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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 7, 2004

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March 8, 2004

WEATHER SUMMARY: Virtually no rain fell during the week of February 29 through March 6 except for a quarter inch or less over some Panhandle and southeastern Peninsula localities. Temperatures in the major cities averaged from four to nine degrees above normal. Daytime highs averaged in the 70s and 80s while nighttime lows averaged in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Nearly all localities recorded at least one low in the 40s except for some southern Peninsula areas. Tallahassee, Live Oak, Marianna, MacClenny and Quincy reported at least one low in the 30s.

FIELD CROPS: Dry conditions allowed field preparations and planting to resume in the northern Peninsula and Panhandle areas. Corn planting is active in Jackson County. Most soils dried during the week. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are mostly adequate over the central and southern Peninsula with short supplies reported for a few spots in Charlotte and Dade counties, and surplus in a few areas of Hendry, Marion, St. John's and Osceola counties. Broward County reported very short to short soil moisture. Northern Peninsula soil moisture is rated short to mostly adequate while soil moisture over the Panhandle is mostly adequate to surplus.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	1	0	10	0	0	9
Short	4	2	31	5	3	28
Adequate	80	68	42	80	72	58
Surplus	15	30	17	15	25	5

VEGETABLES: Planting and harvesting returned to a normal pace. Warmer temperatures brought out the blooms on ornamental and non citrus fruit trees in Columbia County. Most potato planting is finished in the Hastings area. Cabbage cutting around Hastings and other areas, and potato digging in southern areas are increasing as growers begin to meet the mid-March holiday demand. Other vegetables and non citrus fruit available include snap beans, celery, sweet corn, peppers, squash, strawberries and tomatoes. Light supplies of eggplant, endive, escarole and lettuce are also available. Cucumber supplies are increasing seasonally while radishes are decreasing.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern areas, clover is beginning to head out. Permanent grasses are returning where it is not being grazed. Cool season forage is fair due to recent cold weather. Winter weeds are growing rapidly in pastures. In the southwest, cattle condition is mostly fair with most in good condition. Statewide, the condition of the cattle is mostly good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	10	15	5	10
Fair	50	60	35	35
Good	35	25	55	50
Excellent	0	0	5	5

CITRUS: Cloudy and mild weather dominated the citrus belt this week with daytime high temperatures in the middle to upper 80s and lows only into the upper 50s. All reporting stations reported no rainfall for the week. Growers are reporting feathery new growth and abundant bloom buds on oranges and grapefruit. Lower interior areas are showing full, open bloom on oranges and grapefruit while coastal and upper interior areas are lagging in open bloom. Cultural practices in anticipation of bloom are continuing including fertilizations and hedging following harvest. Most fresh fruit packinghouses are packing all available varieties with emphasis on export grapefruit. Varieties being packed include Valencia oranges, white and colored grapefruit, Honey tangerines and Temples. Processing plants are receiving and processing fruit with weekly volumes of early-mid oranges declining as grapefruit and Valencia orange amounts increase.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Feb 22	Feb 29	Mar 7
Navel oranges	6,000	1,000	6,000
Early and Mid oranges	4,915,000	3,641,000	1,897,000
Valencia oranges	700,000	1,404,000	1,802,000
Grapefruit	2,291,000	1,939,000	2,070,000
Early tangerines	2,000	0	2,000
Honey tangerines	154,000	169,000	153,000
Tangelos	16,000	13,000	3,000
Temples	130,000	102,000	147,000

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