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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending April 6, 2003

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WEATHER SUMMARY: A cold front crossing the State at the beginning of the week of March 30 through April 5 caused temperatures to plummet to record low levels in many localities. Temperatures in the major cities averaged three to seven degrees below normal. Lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s for the week with many localities recording at least one low in the 30s, and a few northern Peninsula and Panhandle areas reporting at least one low in the 20s. Some Panhandle and a few northern and central Peninsula counties reported frost on the coldest mornings. Daytime highs were in the 70s with several reports of at least one low in the 80s. Rainfall for the week totaled from traces in several localities to three-quarters of an inch at Tallahassee. Avalon, Ft. Lauderdale and Okahumpka recorded no measurable rain for the week.

FIELD CROPS: Drying conditions in most areas depleted soil moisture with supplies rated mostly adequate. A few localities in the southeastern and northern Peninsula reported very short to short moisture supplies while some surplus supplies still exist in a few areas of the east central Peninsula. Some tobacco growers finished transplanting. Peanut producers are preparing fields for planting which is getting underway. Pecans are budding in some Panhandle and northern Peninsula counties. Cotton producers continue to prepare fields for planting. Sugarcane harvesting in the Everglades is slowing seasonally with some mills already closed.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	1	2	0	0	3
Short	5	9	43	1	10	43
Adequate	84	80	55	89	80	54
Surplus	10	10	0	10	10	0

VEGETABLES: Some tomato leaves and other tender plant parts were singed by frost around Quincy. Harvesting is slowing seasonally in Dade County and gaining momentum in the Palmetto-Ruskin and other central Peninsula localities. Watermelon growers in the northern Peninsula and Panhandle areas started spring crop planting. Vegetables available include cabbage, carrots, celery, cucumbers, sweet corn, eggplant, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, tomatoes and very light supplies of endive, escarole, lettuce and okra.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, north and central areas, frost caused light damage to small grain forage. Warm season (Bahia) grass was badly frosted in some northern locations. In the central areas, pasture condition is generally good, with some pasture damaged by standing water. In the southern areas, grass improved following recent rains. Pasture

condition is fair to good, condition of cattle is good. Statewide, cattle are mostly in good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	0	5	0	0
Fair	10	40	25	40
Good	90	55	75	55
Excellent	0	0	0	5

CITRUS: Spring has arrived with dry, hot weather this week in all areas of Florida's citrus belt. Growers and caretakers have started irrigating so that they might maintain good tree condition during this all important time when the trees are setting next season's fruit crop. March was an unusually wet month for the bloom period as most citrus growing counties reported above average rainfall. Now virtually all of the citrus trees are starting to shed the little fruit they cannot carry during the next fruit season. Generally, groves, trees and fruit remaining for harvest are all in very good condition. Harvest of Valencia oranges continues very active in all areas with most of the fruit going to the processors. Grapefruit movement is starting to slow down as supplies are beginning to run out in some areas. Temple and tangelo harvest is just about complete for this season with almost all of the remaining fruit going to the juice plants. There are still some Honey tangerines being packed for the fresh trade with the balance being utilized by the processors.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops in all areas. Harvested groves are being hedged and topped for better management of next year's crop. Growers are pushing and burning dead and sick trees. Postbloom nutritional sprays are being applied with the greatest concentration on the fresh crop groves. Reset trees are being planted in the larger groves with irrigation. Irrigation and drainage ditches area being cleaned and maintained for better water movement.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 23	Mar 30	Apr 6
Navel oranges	2,000	2,000	1,000
Early & Mid oranges	11,000	2,000	--
Valencia oranges	6,426,000	6,677,000	6,670,000
All grapefruit	1,944,000	1,748,000	1,681,000
Honey tangerines	140,000	127,000	117,000
Temples	21,000	12,000	10,000

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