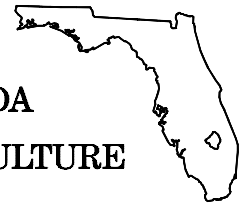




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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 3, 2002

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Showers dropped from about a third inch to an inch of rain over some western Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities and over a few southeast coast areas during the week of January 27 through February 2. Most stations reported only traces of rain, if any, for the week. Temperatures at the major stations averaged seven to thirteen degrees above normal. Most daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Most lows were in the 50s, 60s and 70s with Pensacola, Tallahassee and Jacksonville recording at least one low in the 30s or 40s.

FIELD CROPS: Soil moisture supplies are short to adequate with soils getting drier in some central and southern Peninsula localities where recent rainfall is limited. The danger for wildfires is increasing especially in some west central Peninsula counties. Warmer temperatures are boosting the growth of winter forages. Sugarcane planting and harvesting are continuing at a normal pace in the Everglades.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	0	0	0	0
Short	26	47	34	44
Adequate	74	53	66	56
Surplus	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, clover and cool season forages look good thanks to heavy fog, light showers and warmer temperatures. Stock ponds are still dry. The cattle condition is good. In the northern counties, the pasture condition improved slightly following rain during the past two weeks. In the central area, drought is causing poor pasture and range conditions, and ranchers are providing supplemental hay to cattle. However, warmer temperatures are bringing back Bahia grass pastures. Statewide, most cattle are in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	30	25	0	0
Fair	40	50	50	75
Good	30	25	50	25
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Temperatures in Florida's citrus belt were very warm again this week. By mid-week, many in-grove recordings were in the mid to high 80s. Rainfall was virtually non-existent except for a few occasional hard rains along the lower east coast. The current spring-like weather is producing an abundance of new foliage with pin head bloom buds. Growers in all areas are irrigating to maintain good tree condition during this current dry period. Harvest of early and midseason oranges is starting to slow down as supplies are running low in some areas. There have been a few thousand boxes of Valencia oranges picked in the past few weeks. Movement of both white and colored grapefruit continues very active on the lower east coast.

Caretakers are very busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvesting and for fire protection. Dead trees are being removed and burned. Fertilizations are beginning in all areas. Some new trees are being planted in the larger groves where there is adequate water for cold protection.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Jan 20	Jan 27	Feb 3
Navel oranges	110,000	104,000	113,000
Early & Mid oranges	7,435,000	7,541,000	7,786
Valencia oranges	1,000	4,000	74,000
All grapefruit	1,189,000	923,000	1,327,000
Early tangerines	79,000	50,000	22,000
Honey tangerines	153,000	178,000	149,000
Temples	81,000	62,000	80,000
Tangelos	176,000	154,000	104,000

VEGETABLES: Mostly clear weather allowed planting and harvesting to proceed at a normal pace. Potato digging is slowly increasing in southern Peninsula localities. Northern producers are planting onions. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, celery, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, parsley, potatoes, radishes, snap beans, squash, sweet corn and strawberries.

JANUARY CROP WEATHER: The new year brought hard freezes and light snow flurries to the western Panhandle and some northern Peninsula localities. Temperatures again dipped to freezing and near freezing levels over the western Panhandle, northern and central Peninsula, and some southern Peninsula localities during the second week of January. Producers of citrus, vegetable, floriculture and nursery crops ran heaters and irrigated crops as needed for cold protection. The cold temperatures killed most permanent pasture planted to Bahia, and caused some damage to small grains with high aphid populations causing some concern about disease. The cold weather also caused some terminal bud and canopy damage to sugarcane, lightly singed some lettuce and burned some leaves of young sweet corn in the Everglades. Gusty winds accompanying the cold temperatures blew sand across central and southern Peninsula vegetable fields causing some reduction in quality. Generally, temperatures did not stay cold enough for long enough to significantly damage the citrus crop except in the coldest spots where some outside leaves were burned and some fruit iced. Strawberry production dipped slightly in mid-to-late January as producers lost mature fruit when plants were iced for protection from the earlier cold. The cold singed some foliage around Pierson with most plants recovering. Most field crop, vegetable and citrus acreage recovered well as temperatures soared to record or near record highs during the last half of January. Vegetable and citrus harvesting remained active throughout most of the month. Frequent showers over the western Panhandle and northern Peninsula eased dry soil conditions throughout the month. Widespread, soaking rains fell in nearly all areas except for a few southern Peninsula localities around mid-January. Soggy fields delayed the picking of some vegetables around Immokalee after the mid-month showers but boosted growth of most citrus and vegetables. Northern growers started working land for spring planting of field crops and potato digging increased in southern Peninsula areas during late January. Other field work during January included baling of the last cotton fields and seeding of tobacco hot beds.

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