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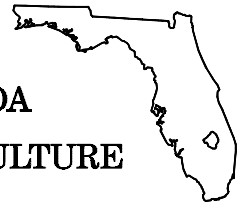
WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending February 27, 2005

Released 4:00 P.M.

February 28, 2005

**FLORIDA
 AGRICULTURE**



WEATHER SUMMARY: Scattered showers across the Peninsula brought much needed rains to many localities, especially in the central Peninsula during the last few days of the week of February 21 through 27. Significant rains in some southern Peninsula localities helped decrease the threat of wildland fires in high risk areas; however, more rains are still needed. Areas in the northern and central Peninsula are still at potential risk for wildland fires. Rainfall ranged from under a tenth of an inch at Homestead to over five inches at Bradenton. Many Panhandle and Peninsula localities received two to three inches of precipitation. Fort Pierce received a little over four inches. About half an inch fell over the southeastern coast, while elsewhere rain totaled about one and a half to two inches. Temperatures averaged from two to six degrees above normal in the major cities. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s with nighttime lows were in the 40s, 50s and 60s.

FIELD CROPS: Sugarcane harvesting was active in the Everglades region. Panhandle and northern Peninsula producers continued preparation of fields for planting. Rain during the week replenished some Panhandle and northern Peninsula soil moisture supplies. Dry conditions for most of the week over the central and southeastern coast left most soil moisture supplies very short to short with the end of week rains providing some increase. Recent rains over the Panhandle and northern Peninsula plus rainfall at the end of the week furnished moisture to soils with supplies rated short to mostly adequate. Central Peninsula soil moisture was rated mostly short to adequate with weekend rains boosting supplies in most areas. Holmes, Union and Marion counties reported some spots with surplus soil moisture while Hernando County's soil moisture still ranges from very short to surplus.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	15	27	0	10	24	0
Short	45	48	5	50	30	6
Adequate	39	24	72	39	45	75
Surplus	1	1	23	1	1	19

VEGETABLES: Mild conditions during most of the week allowed planting and harvesting to remain on schedule. However, significant rains curtailed field work at the end of the period with growers currently assessing damages from the storms. Picking of sweet corn is starting to slow seasonally. Other vegetables and non citrus fruit marketed by growers included snap beans, cabbage, celery, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, strawberries and tomatoes. Very light amounts of cucumbers were also available.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, pasture performance is poor due to dry conditions. Winter forages are in fair condition and permanent grasses are beginning to reappear in some locations. Red clover is blooming. Supplies of hay for feeding have been adequate, in part, helped by the mild winter weather. In the southwest, the condition of cattle is good while pasture condition is mostly fair. Stock ponds are dry or are drying up. Statewide, cattle are in fair to good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	5	0	5	0
Poor	40	55	5	5
Fair	35	35	50	30
Good	20	10	35	60
Excellent	0	0	5	5

CITRUS: Much needed rainfall fell towards the end of the week in all citrus producing counties. The west coast recorded the most at over 5 inches, followed by the east coast at 4 inches and the center of the state at 3½ inches. Temperatures were in the low to mid 50s at night, and low to mid 80s during the day for most of the week. Field representatives are reporting more feathery new growth with small bloom buds beginning to show on oranges and grapefruit. Growers are still fertilizing, mowing and conducting post harvest hedging. Early and mid oranges are still being harvested heavily with the harvesting of late oranges (Valencias) and Temples increasing, primarily for processing. Decreasing quantities of tangelos will also be added to processing. Early, mid and late oranges are being harvested for packing with increasing amounts of white and colored grapefruit, and increasing amounts of Temples and Honey tangerines also going fresh.

ESTIMATED BOXES HARVESTED WEEK ENDED

Crop	Feb 13	Feb 20	Feb 27
<i>In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes</i>			
Early & Mid oranges	5,575	4,320	3,798
Navel oranges	27	16	6
Late oranges	57	61	180
Grapefruit	613	553	555
Tangelos	79	40	33
Sunburst tangerines	2	15	21
Honey tangerines	125	100	98
Temples	100	102	65

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