



# WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 21, 2003

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December 22, 2003

**WEATHER SUMMARY:** Rain fell ahead of cold fronts crossing the State during the week of December 14 through December 20. Rainfall totaled from traces at Homestead and Jay to over three inches at Bradenton for the week. The cold fronts brought freezing temperatures to the Panhandle and most of the northern and central Peninsula. Temperatures averaged six to nine degrees below normal in the major cities. Daytime highs were in the 60s and 70s. Nighttime lows averaged in the 30s, 40s and 50s with several Panhandle and northern and central Peninsula localities recording at least one low in the 20s. Hard frosts and freezes hit many Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities, and some central Peninsula areas during the week. Light frost was reported for a few southern Peninsula localities.

**FIELD CROPS:** Sugarcane harvesting remains active in the Everglades region. Widespread rainfall improved soil moisture supplies in most areas. Counties reporting short soil moisture supplies include Hamilton, Suwannee, Hillsborough and St. Lucie. Very short to short supplies were reported in Broward County. Counties reporting short to adequate supplies include Columbia, Union, St. John's, Highlands and Miami-Dade. Elsewhere, observers reported adequate soil moisture.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	Percent					
Very short	1	10	1	1	5	1
Short	19	15	4	19	15	8
Adequate	75	74	56	79	79	55
Surplus	5	1	39	1	1	36

**VEGETABLES:** Heavy rains slowed harvesting and lowered the quality of some central and southern Peninsula crops. Strawberry growers monitored temperatures closely during the colder nights with most berries escaping major damage. The colder temperatures brought fall crop okra harvesting to an end in Miami-Dade County as snap bean picking got underway. Celery cutting is getting underway in the Everglades area. Harvesting of cabbage is active in the Hastings area and in Lake County. Broccoli harvesting continues around Hastings. Most of the land for potatoes in the Hastings area is ready for planting. Other vegetables available include sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, radishes, squash and tomatoes.

**LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES:** Small grain forage looks good in the Panhandle with some small grain grazing going on for two weeks. Many more producers will turn the cattle into the small grains in the next week. The permanent pasture is dormant until spring. In the northern areas, cool season forages are generally off to a good start. Forage growth is being held back by dry soil conditions in some locations. The feeding of livestock supplement-

tal hay is in full swing. In the central Peninsula, hard frosts and a lack of rainfall reduced green forage available for livestock. Winter pasture plantings are too young to graze due to late plantings and lack of moisture. In the south, pastures need rain. The pasture condition was decreased due to a slight frost the morning of Dec 18<sup>th</sup>. Statewide, the condition of the cattle is mostly good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	Percent			
Very poor	5	5	0	0
Poor	5	5	5	5
Fair	35	30	25	15
Good	55	60	70	75
Excellent	0	0	0	5

**CITRUS:** Rainfall this week was widely scattered and heavy in some areas with very little in others in front of a strong cold front that passed through the State on Tuesday and Wednesday. Most reporting stations recorded under one inch with the exception of some in the lower interior which reported up to two inches. Other inland areas along the east coast reported up to five inches in localized areas. Temperatures were at or slightly below normal levels for this time of year with highs in the 60s and lows in the mid and low 30s several mornings. Some growers reported very short durations of temperatures in the upper 20s. There were some reports of scattered frost but no damage to leaves or fruit is reported. Most growers reduced irrigation to force trees into a semi-dormant condition. After several weeks of cold weather, trees are hardy and should withstand any colder weather later. Growers and packers report good natural color and excellent external appearance on tangerines, early oranges, and grapefruit. Most fresh fruit packing houses are open and packing for fund raising groups. Varieties being packed include early and midseason oranges (Navels, Hamlins, and Pineapple), white and colored grapefruit, Sunburst and Honey tangerines, and Orlando tangelos. All processing plants are reported open and receiving eliminations and field run fruit. As more harvesting crews arrive, the volume for processing is increasing.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Dec 7	Dec 14	Dec 21
Navel oranges	546,000	411,000	189,000
Early and Mid oranges	7,901,000	8,596,000	8,280,000
Grapefruit	828,000	844,000	781,000
Early tangerines	304,000	306,000	276,000
Honey Tangerines	0	3,000	17,000
Tangelos	133,000	109,000	66,000

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