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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending January 12, 2003

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Cold temperatures crept over the Peninsula early in the week of January 5 through 11. Temperatures at the major stations averaged two to six degrees below normal for the week. Most nighttime low temperatures were in the 30s, 40s and 50s for the week. However, lows fell into the 20s and 30s in many central and southern Peninsula areas as the cold weather crossed from the Panhandle and northern Peninsula to southern regions. Some Panhandle and northern Peninsula areas reported hard freezes while frosts occurred in many central and a few southern Peninsula localities. Most daytime highs were in the 60s. Most localities recorded no measurable rain for the week except for traces recorded in a few scattered localities.

FIELD CROPS: Some wetter soils dried during the week with topsoil and subsoil moisture rated mostly adequate. Short soil moisture supplies are reported for the southeastern coast and in some northern Peninsula areas, especially Suwannee County. Scattered localities across the Panhandle and all areas of the Peninsula are reporting surplus soil moisture. Some small grain acreage is in poor condition due to heavy rains in earlier weeks leaching fertilizer from some fields and the recent cold weather slowing or stopping growth. Sugarcane is in very good condition and suffered no significant damage from the cold temperatures. Sugarcane harvesting remains active in the Everglades region.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	1	4	1	1	3
Short	4	4	45	4	4	51
Adequate	85	50	51	80	50	46
Surplus	10	45	0	15	45	0

VEGETABLES: Producers are assessing the effect of heavy frost in the Palmetto-Ruskin region with some damage expected. However, the cold weather caused no significant losses to most crops. Patchy frost around Immokalee caused very little damage but recent cool, wet conditions slowed plant growth and fruit maturation, and lowered the effect of pesticides which increased the incidence of disease. Temperatures were not cold enough for long enough to cause any damage to crops along the East Coast and in Miami-Dade County. Strawberry growers ran overhead sprinklers to form ice caps on plants as cold protection to save the plants and immature fruit with some minor water damage and production loss reported. Vegetables available include snap beans, cabbage, celery, cilantro, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, miscellaneous herbs, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes and strawberries.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, the condition of pasture in most locations decreased because of frost and the leaching of fertilizer due to earlier heavy rains. The temperature is too cool for small grain forage to grow. Ranchers are using supplemental feeding in the northern half of the State. Pasture condition in the Big Bend counties is lower due to drought and cold weather. Pasture in the south is in poorer condition due to cool weather. Statewide, the condition of cattle is mostly good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	10	0	0
Poor	15	15	5	15
Fair	35	20	20	30
Good	45	55	75	55
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Most of the week was cold and dry. Temperatures Tuesday night and Wednesday morning were in the low to mid 30s with a few pockets and low lands showing some upper 20 readings. There was some frost in the colder locations. Again, there was very little if any damage to citrus. A few very young trees might have had the tender new bloom shoots nipped back, but there was no significant leaf or wood damage. Temperatures in the 30s are beneficial to citrus trees in that it helps prevent vulnerable new growth from forming during the cold season. Harvest of early and midseason fruit was very active this week with more than a million boxes of fruit picked each day. Processing plants are limiting the number of loads of fruit delivered each day so that they can run most all of the fruit on their yards that day. Fresh fruit packing houses are busy packing early and mid oranges, both white and colored grapefruit, Temples, tangerines and tangelos.

Caretakers are busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops prior to the arrival of harvesting crews. A few growers are still ditching and deep plowing to help dry out their wet soils. Ditches and canals are being cleaned for more efficient water movement. Dead trees are being cut out and burned. Hedging and topping continue in harvested groves.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 29	Jan 5	Jan 12
Navel oranges	88,000	113,000	166,000
Early & Mid oranges including Ambersweet	5,685,000	8,114,000	8,220,000
All grapefruit	623,000	887,000	981,000
Early tangerines	25,000	28,000	8,000
Honey tangerines	61,000	108,000	147,000
Tangelos	104,000	226,000	275,000
Temples	10,000	23,000	44,000

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