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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending October 20, 2002

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October 21, 2002

WEATHER SUMMARY: Cooler weather finally arrived during the week of October 13 through 19. Temperatures averaged from one degree below normal to two degrees above in the major cities. Daytime highs were mostly in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Several northern Peninsula and Panhandle localities recorded at least one low in the 40s. Scattered showers, triggered mostly by fronts crossing over the state, brought from about a quarter inch of rain at Citra and Homestead, to nearly four and a third inches at Apopka. Several localities, from the Panhandle to West Palm Beach and Immokalee, recorded from an inch to about two and a half inches.

FIELD CROPS: Rainfall over the Panhandle and northern Peninsula improved soil moisture conditions in many localities. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies, statewide, are mostly short to adequate with surplus soil moisture reported in areas recently receiving heavier amounts of rain. The rains and high humidity continue to delay some peanut harvesting with 85 percent of the crop dug. Last year by this date 84 percent of peanuts were dug while the five-year average progress is 86 percent harvested. Sugarcane harvesting is active in the Everglades. The picking of cotton continues in the Panhandle.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	0	5	7	0	5	6
Short	25	20	33	25	20	26
Adequate	70	70	59	70	70	63
Surplus	5	5	1	5	5	5

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and north, cooler temperatures allowed better growth of small grains for grazing. Statewide, cattle were mostly in good condition, up slightly from the previous week.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	0	5	0	0
Fair	40	30	25	20
Good	55	65	65	80
Excellent	5	0	10	0

CITRUS: A moderate cold front pushed through the citrus belt with some needed rain and lower temperatures. Cooler night time temperatures helped harden off a lot of the new foliage that was generated from the September rainfall. Most of this State's citrus trees and new crop fruit are in very good to excellent condition. Many of the early types of fruit are showing fairly good on-tree color break and earlier than normal maturity development. Juice levels are generally high and acids are low for the last of October. Harvesting crews are very busy moving Navels, Hamlin and Ambersweet oranges, white and colored grapefruit, tangerines and tangelos. Most of this early fruit is going to the packing houses with only limited quantities going directly to the few processors that are open at this time.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to harvesting. Some vines are still being cut out of the trees before shading the fruit and foliage. Dead trees are being pushed, cut out and burned. Few resets are still being planted. Fall sprays and fertilizations are nearly completed.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Oct 6	Oct 13	Oct 20
Navel oranges	56,000	90,000	111,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	81,000	110,000	114,000
All grapefruit	311,000	414,000	522,000
Tangerines	98,000	90,000	98,000
Tangelos	1,000	3,000	1,000

VEGETABLES: Tomato picking remains active in the Quincy area while southern Peninsula growers slowly get harvesting underway. Strawberry planting is 65 percent finished in the Plant City area with recent rains boosting crop development. Producers continue to harvest very light but increasing supplies of cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, squash and watermelons. Okra harvesting continues in Dade County.

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