

Weather Crop Report

Week ending October 30, 2005

WILMA WREAKS HAVOC ON SOUTHERN PENINSULA CROPS

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WEATHER SUMMARY: Strong rain bands crossed the central and southern Peninsula early in the week of October 24 through 30 due to Hurricane Wilma. The storm made landfall on Monday, October 24 near Naples, spinning off tornadoes in the southern Peninsula in addition to bringing copious amounts of rain to central and southern Peninsula localities. Many areas in the central and southern Peninsula received nearly one to seven inches. Brooksville recorded no rain while Coral Springs received nearly 26 inches of rainfall. There were many areas that reported more than the "official" amount of rain. Panhandle and northern Peninsula localities received no rain or traces of rain for the week with rainfall needed to help aid crop development. A cold front system swept through the State after Wilma, dropping temperatures significantly for the week. Temperatures at the major stations averaged five to nine degrees below normal which set new record lows in some localities. Daytime highs were in the 60s, 70s and low 80s. Cool evening temperatures were in the 40s, 50s and 60s with several areas recording at least one low in the 30s.

FIELD CROPS: Peanut and cotton harvesting proceeded mostly on schedule as the Panhandle and northern Peninsula escaped the effects of Hurricane Wilma. Peanut digging was 95 percent finished by the end of the week compared with 94 percent last year and the five-year average of 95 percent completed by October 30. Peanut yields in Jackson County are below average with picking over 95 percent done. In Gadsden County, producers finished peanut digging. In Suwannee County, peanut harvesting should be completed in ten to fourteen days. Cotton picking remained very active in Jackson County with some excellent yields realized. In Washington County, cotton harvest was ahead of schedule. Rain and wind from the storm damaged a significant portion of the sugarcane crop around Lake Okeechobee and Immokalee with flooded fields halting most cutting during the week. Strong winds and pounding rains broke some sugarcane tops and laid over most plants. The broken sugarcane plants will form new shoots and growers hoped most intact plants would eventually stand back up as fields drained. Sugar content is expected to be lower and harvesting will be delayed for damaged plants. Hay cutting was active in the Panhandle and northern Peninsula. Topsoil and subsoil moisture supplies over most of the central and southern Peninsula were rated adequate to surplus due to abundant rainfall early in the week. However, a few spots of short soil moisture were reported for Polk County. Over the Panhandle and Big Bend areas, reports showed very short to short soil moisture with a few areas reporting adequate supplies. Elsewhere, soil moisture was rated short to adequate.



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Percentage of Peanuts Harvested to date:		
This week	Last year	5-year average
95	94	95

Moisture Rating	Topsoil			Subsoil		
	This week	Last week	Last year	This week	Last week	Last Year
	<i>Percent</i>					
Very short	10	6	0	4	7	0
Short	30	45	19	35	40	5
Adequate	40	27	68	43	28	77
Surplus	20	22	13	18	25	18

VEGETABLES: Hurricane Wilma damaged several vegetable fields across the southern Peninsula as the storm made landfall leaving many fields saturated. Harvesting was curtailed in many areas across the central and southern Peninsula due to storm damage or saturated fields with many vegetable growers still assessing the damage. A lack of labor hindered the salvaging of transplants. A shortage of transplants may reduce the amount of acreage replanted and will delay scheduled plantings in some areas. Around Immokalee, some snap beans, sweet corn and watermelons are at 100 percent loss with only a minimal amount of squash salvaged. Wilma's winds did not blow any plastic off the strawberry fields. Cool temperatures following Wilma boosted

strawberry plant growth and berry development. In Manatee County, some fruit from tomato vines and plants looked wind-whipped but are expected to recover with tomato picking to begin in early November. Growers expected bacteria on tomatoes to spread but they will try to contain plant disease by spraying pesticides. Growers continued to plant cabbage in St. Johns County with harvesting expected to begin in December. Producers marketed light supplies of snap beans, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, peppers, squash, tomatoes and watermelons.

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: In the Panhandle, early-planted stands of ryegrass are dying and may need to be replanted. Cool season annual forage planting has stopped in several counties due to drought. The pasture condition is very poor to good. In the northern areas, livestock producers began planting winter rye for grazing. Two nights of scattered frost reduced warm season pasture conditions. Cool season forage planting is on hold due to drought. In the central area, planting of small grains for forage is active. Cattle condition is good; the range is in fair condition. In the central and southern counties crossed by Hurricane Wilma, considerable forage and grass quality has been heavily reduced due to excess water. The cattle are losing condition as a result. Statewide, the cattle condition is mostly fair to good.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	This week	Last week	This week	Last week
<i>Percent</i>				
Very poor	5	0	0	0
Poor	15	20	5	10
Fair	20	30	45	40
Good	60	50	50	50
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Hurricane Wilma entered the State Monday south of Naples as a category 3 storm with winds at 125 mph. The path took it over the lower portion of the Gulf citrus production area with hurricane force winds reported 60 to 80 miles on each side. It moved quickly without losing strength and passed about 30 miles south of Lake Okeechobee leaving the State over Palm Beach. As it left the State, the trailing eye wall produced higher winds than the front wall and exceeded 100 mph in citrus producing counties on the East Coast, north to Indian River. The hurricane was steered southward by a strong cold front approaching from the northwest. The cold front brought near record low temperatures. There was no rain in the citrus areas the rest of the week. In the lower interior and in the East Coast counties, growers and field personnel reported considerable fruit on the ground. The larger size fruit (grapefruit and Navel oranges) and early maturing varieties of oranges sustained the heaviest losses. Reports indicate leaves and branches were blown off and broken to varying degrees with complete defoliation rare. Trees on outside rows receiving the direct wind were reported uprooted to varying degrees. Rainfall amounts preceding and during the passage of the storm were heavy in all areas. Amounts up to 12 inches were reported in the East Coast and southern areas. Lakes and canals are at high levels and growers and caretakers are lowering lateral ditch and canal levels where possible to move water away from tree roots. Standing water in groves is limiting access at this time. Limited harvest was occurring before the hurricane, mostly for fresh shipments. Varieties included Navel and Ambersweet oranges, Fallglo tangerines, and grapefruit. Harvest in hurricane affected areas is limited at this time.

ESTIMATED BOXES HARVESTED - WEEK ENDED			
Crop	Oct 16	Oct 23	Oct 30
In thousands of 1-3/5 bushel boxes			
Navel oranges	30	88	61
Early and Mid oranges	13	41	37
Grapefruit	20	79	120
Tangerines	68	124	104

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