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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending May 12, 2002

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Dry weather persisted during the week of May 5 through 11. No measurable rain fell except for less than a tenth inch at Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and Homestead. The danger of wildfire continues to increase in most areas. Temperatures averaged three to seven degrees above normal at the major stations. Daytime highs were in the 80s and 90s while nighttime lows were mostly in the 60s and 70s. Alachua, Hastings, Jacksonville and Pierson recorded at least one low in the upper 50s.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies continue to dry out with almost all areas reporting very short to short supplies. Thirty-five percent of peanuts are planted compared with 41 percent for both last year and the five year average planted by May 12. Growers are irrigating some cotton and peanut acreage to ensure good stands. Other producers are waiting on rain to begin planting cotton and peanuts. Irrigated tobacco, soybeans and corn acreage is in good condition while dryland acreage is beginning to suffer from the hot, dry weather.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	51	23	54	25	16	44
Short	48	57	42	74	64	51
Adequate	1	20	4	1	20	5
Surplus	0	0	0	0	0	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: The pasture in the Panhandle is in fair to good condition. Dry weather is causing critical condition in dryland forage. Winter forages are completely dried up and perennial pastures are not growing. In the north and central counties, pasture is very poor to poor. Cattle that are not being fed supplemental hay are losing weight. In the southeast, pasture is poor and cattle are in only fair condition due to drought. Statewide, cattle are mostly in fair condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	5	0	0
Poor	40	30	5	10
Fair	50	40	85	50
Good	5	25	10	40
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: All areas of Florida's citrus belt were dry this week. Rain is badly needed. Growers and caretakers are using all types of irrigation, and in addition some bedded groves are being flood irrigated where sufficient water is available. There is some new growth in the well-cared-for groves. However, there is afternoon leaf curl and wilt in many of the poorly cared for, non-irrigated groves. Harvest of Valencia oranges remains very active in all areas with some of the processing plants limiting deliveries. Fresh utilization of oranges, white and colored grapefruit and Honey tangerines is slowing as good usable supplies are running low. Temple and Honey tangerine harvest are just about complete for this season.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvest crew's arrival and for fire protection. Hedging and topping continue in all areas. Dead trees are being removed at a very rapid pace. Many growers are stacking limbs and dead trees to be burned at a later time when there is more moisture in the surrounding areas. Second and third sprays are being applied in some of the better cared for fresh fruit groves. New trees are being planted in most areas.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended			
Crop	Apr 28	May 5	May 12
Valencia oranges	8,079,000	7,295,000	6,895,000
All grapefruit	1,529,000	1,309,000	1,083,000
Honey tangerines	18,000	6,000	1,000
Temples	16,000	2,000	1,000

VEGETABLES: Watermelon harvesting is increasing around Arcadia and Wildwood. Harvesting of leafy crops such as endive, escarole and lettuce, is nearly finished around Lake Okeechobee due to the hot temperatures. Producers cut back some cucumber harvesting due to the low market. Eggplant cutting is slowing with most acreage completely harvested. Cabbage harvesting is virtually finished. Other vegetables, berries and melons available include tomatoes, peppers, blueberries, celery, cantaloupes, okra, potatoes, radishes, squash, snap beans and sweet corn.

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