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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending March 27, 2005

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Significant rainfall over the northern and most of the central Peninsula as well as the Panhandle region helped elevate soil moisture supplies during the week of March 21 through 27. Rainfall totaled from less than a tenth inch at Ft. Lauderdale to nearly six inches in Pierson. Most southern Peninsula localities rainfall totaled from under a tenth inch to nearly one inch with some areas still needing more precipitation. Several areas throughout the northern and central Peninsula received rains that ranged from over of an inch to almost four inches of rainfall with a few localities reporting under an inch of precipitation. Scattered areas of the Panhandle also received substantial showers with Jay reporting over three inches and Jackson County reporting five inches of rainfall. Temperatures for the week in the major cities averaged from two to five degrees above normal. Daytime highs were in the 70s and 80s. Miami recorded at least one high in the 90s. Nighttime lows were in 50s, 60s and 70s with some localities reporting at least one low in the 40s.

FIELD CROPS: In the Panhandle and northern Peninsula, plowing and disking of land for peanut and cotton planting was very active between showers. Some field corn germinated well and was reported to be in good condition in Jackson County. Sugarcane harvesting slowed seasonally with activity expected to be completed this week. Ample rains over the northern Peninsula and most of the central Peninsula and Panhandle kept soil moisture supplies mostly adequate to surplus. Lesser amounts of rain in some central Peninsula areas and most of the southern Peninsula kept some soils dry and in need of moisture. Hernando and Washington counties reported some spots of short soil moisture while several counties along the southeastern coast continued to report very short to short soil moisture. Statewide, soil moisture supplies were rated mostly adequate to surplus.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	1	1	4	1	1	2
Short	4	4	33	4	10	32
Adequate	65	79	62	75	74	65
Surplus	30	16	1	20	15	1

VEGETABLES: Most southern Peninsula vegetable areas escaped the frequent showers this week with planting and harvesting on schedule. Potato harvesting around the Hastings area is expected to begin in one to two weeks. Some potato fields are saturated around the Hastings region with fields draining nicely and no significant water damage expected. The low carb and other types of potatoes from Southern Peninsula areas are currently being marketed. Blueberry harvesting got underway with very light amounts available. Other vegetables and non citrus marketed during the week included snap beans, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, peppers, potatoes, radishes, squash, sweet corn, strawberries and tomatoes. Light supplies of endive, escarole, eggplant and lettuce were also available.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, permanent pasture is greening up following rain and warmer temperatures. In the north, winter forages are growing well. Some pasture is drying out from the weekend rains. In the south, pastures are greening up and cattle condition improved somewhat. Statewide, the condition of cattle is fair to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
	<i>Percent</i>			
Very poor	5	5	5	0
Poor	10	10	10	5
Fair	40	25	35	20
Good	45	60	50	75
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Warmer weather prevailed during most of the week in all citrus producing counties with rainfall levels between one tenth of an inch in Ona, to over three inches in Tavares. Oranges are in full bloom with some petal drop in the northern, western and southern counties. Bloom progression is still two to three weeks behind in some of the eastern counties, primarily due to the cooler temperatures earlier in the month. Cultural practices include applying herbicides, fertilizing, aerial spraying and post harvest hedging. Early and mid orange harvesting is almost complete with increasing amounts of late oranges (Valencias) being picked mostly for processing. White and colored grapefruit are being picked for both fresh and processing. Tangelo and Temple harvesting is decreasing, with Honey tangerine harvest remaining steady, primarily for the fresh market.

ESTIMATED BOXES HARVESTED WEEK ENDED			
Crop	Mar 13	Mar 20	Mar 27
In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes			
Early & Mid oranges	1,064	360	91
Late oranges	1,609	2,183	3,523
Grapefruit	517	503	418
Tangelos	15	5	5
Honey tangerines	128	115	118
Temples	36	8	8

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