



WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 16, 2001

Released 4:00 P.M.

December 17, 2001

WEATHER SUMMARY: Hot weather persisted during the week of December 9 through 15. Temperatures at the major stations averaged eight to fourteen degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were in the 50s, 60s and 70s. A few localities received abundant rain with Citra and Jacksonville reporting over two inches for the week, and Putnam Hall and Alachua reporting over an inch. West Palm Beach received almost a half inch. Other areas reported only traces of rain, if any, for the week.

FIELD CROPS: Rains over some western Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities helped ease dry conditions but topsoil and subsoil moisture remains mostly short to adequate over the region, especially in the Big Bend area. Most central and southern Peninsula soil moisture supplies are drying due to a lack of rain but remain short to mostly adequate. Hay making continues in some central and southern Peninsula areas. Cotton harvesting is almost complete. Sugarcane planting and harvesting continue.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very short	11	5	15	7
Short	40	37	32	40
Adequate	49	58	53	53
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern counties, the pasture and winter forage continue to suffer from the lack of significant rainfall. Some locations received scattered rain which reduced the fire danger. Cool season forages are still being planted. The condition of the cattle is poor. Ranchers are feeding supplemental hay. Some of the central area received rain and pasture and range is in good condition. In the west central counties, the pasture grass growth is short and the grass is browning due to short moisture. The cattle condition is holding. Statewide, cattle and calves are mostly in fair to good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
Percent				
Very poor	0	5	0	0
Poor	20	10	10	10
Fair	60	45	60	30
Good	20	35	30	55
Excellent	0	5	0	5

CITRUS: The lack of rainfall and hot weather along with increased use of irrigation have confused trees into thinking this is early spring weather and the time for new growth and bloom buds. The fewer hours of sunlight during the winter are one of the saving factors that are preventing more trees from starting to produce bloom buds. Some young trees in the southern part of the citrus belt have kept growing due to the unseasonably warm fall and winter weather. Harvesting crews have been very active picking early and midseason fruit for both fresh and processing. The fresh fruit packing houses started slowing down by Saturday and Sunday, but the crews moving juice fruit remained very busy in all areas trying to move as much of the higher ratio early oranges as possible.

Caretakers have been very busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops for fire protection and prior to harvesting. Dead tree removal and burning continues. Irrigation equipment is receiving a lot of attention due to the constant use.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 2	Dec 9	Dec 16
Navel oranges	424,000	633,000	484,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	7,948,000	7,988,000	8,617,000
All grapefruit	699,000	835,000	876,000
Tangerines	304,000	371,000	413,000
Tangelos	106,000	175,000	173,000

VEGETABLES: Harvesting to meet the holiday demand remains active. Growers continue to harvest tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, pickles, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries and sweet corn.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Hot weather is speeding plant growth and development. Planting is active. Harvesting continues with a good supply available. Southwest--Planting and harvesting continue. Quality is mostly good. West Central--Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is fair to good.

SWEET CORN: Everglades, Lake Placid--Harvesting is increasing seasonally. Quality is mostly good. Dade--Condition is good. Tasseling is increasing. Planting is finished. East Coast--Planting is active. Plant growth is good.

CABBAGE: Hastings--Planting continues. Harvesting is increasing seasonally. Dade--Harvesting is on schedule. Quality is good. Zellwood--Harvesting is active. West Central--Crop condition is good.

CUCUMBERS, fresh market: Southwest--Picking continues. Quality is mostly good. Palmetto-Ruskin, Plant City--Harvesting is declining seasonally. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Picking is active. Quality is mostly good with super select and select grades available. Color is good. Workers are clearing acreage completely picked.

CUCUMBERS, pickles: Southwest--Harvesting is active. Quality is mostly good. Dade--Growers are irrigating to ensure proper vine growth. Harvesting continues. Volume is light. Quality is good.

EGGPLANT: East Coast--Crop condition is good. Harvesting continues. Quality is good. Southwest--Cutting continues. Quality is mostly good. Dade--Condition is rated very good. Cutting continues to gain momentum. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair to good. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality and color are good. Sizes are large to extra large.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting is active.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting continues.

OKRA: Dade--Harvesting is almost completed.

BELL AND OTHER SWEET PEPPERS: Southwest--Planting and picking are active. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Planting and harvesting are active. Quality is good. West Central--The crop is in fair to good condition. Picking is mostly steady. Quality is fair to good with some misshaped fruit not meeting grade.

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

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Picking continues. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Harvesting continues with good quality available. Volume is light.

POTATOES: Dade--Condition is rated very good with plants making good stands. Planting continues. Growers are irrigating as needed. Southwest--Planting remains steady. West Central--Crop condition is good. Planting remains steady. Hastings--Producers are preparing ground with planting to begin in late December or early January.

RADISHES: Everglades--Harvesting is steady. Quality is good.

SQUASH: Southwest--Planting and harvesting are active. Quality is mostly good. Dade--The crop is in good condition. Planting continues. Picking is active with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin-- The crop is in fair to good condition. Harvesting is nearing the end. Quality is fair to good. Color is good. Sizes are variable.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Floral City, Palmetto-Ruskin--Crop condition is good. Picking is increasing seasonally. Quality is mostly good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting is slow but is expected to increase in late December. Quality is mostly good.

TOMATOES: Southwest--Transplanting and harvesting remain active. Quality is mostly good. East Coast--Crop condition is mostly good. Picking and planting continue. Quality is mostly good. West Central--Crop condition is mostly fair to good. Harvesting is slowing seasonally. Quality is mostly good with 5x6 and 6x6 sizes available. Color is fair to good. Spraying is active. Dade--Condition is rated very good. Plants are setting good hands. Transplanting is active. Picking o f a small volume is expected to start in ten to fourteen days. Producers are irrigating as needed.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Planting and picking continue. Quality is mostly good. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Picking is nearing the end. Quality is fair to good.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Planting continues. Harvesting is active. Quality is mostly good. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Picking is nearing the end. Quality is fair to good.

WATERMELONS: Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair. Picking is nearing the end. Quality is fair to good. Sizes are small to medium.

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