

The Week in Florida Agriculture

March 17-23, 2008

Dry, clear conditions are allowing land preparations for field crop planting to continue. Spring planting of vegetables is under way in parts of the Panhandle.

Potato plantings are in good condition. Harvesting of broccoli and cabbage is winding down.

Growers are preparing land to plant peanuts and cotton.

Vegetables: Producers throughout the state are marketing snap beans, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, escarole, peppers, squash, strawberries, okra, radishes and tomatoes.

Livestock and Pastures: Pastures flooded from locally heavy rains are returning to normal. Warmer weather and adequate rain favored pasture conditions in most areas; however, nighttime temperatures near freezing have slowed forage growth. Permanent summer grasses are starting to green up, but there has been no significant growth. The condition of cattle is mostly fair. In central areas, pasture condition is very poor to good, with most in poor condition. Cattle condition is mostly fair. In the southwestern areas, pasture is very poor to good, with most in poor condition. Scattered showers are keeping pastures green. Statewide, cattle condition is very poor to good, with most in fair condition.

Drought Update: Most localities reported very little rainfall during the week, except for areas in the central and southern peninsula. Homestead reported 2.5 inches of rain. Collier, Broward and Glades reported 1.8 inches, 1.5 inches and 1.2 inches of rain, respectively. In the central peninsula, Hillsborough received about an inch of precipitation. Most other areas to the north of the peninsula and in the Panhandle received very little measurable rain. Seasonal pasture fertilization has been limited this year due to extremely high fertilizer prices. Low fertilization combined with the effects of the drought pose a serious problem to future forage stands. Lake Okeechobee Level is at 10.26 feet.

Citrus: All citrus-producing areas received some rainfall, amounts ranged from 0.25 inch to over 1.75 inches in the lower interior areas. The reported rainfall was very beneficial for the spring flush of new growth and bloom. Growth flush with full, open bloom on orange trees is being reported. Grapefruit and tangerine varieties are beginning to show some open bloom and expanding buds in most areas. Early fertilizer applications continue with some irrigation to support the new growth and bloom. Systemic pesticide applications continue to promote healthier trees for better crop set. Varieties being harvested include declining amounts of early, midseason, and Temple oranges, increasing amounts of Valencia oranges; and steady grapefruit and Honey tangerines.