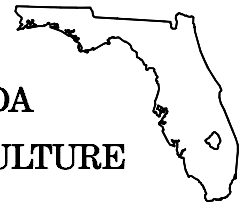




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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 23, 2001

Released 4:00 P.M.

December 26, 2001

WEATHER SUMMARY: Although daily low temperatures dipped into the 40s as far south as Belle Glade, temperatures for the week of December 16 through 22 averaged two to five degrees above normal. Daily low temperatures averaged in the 40s across the Panhandle and many northern and central Peninsula areas with many Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities reporting at least one low in the 30s. Light frosts occurred in some Panhandle and northern lowland areas. Lows averaged in the 50s and 60s elsewhere. Daily highs were in the 60s and 70s. A storm front crossing over the State near the end of the week brought significant showers to most Panhandle and northern areas and to some central localities. Pensacola received almost two thirds inch of rain for the week; Tallahassee, over a quarter of an inch; and Tampa, almost half an inch. This front spurred additional showers in a few southern regions over the holiday with Immokalee reporting almost half an inch falling during December 23 through 25.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are mostly short to adequate. Recent showers provided some relief to the very dry conditions in the Panhandle and some northern and central Peninsula localities but more is needed to ease drought conditions. Sugarcane harvesting continues in the Everglades area.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	5	9	7	11
Short	37	32	40	30
Adequate	58	59	53	59
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: There is a flush of growth of small-grain winter feed in some areas of the Florida Panhandle following rainfall of past two weeks. Temperatures have been very mild. In the northern counties, pasture condition is only fair due to drought and light frost. The grass is growing as the temperature warms. In the central areas, cattle condition is fair. Pasture condition is fair due to drought. In the west central counties, cattle condition is fair. Pasture is still green but grass growth is poor to fair. Haying is active. In the southwest, range condition is fair. The condition of winter forage is fair due to drought. Statewide, the condition of the cattle is mostly fair to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	10	10	10	5
Fair	45	40	30	40
Good	35	50	55	55
Excellent	5	0	5	0

CITRUS: The first part of the week was mild and dry, with cool days and nights from Thursday thru Sunday. There was very little rain this week except for a brief shower in the upper interior and east coast on Tuesday morning. Therefore, many caretakers started using their irrigation systems to maintain good tree and fruit condition. Virtually all of the early and midseason fruit are now well colored on the trees. Some of the tangerines are so well colored on the trees that they are

just being picked, washed and then packed. Harvesting of early and midseason oranges for processing is near record pace for the week before Christmas. Most of the fresh fruit packing houses started slowing down and clearing out their cold storage by Friday for the Christmas holiday.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and disking cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. A few growers are still spraying some of the mid and late season fresh crops. Growers are pushing and burning dead trees in all areas. A few heaters were placed and fueled in the colder locations.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 9	Dec 16	Dec 23
Navel oranges	633,000	484,000	309,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	7,988,000	8,617,000	6,366,000
All grapefruit	835,000	876,000	982,000
Early Tangerines	371,000	413,000	317,000
Honey Tangerines	0	0	4,000
Tangelos	175,000	173,000	141,000

VEGETABLES: Strawberry growers welcomed the cooler temperatures which increased berry development. Harvesting continued to meet the holiday demand. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, pickles, radishes, snap beans, squash, strawberries and sweet corn.

SNAP BEANS: Dade--Planting continues. Picking remains active. Quality is good. Volume dipped slightly reflecting earlier heavy rain damage. Southwest--Crop condition is good. Planting and picking are steady. Quality is good. West Central--U-Pic harvesting continues.

SWEET CORN: Everglades, Lake Placid--Picking remains active. Quality is fair to good. Spring crop planting is expected to begin in early January. Dade--Crop condition is rated very good. Picking is expected to start in January.

CABBAGE: Hastings--Planting and harvesting are active. Dade--Harvesting continues. Quality is good. Zellwood--Harvesting is very active. Quality is good. West Central--Condition is rated fair to good. Planting is steady.

CUCUMBERS, fresh market: Southwest--Crop condition is good. Winter crop planting is winding down. Picking is steady. Quality is good. Palmetto-Ruskin--U-Pic harvesting continues to slow and will end in early January. Dade--Growers are harvesting a small volume. Quality is good.

CUCUMBERS, pickles: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting of a small acreage is active. Picking continues with mostly good quality available. Dade--Picking is active. Quality is good.

EGGPLANT: Southwest--Crop condition is good. Planting remains active. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Dade--Young acreage is in good condition. Harvesting is active with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition remains fair to good. U-Pic harvesting is active.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Harvesting remains active. Hot temperatures reduced some quality.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Harvesting is active. The hot weather caused some heads to form seeds.

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

OKRA: Dade--Harvesting is near the end with very low supplies available. Quality is good.

BELL AND OTHER SWEET PEPPERS: Southwest--Condition is rated fair to good. Planting is steady. Harvesting continues with good quality available. West Central--Condition is fair to good. U-Pic harvesting is active but slowing seasonally.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting and harvesting are steady. Quality is good.

POTATOES: Dade--Condition remains very good. Warm weather is helping plant growth and development. Planting is active. Southwest--Condition is good. Planting is steady. West Central--Condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Hastings--Planting is getting underway.

RADISHES: Everglades--Recent warm weather caused some plants to reach maturity sooner than planned. Digging is very active. Quality is good.

SQUASH: Southwest--Crop condition is rated good. Planting is steady. Picking continues with good quality available. Dade--The crop is in very good condition. Planting is active. Harvesting continues with good quality available. Palmetto-Ruskin--U-Pic harvesting is active.

STRAWBERRIES: Plant City, Dover, Floral City, Palmetto-Ruskin--Recent warm temperatures increased foliage growth and reduced berry formation. Growers welcomed the cooler temperatures which will

increase berry development. Picking is steady. Quality is good. Dade--U-Pic harvesting remains slow but will increase as more acreage reaches maturity this week and in early January.

TOMATOES: Dade--Condition remains very good. Planting continues. Harvesting of a limited volume started. Quality and sizes are good. Workers staked as needed. Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting and harvesting are steady. Fruit quality is good. First picks are yielding extra large and large sizes; second picks, large and medium; and third picks, mostly medium. Volume is good. Packout is above normal. Workers are staking, tying, pruning, and spraying. West Central--The crop is in fair condition. Picking is slowing seasonally. Fruit quality is fair to good. Sizes are variable. Spraying for the control of disease and insects is active. Producers are laying plastic for spring crop planting.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Southwest--Condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Harvesting remains active with good quality available. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Picking is almost finished. Quality is fair.

PLUM TOMATOES: Southwest--Crop condition is fair to good. Planting is steady. Picking is active with good quality available. West Central--Crop condition is fair to good. Harvesting is almost finished. Quality is fair to good.

WATERMELONS: Palmetto-Ruskin--Condition is fair. Growers are making last picks with fair quality available.

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