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WEATHER & CROP NEWS

Week ending September 17, 2000

Released 4:00 P.M.

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FLORIDA
AGRICULTURE



WEATHER SUMMARY: Rainfall for the week of September 10 through 16 was mostly limited to two thirds inch or less except for early week rains totaling from two to over four inches in the Dade County area. At the end of the week and on Sunday, September 17, the passage of Hurricane Gordon through the Florida straits and off the western coast brought significant rains to the Immokalee, Palmetto-Ruskin, and East Coast regions. The Palmetto-Ruskin area recorded from five and a half to eight inches through Sunday. Ft. Myers recorded over six inches from the storm. Fort Pierce measured about three inches and Homestead almost an inch and a half from the storm. Northern Peninsula areas received rain and wind as the storm crossed over the area late Sunday into Monday, September 17 and 18. Jacksonville recorded almost an inch of rain from the storm while Gainesville measured almost two inches. Most western Panhandle areas escaped effects from the storm.

FIELD CROPS: Topsoil moisture throughout the State is mostly short to adequate with scattered areas of surplus moisture. Tobacco marketing is active. Crops are stressed by heat and drought in some areas. Cotton harvest is starting. The sugarcane crop is in good condition. Soybeans are mostly in good condition. Corn for grain harvest is winding down. Haying is active weather permitting. Peanut condition is reported at 17% poor, 67% fair, and 16% good. Seventeen percent of the peanuts for nuts are reported harvested.

Moisture Rating	Topsoil		Subsoil	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very short	1	0	6	14
Short	10	16	32	22
Adequate	86	81	57	64
Surplus	3	3	5	0

LIVESTOCK AND PASTURES: The State's range and pasture is in fair to good condition. In the Panhandle and northern tier counties, pasture and cattle are in fair to good condition. Pasture in the Big Bend area is in good condition. In the central counties, pastures look good and grass is growing. Drought conditions prevailed until late in the week. In the west central area, cattle are getting fat. Pasture growth is fair to good. In the southwest, the condition of cattle and calves is fair to good while pasture condition is good. Statewide, cattle and calves are in fair to good condition.

Condition	Range		Cattle	
	Last week	This week	Last week	This week
	Percent			
Very poor	0	0	0	0
Poor	5	0	0	0
Fair	25	40	30	35
Good	65	60	70	65
Excellent	0	0	0	0

CITRUS: Rains associated with Hurricane Gordon on Saturday night and Sunday added a lot of much needed moisture to Florida's citrus soils. Rainfall amounts varied with the largest

amounts falling in counties on the west coast. Isolated grove lands accumulated from 5 to 7 inches of new moisture. Most other agricultural areas received 1 to 4 inches of rain. The wet weather was very welcomed as this past week was quite dry in most citrus areas. The hurricane was downgraded to a tropical storm by the time it made landfall with very little effect to citrus. Fruit loss from droppage was minimal. New crop fruit continues to size well with some of the early bloom fruit showing the first stages of on-tree color break. There have been some early bloom red and white seedless grapefruit, Navels and Fallglo tangerines packed and shipped as of September 15.

Caretakers are mowing, chopping and discing cover crops that have grown tall and out of control. Several growers are also removing vines from their trees that are shading the leaves and fruit. Dead tree removal is active in all areas along with burning of the trees and general grove debris.

VEGETABLES: Strong winds and heavy rains accompanying Hurricane Gordon damaged some foliage and increased bloom drop in some southwestern, Palmetto-Ruskin, and East Coast fields. Dade County crops escaped major damage from the storm.

SNAP BEANS: Everglades--Planting started with a very small acreage in the ground. East Coast--Land preparation continues with only a very limited acreage planted. West Central--Growers expect to begin planting within the next five to seven days. Dade--Growers are preparing land.

SWEET CORN: Zellwood--Plants are knee-high with condition rated good prior to the storm. Everglades--Planting is active. East Coast--Planting is underway with germination good.

CUCUMBERS, Fresh Market: West Central--Planting is active. Crop condition is good.

PICKLES: West Central--Crop condition is good. Growth and development are normal. Central--Crop making good progress

EGGPLANT: East Coast--Planting remains active with condition rated good prior to the storm. West Central--Planting is finished. Southwest--Planting is gaining momentum. Condition was rated fair to good prior to the storm. Dade--Planting started with rains boosting growth and development. Workers continue to lay plastic.

ENDIVE/ESCAROLE: Everglades--Planting is underway.

LETTUCE: Everglades--Planting of Romaine, head, and leaf types is starting.

OKRA: Dade--Condition is rated good. Rains are aiding growth and development of young fields. Harvesting continues.

BELL PEPPERS: Southwest--Crop condition was rated fair to good prior to the storm. Planting is increasing. West Central--Planting is steady. East Coast--Oldest plants are starting to show blooms. Transplanting is steady. Workers are staking, drenching recent transplants with water and spraying for the control of disease.

HOT PEPPERS: Southwest--Planting is gaining momentum.

POTATOES: East Central--Planting started. Dade--Planting is expected to begin in late October.

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

SQUASH: West Central--Planting is increasing seasonally. Southwest--Planting is slowly gaining momentum. East Coast--Planting is limited. Germination is good.

STRAWBERRIES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Workers are preparing land for transplanting which is expected to begin in two to three weeks.

TOMATOES: Quincy--Most acreage escaped the effects of the storm. Harvesting is expected to start in late September. East Coast--Oldest plants are starting to set fruit. Transplanting is steady. Workers are leveling land, laying plastic, making ties, pruning, staking, and spraying for the prevention and control of disease and insects. Palmetto-Ruskin--Transplanting is nearly done. Fruit is setting. Recent heavy rains caused some bloom loss. Workers are staking, making first and second ties, and spraying for the control of disease and insects. Southwest--

Transplanting is on schedule. Recent high temperatures slowed the development of young plants. Workers are laying plastic, staking, and spraying for the control of insects and disease. Dade--Workers are preparing land for transplanting which is expected to start within the next seven to fourteen days.

CHERRY TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Planting is finished. Picking may start by early October. Southwest--Planting is increasing seasonally.

PLUM TOMATOES: Palmetto-Ruskin--Planting is slowing seasonally. Oldest plants show fruit set. Southwest--Planting is gaining momentum.

WATERMELONS: Palmetto-Ruskin--Oldest plants show good sized fruit. Planting is finished. Southwest--Planting is winding down.

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