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# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 30, 2003

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 31, 2003

**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Storms crossed over mainly central Peninsula areas during the week of March 23 through 29. Rainfall ranged from less than a tenth inch at Marianna to over three and a half inches at Pierson. Temperatures in the major cities averaged normal to four degrees above. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Nighttime lows were mostly in the 50s and 60s with several localities recording at least one low in the 40s. A cold front crossing the State on March 30 and 31 caused both high and low temperatures to fall well below normal with Crestview recording a low temperature of 28 and West Palm Beach, a low of 50 on Monday, March 31.

**FIELD CROPS:** Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies remain mostly adequate. Some short soil moisture supplies exist in pockets of the southeastern Peninsula and in a few northern Peninsula localities. Some surplus moisture conditions are reported for the central Peninsula and the Big Bend area. Producers in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula continue to prepare land for planting. Sugarcane harvesting continues in the Everglades.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	1	2	0	1	2
Short	9	4	45	10	4	37
Adequate	80	80	53	80	80	61
Surplus	10	15	0	10	15	0

**VEGETABLES:** Growers are currently assessing the recent cold temperature damage to tomatoes around Quincy. Okra harvesting is underway in Dade County with very light supplies available. Other vegetables available include cabbage, carrots, celery, cucumbers, sweet corn, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, tomatoes and very light supplies of blueberries, eggplant, endive and escarole. Lettuce harvesting is virtually finished.

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** The condition of pasture improved in all areas. In the Panhandle, the condition of the cattle and pasture are mostly good. However, the ground is quite wet. In the northern counties, pastures are greening up, but growth is slow as grasses recover from frost. Some low lying pastures were damaged by standing water. In the central area, warmer weather caused forages to green up. In the southwest, cattle are mostly in good condition and pasture is mostly in fair condition. Overall, the cattle in the State are in good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	5	15	0	10
Fair	40	55	40	65
Good	55	30	55	25
Excellent	0	0	5	0

**CITRUS:** Most areas in Florida's citrus belt had at least two days or nights of scattered rains this week. Weak cold fronts moved up and down Florida's Peninsula during the week depositing varying amounts of very useful moisture. Most citrus groves are in very good to excellent condition as a result of the abundant rainfall during March. This year's bloom cycle is just about over. There are still a few groves that are lagging behind the majority of this state's citrus. Some of the older grapefruit, tangerine and tangelo trees are still in bloom and will have petal drop very soon. Harvest of Valencia oranges continues to increase in all areas for both fresh and processing. However, there are some Valencia groves with multiple bloom fruit that are not passing minimum maturity tests at this time. Several processors are now taking grapefruit packing house eliminations and field-run fruit. Tangelo harvest is just about over for this season. There are still some Honey tangerines and Temples going to the fresh trade and to the juice plants.

Caretakers are very busy mowing, chopping and discing cover crops. Postbloom nutritional spraying is very active in all areas. Hedging and topping continue in harvested groves. Dead, dying and diseased trees are being pushed out and burned where the groves are nonthrifty. Resets are being planted as many areas have adequate surface soil moisture. Growers are working on and cleaning their ditches and main canals for adequate water movement.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 16	Mar 23	Mar 30
Navel oranges	4,000	1,000	2,000
Early & Mid oranges	77,000	131,000	2,000
Valencia oranges	4,413,000	5,642,000	6,677,000
All grapefruit	2,438,000	2,001,000	1,748,000
Honey tangerines	147,000	142,000	127,000
Tangelos	2,000	1,000	0
Temples	63,000	36,000	12,000

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