking of Temples for both fresh and processing has been reported in all areas.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping, and discing cover crops for fire protection and prior to harvesting. Growers are bush hogging following the hedging and topping operations. Very little spraying and fertilizing are being done during the bloom period. Burning of dead trees and grove trash is limited due to the dry conditions.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended

Crop	Feb 18	Feb 25	March 4
Navel oranges	40,000	38,000	14,000
Early & Mid oranges	7,877,000	6,044,000	3,534,000
Valencia oranges	284,000	339,000	799,000
All grapefruit	1,608,000	1,970,000	2,310,000
Early Tangerines	2,000	1,000	0
Honey Tangerines	115,000	93,000	104,000
Tangelos	70,000	55,000	21,000
Temples	82,000	133,000	152,000

**VEGETABLES:** The threat of cold weather is delaying the planting of spring crops in some northern Peninsula and Panhandle areas. Vegetables available include tomatoes, cabbage, peppers, strawberries, potatoes, snap beans, sweet corn, squash, lettuce, radishes, escarole, endive, cucumbers, eggplant, Chinese cabbage, and parsley.

**SNAP BEANS:** Dade--The crop remains in good condition. Planting is virtually done. Growers are making both hand and machine picks with good quality available. Supply is good. East Coast--Plant growth is good with beans developing well. Harvesting by hand is yielding good quality. Volume remains light. Workers are pulling up plants completely picked. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting continues at a steady pace. Picking is increasing with fair to good quality available. Everglades--Planting continues. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting continues.

**CABBAGE:** Dade--Picking is on a weekly schedule with good quality and yield. West Centra--The crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality, size, and color are good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are good. Harvest is increasing. Head quality is good. Hastings, Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Growers are actively harvesting. Quality is good. Heads are smaller than normal.

**SWEET CORN:** Dade--Young fields are in good condition with growers irrigating as needed. Picking continues with good quality available. Volume is good. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Warm temperatures are accelerating plant growth. Picking remains active with light supplies available for white, bi-color and yellow types. Ear quality is good. Yield is below normal. Workers are mowing and discing acreage completely harvested. Everglades--Planting continues. Picking is expected to start in about two weeks. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is finished. Zellwood--Planting is active.

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

**CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market:** West Central--Planting is steady for the spring crop. Growth and development are normal. The crop is in good condition. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Warmer weather is increasing plant growth, runner formation, blooming, fruit setting, and sizing. Initial harvest is starting this next week. Planting continues for the spring crop. Overhead irrigation is needed. Germination is good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are good. Harvest is light. Quality is fair to good.

**PICKLES:** West Central--Planting is gaining momentum. The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Dade--The crop is growing good but needs irrigation. Fields are up to good stands. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is light and quality is good. Zellwood--Planting for the spring crop is active.

**EGGPLANT:** Dade--Harvesting is active. Quality and volume are good. Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Cutting continues with fair quality available. Volume is light. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good with producers irrigating as needed. Cutting of regular and Italian types is active. Quality and color are good. Volume remains light.

**ENDIVE/ESCAROLE:** Everglades--Harvesting is active.

**LETTUCE:** Everglades--Harvesting continues.

**OKRA:** Dade--Planting started with growers irrigating as needed.

**BELL PEPPERS:** Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Warm temperatures are increasing young plant growth. Transplanting is active. Picking of green Bells continues with good quality available. Harvesting of red and yellow Bells is yielding a light volume. Workers are laying plastic and mowing acreage completely picked. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting remains steady.

**HOT PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is finished. Harvesting remains steady with good quality available.

**POTATOES:** Southwest--The crop remains in good condition. Digging is steady. Quality is good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Hastings--Planting is nearly finished. Digging will begin in mid-to-late April.

**RADISHES:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Digging continues at a steady pace. Quality is good.

**SQUASH:** Dade--Young fields are in good condition. Planting is slowing. Harvesting is active. Quality is good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is slowing seasonally. Harvesting is increasing. Quality is good. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Planting of a small acreage is active. Germination of recent plantings is good with growers irrigating as needed. Harvesting of zucchini and yellow types is active. Quality and color are good. Volume is light. West Central--Condition remains good.

**STRAWBERRIES:** Plant City, Floral City--Picking continues to increase with fair to mostly good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality and sizes are good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting continues. Quality and volume are good.

**TOMATOES:** Dade--Crop condition is good. Picking continues with good quality and sizes available. Gradeout increased due to rough fruit hurt by the earlier freeze. Volume is down slightly. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Warm temperatures are aiding plant growth. Fruit set and sizing are good. Picking continues. Quality is fair. Gradeout is above normal due to odd-shaped and scarred fruit hurt by the earlier freeze. Volume is expected to increase over the next two to three weeks. East Coast--Plant growth is very good with younger plants showing abundant blooms. Transplanting continues. Harvesting is active with growers making first through third picks. Sizes are variable. Quality is mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is nearing the end. Picking is expected to begin in early to mid-April. Quincy--Producers are delaying transplanting until the threat of cold temperatures passes. Sumter County--Land preparation for spring crop planting is active. Planting is expected to start over the next five to seven days.

**CHERRY TOMATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition remains fair to good. Harvesting is steady with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is virtually done. Picking is expected to start in early to mid-April.

**PLUM TOMATOES:** Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. 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. Sumter County--Land preparation for spring crop planting is active. Planting is getting underway.

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