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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 14, 2004

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**FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Winds stirred up dust in many areas during the week of March 7 through 13. Most localities reported no measurable rain falling during the week except for about a third inch falling in Live Oak, less than a quarter inch in Belle Glade and MacClenny and traces in a few other scattered localities. Temperatures in the major cities averaged three to five degrees below normal. Daytime highs were mostly in the 70s with most localities reporting at least one high in the 80s. Nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s with several cities recording at least one low in the 30s. MacClenny and Alachua reported one low in the 20s. Some localities in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula experienced daytime highs in the 70s and frost at night.

FIELD CROPS: Corn planting is active in Leon County. Tobacco transplanting is in full swing in Union County. Flowering trees and shrubs grown as ornamental nursery crops are blooming and forming buds in Jefferson County. Soils continue to dry across the Panhandle and northern Peninsula with soil moisture rated mostly adequate in the Panhandle and short to adequate across the northern Peninsula. Holmes, Jackson and Jefferson counties reported a few spots of surplus soil moisture. Central and southern Peninsula areas report short to mostly adequate soil moisture with a few spots of very short soil moisture supplies in Broward County and a few spots of surplus moisture in Okeechobee and Marion counties.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	1	1	14	0	0	10
Short	29	4	26	30	5	18
Adequate	68	80	44	65	80	63
Surplus	2	15	16	5	15	9

VEGETABLES: Vegetable planting is in full swing in Union and Leon counties while southern Peninsula planting continues. Tomato transplanting is active in the Quincy area. Blueberries are in full bloom in Jackson County. Oldest potato plantings are in good condition while the harvesting of cabbage, broccoli, onion and leafy greens continues in the Hastings area. Other vegetables and non citrus fruit available include snap beans, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, escarole, endive, lettuce, peppers, radishes, squash, strawberries and tomatoes.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, warm temperatures during the day are helping winter forage growth but two weeks of drought is limiting growth in many locations. Some bahia grass pasture is being established. In the north, dry conditions and wildfire danger are preventing cleanup pasture burning.

Cattlemen are still feeding hay to livestock. In the central counties, summer pasture (bahia) started growing. Warmer temperatures combined with heavy grazing pressures are taxing pastures. In the southwest cattle condition is mostly fair. Statewide, the condition of cattle is mostly fair, down from mostly good last week.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	5	5	0	0
Poor	10	10	10	5
Fair	65	50	55	35
Good	20	35	30	55
Excellent	0	0	5	5

CITRUS: Spring like, mild weather prevailed throughout the citrus belt this week with daytime high temperatures in the upper 70s and lows only into the lower to mid 40s on one morning. No rainfall was reported for the second week. Growers are returning to frequent irrigation as trees enter into various stages of bloom. Growers are reporting abundant new growth and bloom from the swelling bud state, to full, open bloom on oranges and grapefruit. Lower interior areas are showing open bloom on oranges and grapefruit while coastal and upper interior areas are entering into the open bloom stage. 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, and Honey tangerines. Processing plants are receiving and processing fruit with weekly volumes of early-mid oranges declining as grapefruit and Valencia orange amounts increase.

Estimated boxes harvested week ended

Crop	Feb 29	Mar 7	Mar 14
Navel oranges	4,000	6,000	4,000
Early and Mid oranges	3,683,000	1,897,000	1,135,000
Valencia oranges	1,630,000	1,802,000	4,292,000
Grapefruit	1,778,000	2,070,000	2,432,000
Early tangerines	2,000	2,000	2,000
Honey tangerines	158,000	153,000	166,000
Tangelos	8,000	3,000	0
Temples	94,000	147,000	140,000

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