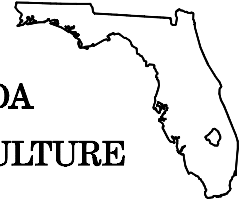




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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending December 26, 2004

Released 4:00 P.M.

December 27, 2004

WEATHER SUMMARY: A cold front passing over the State at the end of the week of December 20 through 26 brought much needed rain to most areas. Rainfall for the week in the major cities ranged from none in Homestead to over three and a half inches in Pensacola. The Panhandle and Big Bend areas received two to three inches with some coastal localities recording over four inches. Northern Peninsula localities received a half inch to two inches. Most central and southern Peninsula areas reported a half inch to over three inches with some west central localities saturated and the extreme southern Peninsula recording none or only traces for the week. Temperatures plunged below normal with the weekly average temperature two to nine degrees below normal. Daytime highs averaged in the 50s, 60s and 70s with a few southern Peninsula areas recording at least one high in the 80s. Nighttime lows averaged from the 30s to the 60s. Several Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities recorded at least one low in the 20s. Some frosts occurred in a few central Peninsula areas with several Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities reporting frost and a few hard freezes.

FIELD CROPS: Sugarcane harvesting was active in the Everglades region. Soil moisture supplies were short to mostly adequate in most areas prior to the late week rainfall. The end of week rains saturated some low lying areas and caused surplus soil moisture supplies, especially in the Panhandle and west central Peninsula. In the extreme southeastern Peninsula, soils remained dry with no significant rain falling over the area during the week.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	1	13	1	1	11	4
Short	9	30	19	14	22	16
Adequate	75	55	78	80	60	79
Surplus	15	2	2	5	7	1

VEGETABLES: Some planting and harvesting slowed as the rain spread southward and growers observed the holidays. Cooler temperatures slowed the maturation of some crops but aided the development of strawberries. Vegetables and non citrus fruit marketed during the week included snap beans, cabbage, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, radishes, strawberries, squash and tomatoes. Celery harvesting is getting underway in the Lake Okeechobee area.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle and northern areas, freezing temperatures slowed the growth of small grain winter forage. Supplemental hay feeding was active in the north and central areas. In the central areas, pasture condition is poor to fair due to cold temperatures. Standing water is receding in flooded pastures. In the southwest areas, cold weather and drought limited grass growth. Statewide, the condition of cattle is mostly fair.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	30	25	5	10
Fair	55	65	55	65
Good	15	9	35	20
Excellent	0	1	5	5

CITRUS: A cold front moved across the citrus belt on Monday night, bringing temperatures ranging from 28 degrees in the Bradenton area to 40 in Ft. Pierce. In areas where the temperatures were below freezing, the duration was less than three hours, and was not long or cold enough to cause any freeze damage. The middle of the week was mild and dry until Christmas Day, when rain bands covered the State. All stations reported at least a half an inch on Christmas. The Southern stations (Sebring and Ona) reported the most at over two inches. The removal of dead or damaged trees and reduction of excessive weed growth is occurring in citrus groves. Color break is evident on late oranges in many areas. Early and mid oranges are going to processing plants, while fresh fruit packing houses are still running early oranges (Navels and Hamlins), white and colored grapefruit, Sunburst and Honey tangerines and tangelos.

ESTIMATED BOXES HARVESTED WEEK ENDED

Crop	Dec 12	Dec 19	Dec 26
<i>In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes</i>			
Early & Mid oranges	4,790	5,610	4,004
Navel oranges	309	187	61
Grapefruit	414	471	367
Early tangerines	239	222	122
Honey Tangerines	0	0	6
Tangelos	125	77	39

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