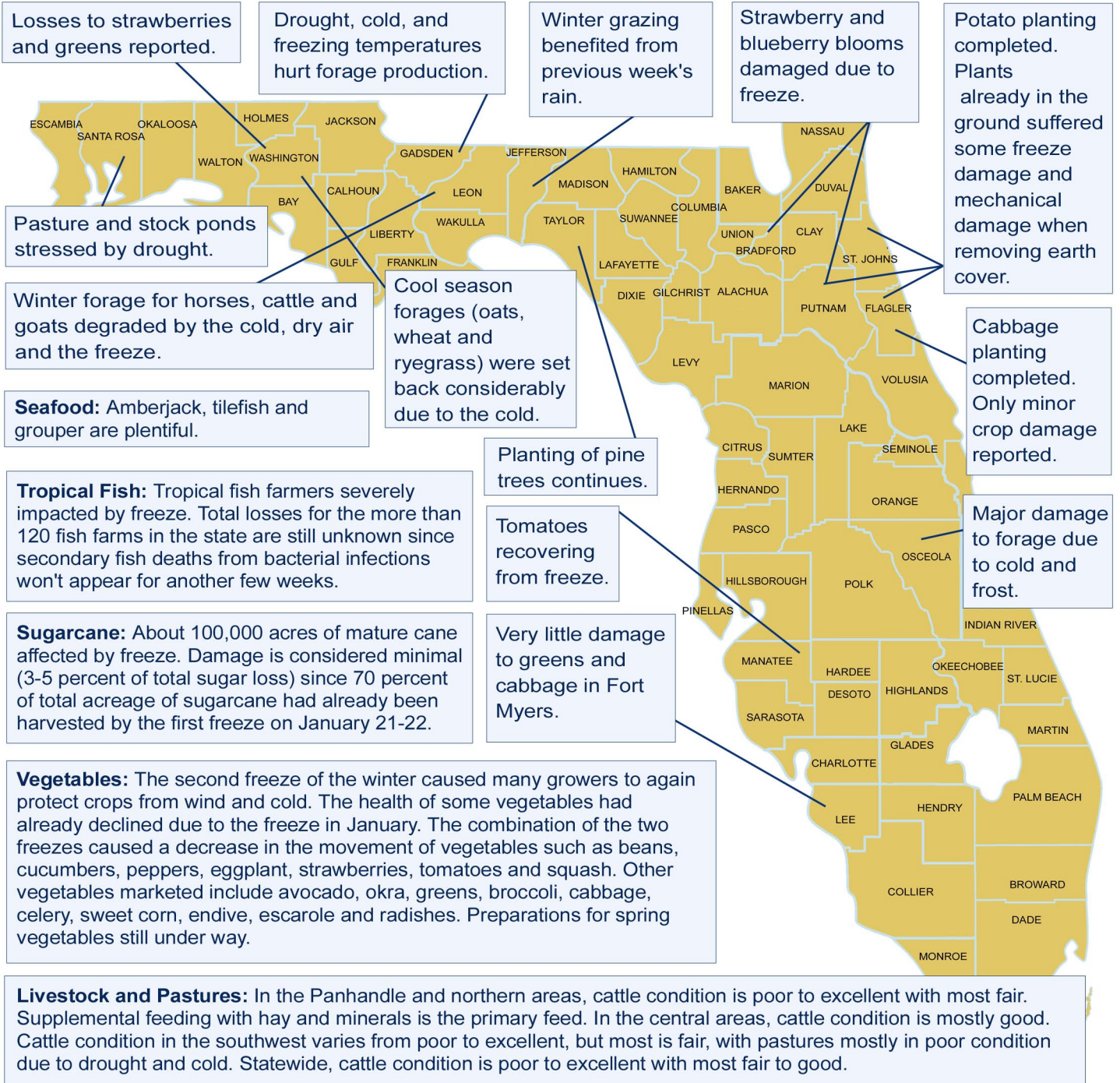


The Week in Florida Agriculture

February 2-8, 2009



Losses to strawberries and greens reported.

Drought, cold, and freezing temperatures hurt forage production.

Winter grazing benefited from previous week's rain.

Strawberry and blueberry blooms damaged due to freeze.

Potato planting completed. Plants already in the ground suffered some freeze damage and mechanical damage when removing earth cover.

Pasture and stock ponds stressed by drought.

Winter forage for horses, cattle and goats degraded by the cold, dry air and the freeze.

Seafood: Amberjack, tilefish and grouper are plentiful.

Cool season forages (oats, wheat and ryegrass) were set back considerably due to the cold.

Planting of pine trees continues.

Tomatoes recovering from freeze.

Tropical Fish: Tropical fish farmers severely impacted by freeze. Total losses for the more than 120 fish farms in the state are still unknown since secondary fish deaths from bacterial infections won't appear for another few weeks.

Sugarcane: About 100,000 acres of mature cane affected by freeze. Damage is considered minimal (3-5 percent of total sugar loss) since 70 percent of total acreage of sugarcane had already been harvested by the first freeze on January 21-22.

Very little damage to greens and cabbage in Fort Myers.

Cabbage planting completed. Only minor crop damage reported.

Major damage to forage due to cold and frost.

Vegetables: The second freeze of the winter caused many growers to again protect crops from wind and cold. The health of some vegetables had already declined due to the freeze in January. The combination of the two freezes caused a decrease in the movement of vegetables such as beans, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, strawberries, tomatoes and squash. Other vegetables marketed include avocado, okra, greens, broccoli, cabbage, celery, sweet corn, endive, escarole and radishes. Preparations for spring vegetables still under way.

Livestock and Pastures: In the Panhandle and northern areas, cattle condition is poor to excellent with most fair. Supplemental feeding with hay and minerals is the primary feed. In the central areas, cattle condition is mostly good. Cattle condition in the southwest varies from poor to excellent, but most is fair, with pastures mostly in poor condition due to drought and cold. Statewide, cattle condition is poor to excellent with most fair to good.

Citrus: Cold fronts and freezing temperatures returned Tuesday, with a hard freeze warning in many citrus-producing counties. Citrus growers took preventive measures to lessen the impact to their citrus crop through irrigation. The State of Florida relaxed weight restrictions for citrus trucks, which allowed growers to increase their load size and speed the harvest. Mid-week the freezing temperatures returned with minimal precipitation. Early morning lows ranged from 18 degrees in Brooksville, mid 20s in Arcadia, to 23 degrees in Palmdale. Widely scattered reports from the groves indicated some fruit and tree damage. Trees that survived the recent freezing temperatures appear to be healthy in the well-tended groves. New bloom and growth has not been seen thus far. Caretakers were fertilizing, hedging, irrigating, and removing brush while others are taking a more proactive approach to greening by pushing affected trees. The Honey tangerine harvest was over 100,000 boxes last week and is expected to hold constant for the next several weeks. Grapefruit increased to over 1 million boxes while the early and midseason orange harvest was expected to continue at around the 5 million box level until the crop is fully harvested in early to mid-March. Varieties being harvested included early, midseason, Navel, Temple, Valencia oranges; grapefruit; Sunburst and Honey tangerines and tangelos.