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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending April 14, 2002

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Afternoon storms provided some drought relief in the central Peninsula and slowed field work in the Panhandle during the week of April 7 through 13. Rainfall for the week totaled from traces to nearly three inches at Ft. Pierce. However, a few localities recorded no measurable rain for the week. Temperatures at the major stations averaged one to five degrees above normal with daytime highs in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 50s, 60s and 70s with a few northern Peninsula and Panhandle localities recording at least one low in the 40s. Soaking rains fell over the Peninsula throughout the day on Sunday, April 14 with preliminary totals ranging from traces to almost two and a half inches.

FIELD CROPS: Nearly daily rains slowed field work in the Panhandle. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies remain mostly short to adequate. Some Panhandle localities which received daily rains are reporting surplus topsoil moisture with most also reporting short subsoil moisture. Cotton planting is getting underway. Producers continue to plant corn and prepare land for peanut planting. Tobacco transplanting in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula and sugarcane harvesting in the Everglades are virtually done.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last Year	This week	Last week	Last Year
Percent						
Very short	6	2	51	2	3	55
Short	60	43	31	72	44	31
Adequate	30	55	18	26	53	14
Surplus	4	0	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: Pasture condition in the Panhandle improved in most counties following weekend rains. Grass growth was limited by cool night temperatures. In the north counties, condition was lowered in part due to mole cricket damage. For the north, pasture condition is fair. In the central area, pasture condition is fair due to drought. Ranchers are feeding supplemental hay. In the southwest, pasture condition decreased to poor due to drought. Statewide, cattle condition is mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
Percent				
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	0	20	10	10
Fair	90	65	75	55
Good	10	15	15	35
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: The first part of the week was warm and dry. However, Friday morning rains hit the lower part of the State and moved up toward the middle. Most areas received varying amounts of rain on Friday. Scattered showers continued the remainder of the weekend with most citrus locations getting at least some new moisture. The rains helped growers reduce their irrigation. There continues to be an abundance of new foliage on trees of all ages in well-cared-for groves. New crop fruit is making good progress. Some of the new little pea size fruit are dropping as the trees adjust to the size or quantity they can carry for the next crop year. Harvest of Valencia oranges for processing is active in all areas. Grapefruit harvest for fresh shipments is slowing as supplies are somewhat limited. Most of the grapefruit currently being picked are going to the juice plants. Temple and Honey tangerine movement is slowing as supplies are running low. Most of the Temples and Honey's are now being processed.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops in all areas. Hedging, topping and bush hogging of the cut limbs continues in harvested groves. Post bloom nutritional sprays are just about complete with a few growers starting on their second rounds. Growers are cutting out and pushing dead trees and replanting all over the State.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 31	Apr 7	Apr 14
Early & Mid oranges	221,000	4,000	0
Valencia oranges	6,877,000	7,226,000	7,401,000
All grapefruit	2,504,000	1,974,000	2,044,000
Honey tangerines	143,000	113,000	80,000
Temples	27,000	8,000	19,000

VEGETABLES: Watermelon harvesting is slowly gaining momentum in the Immokalee area. Spring crops are reaching maturity in the Palmetto-Ruskin area with harvesting slowly increasing. Potato digging is getting underway in the Hastings area. Vegetables available include tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, parsley, potatoes, radishes, snap beans, squash, sweet corn and watermelons.

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