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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 21, 2004

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March 22, 2004

WEATHER SUMMARY: Welcomed rain fell in most areas early in the week of March 14 through 20. Rainfall totaled from traces at Quincy, Tallahassee, Carrabelle, Immokalee and Homestead, to nearly five inches at Hastings and a little over four inches at Pierson. Several localities reported one to two inches of rain for the week while a few others recorded a quarter to a half inch. Temperatures for the week averaged from one to five degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s while nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s.

FIELD CROPS: Producers are preparing land for cotton and peanut planting in Santa Rosa County. Tobacco transplanting is finished in Union County. Dry soils in a few Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities are preventing some planting. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are rated short to adequate in the Panhandle and in the northern and southern Peninsula. Central Peninsula soil moisture supplies are rated mostly adequate. Broward County reported very short topsoil moisture. Flagler County reported surplus topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies while Osceola and Okeechobee counties reported adequate to surplus topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	1	1	5	0	0	4
Short	19	29	10	25	30	7
Adequate	77	68	70	72	65	75
Surplus	3	2	15	3	5	14

VEGETABLES: Rainfall caused very few interruptions in planting and harvesting with most on schedule. Cabbage cutting around Hastings slowed until soils drained the abundant rain. Oldest potato fields in the Hastings area are starting to bloom with most digging to begin about mid-April. Oldest sweet corn plantings are starting to emerge in the Hastings area. Rain showers delayed some strawberry picking in the Plant City area with most on schedule. Other vegetables and non citrus fruit available include snap beans, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, escarole, endive, lettuce, potatoes, peppers, radishes, squash and tomatoes.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle area, pasture condition is mostly good, with rain needed. In the northern counties, pasture condition is mostly fair due to drought and cold. Pasture is greening up, but haying of livestock is still active.

In the central area, pasture is mostly fair with some areas poor due to cold and short moisture. In the southwest area, range condition is mostly fair with cattle in poor to excellent condition. Statewide, the condition of the cattle is poor to excellent with most in fair condition.

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

CITRUS: Spring like, mild weather prevailed for another week in the citrus belt with daytime high temperatures in the mid 80s and lows only into the upper 40s on one morning. The only rainfall was associated with a cold front that passed through the State early in the week. Rainfall was variable. Some areas received over two inches and others less than one-half inch. The rainfall was welcome by growers at this critical bloom stage. Most growers are returning to frequent irrigation as trees are in all stages of bloom. Growers are reporting abundant new growth and full open bloom statewide. Lower interior areas are showing abundant petal drop while coastal and upper interior areas are in full, open bloom. Cultural practices 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.

Crop	Estimated boxes harvested week ended		
	Mar 7	Mar 14	Mar 21
Navel oranges	6,000	4,000	2,000
Early and Mid oranges	1,634,000	1,135,000	146,000
Valencia oranges	2,403,000	4,292,000	6,684,000
Grapefruit	2,419,000	2,432,000	2,108,000
Early tangerines	1,000	2,000	0
Honey tangerines	170,000	166,000	177,000
Tangelos	1,000	0	0
Temples	157,000	140,000	52,000

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