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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS



Week ending April 1, 2001

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**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Heavy but spotty showers brought abundant rain to many localities during the week of March 25 through 31. Rainfall at the major stations ranged from about a half inch at West Palm Beach to almost four inches at Tampa. The Palmetto-Ruskin region received from six to over nine inches for the week with light hail falling in a few localities. The Immokalee area reported from a half inch to over five and a half inches while Homestead recorded about one third inch of rain for the week. Hastings reported about an inch of rain while Lake Alfred recorded over four inches. Temperatures at the major stations averaged from six degrees below normal at Tallahassee to two degrees above at Miami and West Palm Beach. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s while nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Tallahassee and Jacksonville reported at least one low in the 30s with some light frost occurring in some low lying areas of the Panhandle and northern Peninsula.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil moisture in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula is mostly adequate with scattered areas of surplus moisture. Moisture throughout the rest of the State is very short to short with scattered areas of adequate moisture. Field preparations are underway for spring crops. Farmers are planting tobacco. Winter forages are beginning to head out. Growers are actively planting corn. Sugarcane harvest is winding down with mills closing for the season. Nitrogen fertilizer supplies were reported to be 94 percent of normal.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	13	30	22	29
Short	53	37	54	44
Adequate	32	28	24	27
Surplus	2	5	0	0

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle, cool temperatures and light frost held back grass growth. Rainfall of the past two weeks is starting to fill stock ponds. In the north, light frost set back warm season pastures. In the west central counties, pasture and cattle are in poor to fair condition. Grass growth is slow. Streams and ponds are filling following the rains of the past two weeks. In the southwest, pasture grass is beginning to grow. Statewide, cattle condition is poor to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	15	5	0	0
Poor	40	50	25	45
Fair	35	40	65	35
Good	10	5	10	20
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** There were heavy rains and thunderstorms in virtually all areas of Florida's citrus belt on two or more days during the last week of March. Rainfall accumulations for the week were by far the largest of the year. Some east and west coastal counties recorded three to five inches of rain. Most growers and caretakers were able to discontinue irrigation. All well-cared-for citrus trees are showing an abundance of new growth. Most of this year's bloom is complete with only a few groves still blooming. Most harvesting operations were slowed on two

or more days due to the rainy conditions. Early and midseason orange harvest is finally complete. Grapefruit movement is very active in all areas for both fresh and processing. Valencia harvest is increasing. Temple and honey tangerine movement is slowing as supplies are running low.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops. Hedging and topping continue with caretakers bush hogging tree clippings in most groves. Post bloom nutritional sprays are being applied in all areas. Due to the recent rains, some burn permits are now being issued.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 18	Mar 25	Apr 1
Navel oranges	18,000	11,000	7,000
Early & Mid oranges	919,000	204,000	47,000
Valencia oranges	2,872,000	3,344,000	4,555,000
All grapefruit	2,512,000	2,984,000	2,665,000
Honey Tangerines	112,000	109,000	97,000
Tangelos	2,000	3,000	1,000
Temples	61,000	44,000	34,000

**VEGETABLES:** Heavy rains flooded some watermelons in the Palmetto-Ruskin region with damages currently being assessed. Cool temperatures in northern areas were not low enough to cause major damage to vegetables. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, potatoes, sweet corn, strawberries, snap beans, cucumbers, squash, eggplant, lettuce, radishes, escarole, endive, and parsley.

**SNAP BEANS:** Dade--The crop is in good condition. Planting is virtually finished. Picking continues with a good volume available. Quality is good. East Coast--Plant growth and bean development are mostly good. Hand picking is producing a light volume. Quality and color are mostly good. Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is winding down with some growers finished. Harvesting continues with good quality available. West Central--Crop condition is fair.

**BLUEBERRIES:** Central--Recent cool, wet weather is slowing crop progress. Picking is getting underway. Volume is very light.

**CABBAGE:** Dade--Harvest is active with weekly plantings cut on schedule. Quality and yield are good. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality is fair to good. Sizes and color are good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is winding down. Head quality is good. Hastings--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is active. Zellwood--Head size is generally good. Harvest is winding down and will be complete in two weeks.

**SWEET CORN:** Dade--Picking continues with good quality available. Yield and volume are good. Everglades--The crop is in good condition. Cool temperatures are slowing plant growth and ear development. Harvesting of a light volume is active. Quality is good. Supplies are expected to increase in about a week to ten days. East Coast--Harvesting is active with a light volume picked. Quality is good. Workers are discing and mowing acreage completely harvested. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Zellwood--Cool temperatures are slowing crop development. Yield prospects are good. Picking is expected to begin during the first week of May.

**CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market:** West Central--Growth and development are slow but normal. The crop is in fair condition. East Coast--

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

The crop condition is fair to good. New fields open for first picks have good quality and color. All sizes are available. Growers started mowing down the earliest plantings. Planting is winding down. Mid-growth fields are blooming and runners are forming. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Planting is winding down. Growth and development are good. Harvest is gaining momentum. 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--Harvest is active with good quality and yield as new fields come into production. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Quality is fair to good. Zellwood--Planting for the spring crop is active. The early crop is growing well.

**EGGPLANT:** Dade--Harvesting continues to slow. Quality is good. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Cutting continues with fair to good quality available. Volume is light. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Plant growth and fruit development are improving. Cutting is active with a light volume harvested. Quality and color are good for the fancy grades. West Central--Crop condition is rated fair.

**ENDIVE/ESCAROLE:** Everglades--Harvesting is active with good supplies available. Quality is good.

**LETTUCE:** Everglades--Harvesting continues with good volume available. Quality is mostly good.

**OKRA:** Dade--The crop is in good condition with recent rainfall aiding crop development. Planting continues. Growers are irrigating as needed.

**BELL PEPPERS:** Southwest--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is steady with fair to good quality available. East Coast--Crop condition is good. Recent heavy rainfall caused some plant stress. Transplanting is finished. Green Bell harvesting is yielding very good quality and large sizes for first picks. West Central--The crop is in fair condition.

**HOT PEPPERS:** Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. East Coast--Picking continues. Volume is light.

**POTATOES:** Southwest--Crop condition is good. Digging is steady with good quality available. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting started but was slowed by rain. Quality and sizes are fair. Hastings--Planting is virtually finished. Harvesting is expected to begin about mid-April.

**RADISHES:** Everglades, Lake Placid--Digging continues with ample supplies available. Quality is good.

**SQUASH:** Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Harvesting is steady. Quality is good. East Coast--Plant growth and fruit development are improving. Harvesting of zucchini and yellow varieties is active with mostly good quality and color available. Volume is light. West Central--The crop is in fair condition.

**STRAWBERRIES:** Plant City, Floral City--Picking is slowing as growers finish harvesting for the season. Quality is fair to mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Most picking is finished with only a few U-Pic fields still open. Dade--U-Pic harvesting continues. Quality is good.

**TOMATOES:** Dade--Crop condition remains good. Picking is very active with good quality available. Packout is fair with some rough fruit not meeting grade. Southwest--Crop condition is mostly good. Picking continues with volume beginning to increase as producers start harvesting new acreage. Fruit quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. Packout is below normal with misshapen fruit and fruit with shoulder damage and stem cracks not meeting grade. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. A few plants show wilt due to heavy rains with most unaffected. Transplanting is complete. First picks are yielding good quality with all sizes available. Yield is improving. Volume is steady. Workers are removing stakes, strings and plastic from acreage completely picked with some plastic being baled. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is fair. Planting is complete. Damage from recent storms is currently being assessed. Harvesting is expected to start about mid-April. Quincy--Temperatures did not get low enough to cause major damage. Transplanting is almost complete.

**CHERRY TOMATOES:** Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting continues at a steady pace. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair to good. Picking is getting underway. Quality is fair to good.

**PLUM TOMATOES:** Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting remains steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is expected to start within the next seven to ten days.

**WATERMELONS:** Southwest--Condition is good. Planting is finished. Palmetto-Ruskin--The crop is in fair condition. Recent storms flooded some acreage with damage currently being assessed. Jefferson County--Planting is expected to start over the next five to seven days.

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