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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



Week ending March 25, 2001

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 26, 2001

WEATHER SUMMARY: Significant rain fell early in the week of March 18 through 24 over the western Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities and over some central Peninsula areas. Precipitation at the major stations totaled from about two thirds of an inch at Orlando to over five inches at West Palm Beach. The Immokalee area received up to six inches while Homestead and the Palmetto-Ruskin region reported a half inch or less falling during the week. Strong winds following the storms were felt in many central and southern Peninsula localities. Storms crossing over the western Panhandle and northern Peninsula on Saturday and Sunday March 24 and 25 left many central and southern Peninsula areas dry with the potential for wildfires increasing. Temperatures at the major stations averaged one to six degrees below normal for the week. Most daytime highs were in the 60s and 70s with most Miami highs in the 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 40s, 50s and 60s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle is mostly adequate to surplus. Moisture throughout the rest of the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Field preparation is underway for spring crops. Farmers are planting tobacco. Winter forages are beginning to head out. Growers are starting to plant corn. Sugarcane harvest is winding down with mills closing for the season.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	54	13	59	22
Short	25	53	33	54
Adequate	21	32	8	24
Surplus	0	2	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Statewide, pasture condition improved slightly from the previous week, but cool temperatures held back forage growth. Recent rain so far has not had time to improve grass growth. In the Panhandle, the stock pond levels are up measurably. Cool season forage is doing well. In the north counties, permanent pasture (Bahia) grass growth is slow due to cool temperature. In the central area, stock ponds filled slightly following 3 - 7 inches of rain. The feeding of supplement hay is decreasing. In the west central counties, pasture condition is still poor to fair. Cooler temperatures are holding back grass growth. In the southwest, pasture condition is still poor and cattle condition is poor to fair. Statewide, cattle condition is mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	20	15	10	0
Poor	50	40	15	25
Fair	20	35	65	65
Good	10	10	10	10
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: High winds associated with day long rains covered virtually all of Florida's citrus belt on Monday the 19th. Rainfall accumulations generally were one half to more than two inches of much needed moisture. Many growers were able to temporarily turn off their

irrigation equipment. Most citrus trees showed tremendous improvement following this past Monday's rains. There is an abundance of new growth on all trees in the well-cared-for groves. Most of this season's bloom is over. However, there are several older grapefruit groves and a few seedling orange trees still showing various stages of bloom flowers. Early and midseason orange harvest is down to the last few blocks. Movement of Valencias is increasing and some of the younger groves are showing very good ratios and pounds solids per box. Grapefruit, Temple and Honey tangerine harvests for both fresh and processing continues active in all areas.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. Hedging, topping, and piling of cut limbs has been reported in all areas. Post bloom nutritional sprays are increasing. Growers are applying spring herbicides.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 11	Mar 18	Mar 25
Navel oranges	19,000	15,000	11,000
Early & Mid oranges	1,776,000	1,077,000	204,000
Valencia oranges	1,394,000	2,261,000	3,344,000
All grapefruit	2,355,000	2,407,000	2,999,000
Honey Tangerines	121,000	117,000	109,000
Tangelos	10,000	1,000	3,000
Temples	190,000	74,000	44,000

VEGETABLES: Wet fields delayed some harvesting early in the week. Strong winds during early to mid-week caused some foliage damage with blowing sand scarring some fruit. Quincy tomato growers are preparing for predicted temperatures in the 30s. Vegetables available include strawberries, cabbage, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet corn, snap beans, cucumbers, squash, radishes, lettuce, eggplant, escarole, endive, parsley, and Chinese cabbage.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Crop condition is very good. Cooler temperatures are helping to increase yield prospects. Planting is finished. Harvesting is active with a good volume available. Quality is good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Wet fields delayed some picking early in the week. Hand harvesting is yielding mostly good quality. Supplies are very light. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Planting and picking are active. Quality is fair to good. Everglades--Harvesting continues. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Plant growth and bean development are slow but normal.

CABBAGE: Dade--Cutting is on schedule with good quality and yield. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality and color are good. Sizes are good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Head quality is good. Hastings, Zellwood--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is very active.

SWEET CORN: Dade--Harvesting is active with good quality available. Supplies are good with a good volume available through mid-to-late April. Everglades--Picking continues. Supplies are light. East Coast--Picking continued about mid-week after fields dried out. Quality is mostly good with yellow, white and bi-color varieties available. Supplies are decreasing seasonally. Southwest--Condition is good. Planting is finished. Zellwood--Planting is active. Harvesting will start in late April.

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

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Growth and development are slow but normal. The crop is in fair condition. East Coast--Crop conditions are fair but good. Wet fields delayed harvesting the first of the week. New fields coming into production are providing good quality and color. All sizes are available for the market. The young plantings show good growth, runners forming, blooming and fruit setting. Harvest volume is light to moderate. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are good. Harvest is gaining. Quality is fair to good.

PICKLES: West Central--Planting is winding down. The crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are slow but normal. Dade--Harvesting is active with good quality and fair yield. Young fields are up to good stands with warm weather boosting plant growth. A small volume is available for the rest of the season. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality is good. Zellwood--Planting for the spring crop is active. The early crop is growing well.

EGGPLANT: Dade--Cutting is slowing seasonally. Quality is good. Volume is decreasing as the season nears the end. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting is active with a low volume available. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Plant growth is good. Fruit setting and sizing are improving. Harvesting continues with a light volume available. Quality and color are mostly good. A light amount did not meet grade due to scarred and misshapen fruit. West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Plant growth and fruit development are normal but slow.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting is mostly steady.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is active.

OKRA: Dade--Warm temperatures are aiding plant growth with good stands established. Planting is active. Workers continue to irrigate as needed.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking continues at a steady pace. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Plant growth is good. Some fieldwork was delayed by wet acreage early in the week. Transplanting is nearing the end. Harvesting of green Bell crown and limb fruit is active with first picks yielding good quality and large sizes. Picking of red and yellow Bells is producing a light volume. West Central--Condition is rated fair. Planting is complete.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking is steady with good quality available. East Coast--Harvesting is active with light supplies available.

POTATOES: Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting continues with good quality available. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Digging is expected to start in two to three weeks. Hastings--

The crop is in very good condition. Some acreage shows salt damage caused by a lack of rain. Planting is nearly done. Digging is expected to begin about mid-April.

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

SQUASH: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Planting is finished. Picking is active with volume expected to increase. Quality is good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking is steady. Quality is good. East Coast--The crop is in fair to good condition. Young plant growth is good. Cutting continues with wet fields delaying some activity early in the week. Volume is light with zucchini and yellow types available. Quality and color are mostly good. West Central--Crop condition is fair.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Floral City--Harvesting is starting to slow seasonally. Quality ranges fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair. Recent rain and strong winds caused some damage. U-Pic fields are open with fair quality available. Dade--U-Pic harvesting is active. Quality is good.

TOMATOES: Dade--The crop is in good condition. Warmer temperatures are speeding fruit maturation. Harvesting is very active with good quality available. Packout is good. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Recent rain caused some fruit damage with most escaping harm. Strong winds following the storms broke some stems and caused some leaves to fall off plants with blowing sand scarring some fruit. Harvesting of light supplies is active. Quality is rated fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in good condition. Wet fields delayed some field activities early in the week. Picking is producing mostly good quality with all sizes available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair to good. Recent strong winds blew some blooms off plants. Fruit setting and sizing are fair. Planting is expected to finish in about one to two more weeks. Picking will begin in two to three weeks. Quincy--Transplanting is nearing the end. Growers are preparing for predicted low temperatures in the 30s.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking remains steady. Quality is good.

Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Producers are preparing for harvest.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is steady with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is expected to start in about two weeks.

WATERMELONS: Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Planting is almost done. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Plant growth and melon development are normal.

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