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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 6, 2005

Released 4:00 P.M.

March 7, 2005

WEATHER SUMMARY: Cooler, wetter conditions helped ease the danger of wild fires during the week of February 28 through March 6. However, some northern Peninsula counties, especially in the Big Bend area and the extreme southeastern Peninsula, remain susceptible to outbreaks of wild fires. Temperatures in the major cities averaged three to eight degrees below normal. Daytime highs were in the 60s and 70s with Ft. Lauderdale, Homestead, Miami and West Palm Beach recording at least one high in the 80s. Nighttime lows averaged in the 30s, 40s and 50s with Miami lows averaging in the 60s. Live Oak recorded at least one low in the 20s during the week. Rainfall ranged from less than a tenth inch at Hastings, Marianna, MacClenny and Quincy, to over two inches in Tallahassee.

FIELD CROPS: In the Everglades, sugarcane harvesting was active with recent rains causing few delays. Panhandle, central and northern Peninsula producers continued land preparations for planting. This week's precipitation replenished soil moisture in most central, northern and southern Peninsula localities. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies are short to mostly adequate with nearly all areas reporting some short supplies. A few areas across the Peninsula that received rainfall reported some surplus soil moisture. Scattered spots of Dade County that missed some of the recent rainfall had very short to adequate subsoil moisture while Broward County reported very short to short moisture supplies. Soil moisture supplies in Hernando County ranged from short to surplus.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	2	15	1	1	10	1
Short	11	45	4	10	50	5
Adequate	84	39	78	84	39	79
Surplus	3	1	17	5	1	16

VEGETABLES: Rains at mid-week delayed some field work, especially in the Immokalee area. Growers in the Quincy area continued to transplant tomatoes with activity expected through the end of March. In Jefferson County, some plum, apple, fig and other deciduous fruit completed flowering and leaf development due to recent warmer temperatures; there could be a loss of fruit if a late freeze hits. Producers in Jefferson County also prepared land for watermelon planting. Recent periods of cool, wet weather in Hernando County favored disease development in blueberries. Vegetables and non-citrus fruit harvested included snap beans, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, strawberries, sweet corn and tomatoes.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, permanent pastures started to emerge, but grazing pasture is some weeks away. Crimson

clover is blooming and pasture establishment is underway. Cold nights limited small grain forage and grass growth. Hay feeding was active with supplies adequate at this time. In northern areas, pastures began to recover from winter frost and freeze damage. In the central areas, Bahia and Bermuda grass pastures started growing. The combination of rain and warmer temperatures initiated pasture growth. In the southwestern areas, longer days and warmer temperatures helped grass growth. Statewide, the condition of cattle is mostly fair to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	5	5	5	5
Poor	20	40	15	5
Fair	45	35	40	50
Good	30	20	40	35
Excellent	0	0	0	5

CITRUS: Scattered rain fell during the middle of the week in all citrus producing counties. Ft. Pierce recorded the most at over 1 inch; Lake Alfred recorded the least at one tenth of an inch. Two cold fronts, one on Tuesday and one on Saturday, brought temperatures to the low 40s. Various stages of bloom are being reported across the State from pinhead bloom buds to blossoms erupting, primarily from stressed trees. The cooler temperatures and small amounts of sunlight could delay full bloom for a while. More feathery new growth began to show on all varieties. Cultural practices include fertilizing, mowing and post harvest hedging. Early and mid oranges are still being harvested with the picking of late oranges (Valencias) and Temples increasing, primarily for processing. Early, mid and late oranges were harvested for packing, with white and colored grapefruit increasing, and increasing amounts of Temples and Honey tangerines also going fresh.

ESTIMATED BOXES HARVESTED WEEK ENDED

Crop	Feb 20	Feb 27	Mar 06
In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes			
Early & Mid oranges	4,886	3,798	2,453
Navel oranges	12	6	0
Late oranges	62	180	690
Grapefruit	626	555	606
Tangelos	58	33	49
Sunburst tangerines	1	21	6
Honey tangerines	117	98	119
Temples	104	65	105

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