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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 15, 2002

Released 4:00 P.M.

December 16, 2002

**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Widespread showers dropped from almost an inch to nearly nine inches of rain during the week of December 8 through 14 with heavier amounts falling across the central Peninsula. Temperatures in the major cities averaged from four degrees below normal in Pensacola to five degrees above in Miami. Daytime highs were in the 50s, 60s and 70s with Miami, West Palm Beach, Immokalee and Ft. Lauderdale recording at least one high in the 80s. Lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s with Alachua, Tallahassee and Pensacola recording at least one low in the 30s. Temperatures plunged on Monday, December 16 with Crestview, Marianna, and Tallahassee reporting at least one low in the 20s, hard freezes occurring in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula and frosts dipping into some central Peninsula localities.

**FIELD CROPS:** The frequent showers replenished topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies which are now rated mostly adequate to surplus with some very short to short supplies existing in the Panhandle and in a few southeastern localities. Most cotton harvesting was delayed by the rains. Oldest cotton has very poor quality with most being picked to satisfy insurance requirements. Small grain planting was interrupted by the rainfall with the moisture encouraging proper germination and plant growth of recent seedings. Sugarcane harvesting was slowed slightly by the rain in the Everglades.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	0	1	6	1	2	8
Short	5	39	37	4	28	39
Adequate	60	60	57	55	70	53
Surplus	35	0	0	40	0	0

**VEGETABLES:** The frequent rainfall over the major production areas interrupted planting and picking, and lowered the quality of some crops. Growers continue to harvest snap beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, okra, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and very light supplies of cabbage, strawberries and watermelons.

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** In the Panhandle, early planted oats were damaged by a virus. Planting for small grains for forage continues. In the north, the pasture condition is mostly fair due to cool weather. Pasture in the central area is in poor to fair condition. In the south area, the range is in fair to good

condition with pasture in some locations in poor condition due to standing water from recent heavy rains. Statewide, cattle are in good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	5	20	5	5
Fair	55	45	25	20
Good	40	35	70	75
Excellent	0	0	0	0

**CITRUS:** There were scattered but heavy rains and thunderstorms on Monday and Friday depositing large quantities of moisture on most citrus groves. Many areas reported more than their average December rainfall during this week. Some of the caretakers had to deep plow grove middles to drain water away from the tree's roots. Growers with bedded trees, are pumping water out of the groves into main ditches. The recent heavy rains had no significant affect on the high sand hill groves. Fresh fruit packing houses have had some disruption of their supplies due to the wet conditions. Many juice plants are now limiting the deliveries from the field so that the fruit does not sit too long before processing. Several processors are running around the clock to handle their supplies.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops to help dry out the wet soils. Hedging and topping of harvested groves continues in the southern areas. Dead trees are being pushed out and burned. Some resets are being planted in the warmer locations. Spot sprays are still being applied where necessary.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 1	Dec 8	Dec 15
Navel oranges	235,000	465,000	495,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	5,894,000	7,637,000	7,064,000
All grapefruit	568,000	921,000	845,000
Tangerines	194,000	253,000	247,000
Tangelos	77,000	193,000	216,000

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