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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending October 5, 2003

Released 4:00 P.M.

October 6, 2003

**FLORIDA
 AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Drier conditions over the Panhandle and most northern Peninsula localities allowed field work to progress rapidly during the week of September 28 through October 4. Several localities (mainly in the Panhandle) reported no rainfall, while three inches or more was reported in Alachua, Daytona Beach and Miami. Most reports indicated from a quarter inch to two inches of rain for the week. Temperatures in the major cities averaged normal to five degrees below. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Bronson, Miami and Umatilla recorded at least one high in the 90s. Nighttime lows were in the 60s and 70s with several Panhandle and a few northern Peninsula areas reporting at least one low in the 50s.

FIELD CROPS: Mostly dry weather over the Panhandle and several northern Peninsula localities is hardening soils which makes peanut digging more difficult. However, the clear weather allows harvesting to progress at a rapid pace. Some northern producers are trying to bale the last cutting of hay. Cotton picking is slowly gaining momentum in the Panhandle. Sugarcane is in good condition in the Everglades region with harvesting getting underway soon. Drier weather over the Panhandle and some northern Peninsula localities lowered soil moisture supplies with ratings ranging from very short to mostly adequate over the area. Wetter conditions over the central and southern Peninsula increased soil moisture in most areas with supplies rated mostly adequate to surplus. Supplies remain very short to short in a small area of the southeastern Peninsula.

Percentage of Peanuts Harvested To Date

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| This year | 65% |
| Last year | 52% |
| 5 - year average | 53% |

| Moisture Rating | Topsoil | | | Subsoil | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | This week | Last week | Last year | This week | Last week | Last Year |
| | Percent | | | | | |
| Very short | 1 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Short | 14 | 6 | 14 | 10 | 5 | 19 |
| Adequate | 55 | 76 | 60 | 55 | 75 | 55 |
| Surplus | 30 | 17 | 22 | 35 | 20 | 21 |

VEGETABLES: Tomato picking is slowly increasing around Quincy and getting underway in the southern Peninsula. Planting of cabbage and fall vegetables is active in St. John's County. Okra harvesting continues in Dade County. Other crops

available include very light amounts of cucumbers and Bell peppers. Planting of crops for late fall and winter harvesting continues over the southern Peninsula with some activity delayed by rainfall.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern counties, growers are making the last cutting of hay. The growth of permanent pasture grass stopped seasonally in most places due to the cooler temperatures. Land preparation is active for planting cool season forage small grains. Rain is needed for the newly planted forage. In Madison County, armyworms are still a problem and there is disease pressure in forages. Grass growth is slow in the Big Bend area due to dry soil conditions. In the southwest, pastures are very wet but cattle have plenty of grass. Statewide, the condition of cattle ranges from fair to excellent, with most in good condition.

| Condition | Range | | Cattle | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | This week | Last week | This week | Last week |
| | Percent | | | |
| Very poor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Poor | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Fair | 20 | 25 | 10 | 15 |
| Good | 64 | 60 | 75 | 75 |
| Excellent | 15 | 10 | 15 | 10 |

CITRUS: Moderate to heavy rainfall occurred early in the week as a tropical system approached the southwestern growing areas of the State. Although scattered and light in some areas, most southern and coastal areas received heavy rainfall. By mid-week, temperatures moderated as a cool front approached from the north and rainfall was less prevalent. Growers welcomed the cooler and dryer weather. Many low lying groves with heavy soils in the western and central areas continue to experience soggy ground. Growers are maintaining middles and lateral ditches to keep water moving away from tree roots. Mowing and discing continues to control summer cover crop growth. Fruit growth is reported good and the majority of trees in sand hill locations are in excellent condition because of all the summer rainfall. Natural color break is showing on some early tangerine and grapefruit crops. More fresh fruit packing houses are open with most planning to be open by the middle of October. Varieties being packed include early oranges (Navels, Ambersweet, and Hamlins), white and colored grapefruit, and Fallglo tangerines.

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