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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending May 20, 2001

Released 4:00 P.M.

May 21, 2001

**FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Most localities reported no measurable rain falling during the week of May 13 through 19 except for about a half inch for Avalon, over a third inch for Lake Alfred, about a quarter inch for Orlando and Umatilla and traces at Dover, Ft. Lauderdale, Okahumpka, Miami, Pensacola, Tallahassee, and West Palm Beach. Temperatures at the major stations averaged from four degrees below normal to three degrees above for the week. Daytime highs were in the 80s and 90s while nighttime lows were in the 50s and 60s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is very short to short. Wild fire problems are on the increase. Dry conditions are delaying cotton and peanut planting. Some farmers are planting dryland and hoping for rain. The small grain harvest is underway. Irrigated corn, sugarcane, and tobacco are in good condition. Dryland crops are showing stress from drought. Hay fields are showing drought signs. Farmers are cutting hay in irrigated fields. Growers reported 55 percent of the peanuts are planted compared with 43 percent last week, 58 percent last year, and a five-year average of 71 percent.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	57	71	44	44
Short	39	29	51	52
Adequate	4	0	5	4
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and north counties, forages for grazing and for hay are at a critical growth stage and need rain soon or cattlemen will have to move cattle. The fire danger is high. In the central and west central areas, pastures are getting drier, the grass stand is very thin, and grass is turning brown. In the southern part of the Peninsula, pasture is in poor condition. Some ranchers are putting out supplemental hay. Statewide, cattle condition is mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	15	0	0
Poor	70	50	10	10
Fair	25	35	85	85
Good	0	0	5	5
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: There were only scattered rains in some citrus producing areas this week. Rain is badly needed in all areas. All types of irrigation are being used to maintain tree condition. New crop fruit continues to make good progress as most trees have completed dropping the fruit they cannot carry for next year. Most young tree groves have an abundance of new growth. Some new crop Navel and early oranges are nearing golf ball size, while many grapefruit are larger than golf balls. Temples, tangerines and tangelos are generally about the size of marbles. Harvest of Valencia oranges is active in all areas with most of these going to the processors. Movement of grapefruit is slowing as many fresh fruit packers have closed for the season. Most of the grapefruit are now being processed. Honey

tangerine harvest is virtually complete.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops for fire protection and prior to harvest. Post bloom nutritional sprays are completed and some growers are applying their second, third, and fourth sprays. Hedging and topping continue. Burn permits continue to be limited due to the current dry conditions.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	May 6	May 13	May 20
Valencia oranges	7,215,000	7,504,000	7,824,000
All grapefruit	1,034,000	1,151,000	803,000
Honey Tangerines	43,000	22,000	6,000

VEGETABLES: Hot daytime temperatures are bringing some southern Peninsula harvesting to an end. Picking for the Memorial Day demand remains active. Vegetables available include potatoes, watermelons, tomatoes, sweet corn, peppers, cucumbers, cantaloups, snap beans, squash, eggplant, radishes, okra, blueberries, escarole, endive, lettuce, and parsley.

SNAP BEANS: North--Harvesting is active with mostly good quality available. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Picking continues at a steady pace with good quality available. Dade--Crop condition is rated good. Harvesting remains active with supply declining seasonally. Quality is good. Producers expect to pick for another two weeks. West Central--U-Pic harvesting is active. East Coast--The season is nearing the end with only a limited acreage left to be picked.

BLUEBERRIES: North, Central--Picking continues. Supplies are decreasing seasonally. Quality is mostly good.

CABBAGE: Harvest is virtually complete.

SWEET CORN: Everglades--Harvesting is active. Quality is mostly good. Picking is expected to be active through June. Zellwood--Harvesting is active. Mostly good quality is available.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Growth and development are normal. The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvest is steady with fruit of fair to good quality available. Size is variable. Yield and volume are slowing. East Coast--The crop for late spring is in fair to good condition. Runners are forming. Plants are blooming and setting fruit. Volume is steady. Quality and color remain good. Southwest--The crop is in good condition. Growth and development are good. Harvest is steady. The quality of fruit is good.

PICKLES: West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvesting is steady. Fruit quality and color are fair. Dade--Harvest is complete. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Growth and development are normal. Harvest is steady. Fruit quality is good. Zellwood--Crop progress is generally good. Harvest is active.

EGGPLANT: Southwest--Crop condition is fair. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Harvesting is active with a light supply available. Quality and color are good. Dade--Cutting is almost done with a light supply available over the next seven to ten days.

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

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting is virtually finished.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is nearly completed.

OKRA: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Supplies and quality are good. Growers expect good supplies for the next six weeks.

BELL PEPPERS: West Central--The crop is in good condition. Harvesting is gaining momentum. Quality, color and sizes are good. Supplies are increasing seasonally. Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Picking is steady. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--Crop condition is good. First picks are producing large sizes of good quality. Volume is decreasing seasonally. Workers continue to remove stakes and strings and mow down plants completely harvested.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition is rated fair to good. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality is good. East Coast--Picking of a light volume is active.

POTATOES: Hastings--Digging is active. Quality is mostly good. West Central--Harvesting is virtually done.

RADISHES: Everglades, Lake Placid--Digging is nearing the end. Quality is good.

SQUASH: North--Picking is active. Quality is mostly good. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality is good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Harvesting of zucchini and yellow types continues with a very limited supply available. Dade--Picking of a few small fields remains active. Quality is fair. Volume is very light. Producers are discing acreage completely picked and planting cover crops.

TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is rated fair. Harvesting is steady with first, second and a few third picks being made. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. Southwest--The crop is in fair condition. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Supplies are light. Sizes are variable. Quality is fair to good. East Coast--The crop is in mostly good condition. Hot temperatures are accelerating the ripening of fruit. Picking is mostly steady with growers making first through fourth picks. Quality and sizes are good. Dade--The season is complete. Producers are removing stakes, strings and plastic from acreage completely harvested and planting cover crops. Quincy--Harvesting is expected to begin in early June.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is winding down. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is mostly steady but starting to slow seasonally. Quality is fair to good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is fair to good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is mostly steady but starting to slow seasonally. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are normal.

WATERMELONS: Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is rated fair to good. Harvesting is steady. Quality and color are good with medium and large sizes available. Southwest--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is slowing seasonally. Quality is good. North--Irrigated acreage is in good condition. Plant development of dry land acreage is delayed due to drought. Harvesting is expected to begin during late May through early June.

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