



PALM BEACH COUNTY EXTENSION AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

February Freeze Déjà Vu

For the second year in a row, vegetable growers in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) were hit with a devastating freeze in the middle of February. Many growers were recovering from two nights of temperatures in the 20's and low 30's, pulling all-nighters on the 17th and 19th as they monitored temperatures, directed helicopters, and made all attempts at trying to save their crops.

Even though final damage numbers may not be known for weeks or even months, immediate crop losses are in the \$10's of millions. Very few crops escaped the cold temperatures – sweet corn, green beans, sugarcane – will all be affected. Other crops, such as sod, lettuce and leafy crops likely suffered variable degrees of damage, although not immediately evident – this damage will eventually be seen by lower than expected crop yields.



Above: Damage to green beans grown in the EAA was widespread.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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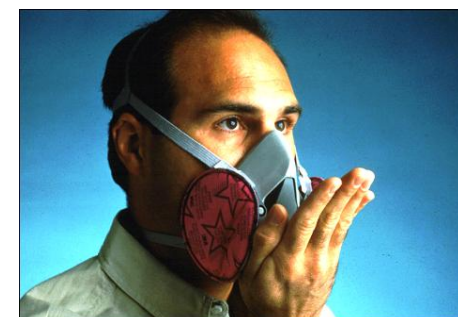
Belle Glade
2976 State Road 15
(561) 996-1655

Ron Rice
Agronomic Crops
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Kiley Harper
Agricultural Safety
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MARCH - APRIL 2007 EVENTS

Beginning March 29 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Natural Resource Issues Facing South Florida, Palm Beach Gardens 6 week continuing education course, offered in partnership with the Palm Beach Community College, registration required. For more information please contact Alyssa Dodd at (561) 233-1724
April 2 8 am - 10 am 10 am - noon 1 pm - 3 pm	Pesticide Applicator Training, West Palm Beach 2-Hour General Standards / Core Test Review (2 CEUs) Private Applicator Test Review (2 CEUs) Ornamental and Turf Test Review (2 CEUs) *Testing for any category offered 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
April 4 8 am - noon 1 pm - 3 pm	Pesticide Applicator Training, Belle Glade—Preregistration Required 4-Hour General Standards / Core Test Review (4 CEUs) Agricultural Row Crop Test Review (2 CEUs) *Testing for any category offered 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
April 9 8 am - 4 pm	Department of Transportation Pilot-Escort Training, West Palm Beach For more information please contact Kiley Harper at (561) 996-1655
April 13-15	Delray Affair, Delray Beach Visit the Farm Bureau Tents
April 17 9 am - 4 pm	Worker Protection Standards (WPS) Train the Trainer, West Palm Beach For more information please contact Kiley Harper at (561) 996-1655
April 28 9 am - 4 pm	7th Annual Grower Appreciation Dinner Dance Contact Ann Holt at (561) 346-2826 for tickets
April 28 9 am - 4 pm	7th Annual Sweet Corn Fiesta, West Palm Beach Yesteryear Village, South Florida Fairgrounds



Above: Instruction time and respirator proper fit testing are fundamental elements of a successful program that complies with local, state and federal mandates.

Call (561) 996-1655 to register your company for free respirator fit testing on May 18 at the Clayton Hutcheson Agricultural Center in West Palm Beach.

Breathe Easy with a Respiratory Protection Program

Of the top 10 violations cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), fines for inadequate or outdated respiratory protection programs ranked fourth. The OSHA standard for general industry (29 CFR 1910.134) governs respiratory protection programs. The following summary highlights key issues that will help your organization maintain a successful respiratory protection program.

1. You must have a written respiratory program.
2. You must have a trained respiratory program administrator.
3. Respiratory programs should be reviewed and updated whenever workplace conditions change.
4. Respirator selection procedures should be taught to management and employees.

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5. Employees required to use respirators must have medical evaluations.
6. Conduct fit-testing procedures for tight-fitting respirators.
7. Conduct procedures on proper respirator use (routine and emergency situations).
8. Implement a scheduled maintenance program to inspect, clean, disinfect, store, repair, and/or discard respirators.
9. Conduct procedures to ensure acceptable flow volumes of good breathing air quality for atmosphere-supplying respirators.
10. Conduct employee trainings on respiratory hazards they may encounter during routine and emergency situations.
11. Conduct employee trainings on proper respirator use, respirator limitations, and maintenance protocols.
12. Develop protocols to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of your respiratory protection program.

Your written respiratory program should also provide instructions for employees who prefer to wear a respirator (other than dust masks), even if not specifically required for their working situation.

A free respirator fit test will be held during WPS Handler training on May 18 at the Clayton Hutcheson Agricultural Center. To attend this May 18 event, or to schedule future fit tests or obtain help to develop your respiratory protection program, please contact Cesar Asuaje (561) 233-1727 or Kiley Harper (561) 996-1657.

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index: An Indicator of Potential Wildfire Activity

What is the Keetch-Byram drought index (KBDI)?

The index estimates the dryness of the soil and surface duff layers. It increases for each day without rain and decreases when it rains.

What is the index scale?

The scale ranges from 0 (no moisture deficit) to 800. The range of the index is determined by assuming that there is 8 inches of moisture in a saturated soil that is readily available to the vegetation. For different soil types, the depth of soil required to hold 8 inches of moisture varies (loam=30", clay=25" and sand=80").

What does a high index value mean?

It is an indication that conditions are favorable for the occurrence and spread of wildfires. A prolonged drought (high KBDI) influences fire

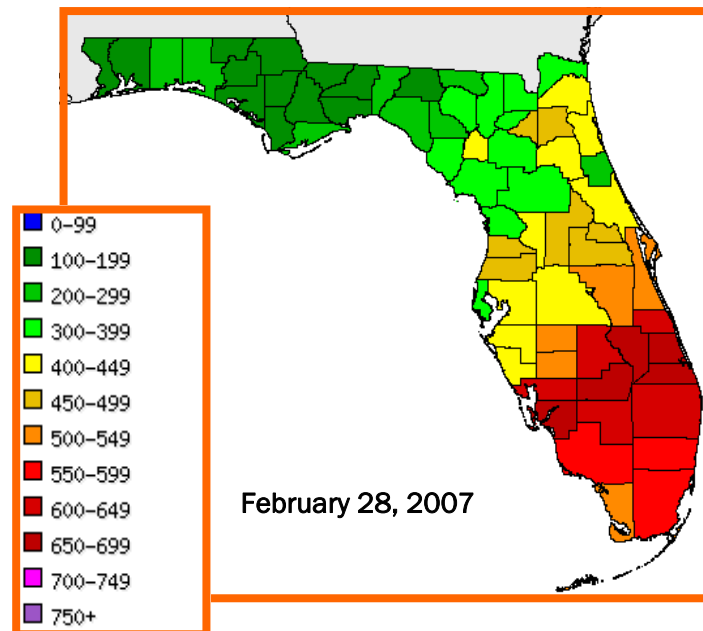
intensity largely because more fuel is available for combustion. However, drought is not by itself a prerequisite for wildfires. Other weather factors, such as wind, temperature, relative humidity and atmospheric stability, all play a major role.

Who uses the index?

The index is a tool used by the Florida Division of Forestry to provide current and forecast weather information to fire managers and fire suppression professionals across the state. High values of the drought index are associated with severe wildfire outbreaks such as occurred during 1998.

Where can I find more information?

This article was adapted from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services web site at: <http://www.fl-dof.com>



Left: A map of the current Keetch-Byram Drought Index statewide for February 28, 2007. For the latest map visit FDACS on the web.

NEWS AND NOTES

Both Monsanto and Syngenta Seeds have been issued new or amended experimental use permits (EUPs) from the EPA for modified (B.t.) corn seed. These trials may result in the corn lines being planted in Florida. (*Federal Register*, 1/24/07).

Tomato and pepper growers are seeing serious problems with western flower thrips (*Frankliniella occidentalis*) in numerous locations from Fort

Pierce to Boca Raton. Sources indicate that the thrips species have been positively identified by reputable sources.

Late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) continues to plague tomato growers around Southwest Florida and is widely present across the area. Favorable conditions over the past month to six weeks have contributed to the high level of pressure being reported by growers.

Thank You

Erickson Farm

(561) 924-7714



<http://www.ericksonfarm.com>

For sponsoring this newsletter issue!

Seven New Disaster Relief Programs for 2005 Hurricanes

USDA announces that growers suffering losses in 2005 from Hurricanes Katrina, Ophelia, Rita, and/or Wilma may be eligible for assistance. The signup period for six disaster programs began 11 December, 2006 and ends 30 March, 2007. The signup period for the seventh program (Tree Assistance Program) began 31 January, 2007 (end date not yet determined). Florida has 37 eligible counties, including most counties south of Orlando. USDA has allocated \$95 million for these programs.

Growers should carefully review specific eligibility requirements since they differ across each program. Additionally, past payments from earlier disaster relief programs (TIP, NAP, HIP, TAP, etc.) may need to be refunded before eligibility is considered for these new programs.

The USDA Farm Service Agency website contains fact sheets for the disaster relief programs (links provided below). For more information, please contact your local Farm Service Agency office: (561) 683-2285.

Citrus Program: Provides funds to eligible growers who suffered production losses and/or tree damage/losses. http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/citrus_06.pdf

Tropical Fruit Program: Provides funds to eligible tropical fruit growers in Tier I and Tier II groves who suffered production losses equal to or greater than 50% normal. http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/tropfruit_06.pdf

Nursery Program: Provides funds to eligible commercial nurseries (must have been registered with the State Division of Plant Industry (DPI) at the time of the storm disaster) that suffered inventory losses and/or incurred clean-up expenses. http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/nurs06.pdf

Fruit and Vegetable Program: Provides funds to eligible growers that suffered 35% or greater production losses or crop damages of at least 15%. http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/fruitveg_06.pdf

2005 Hurricane Tree Assistance Program: Provides funds to eligible producers with eligible stands of commercial trees, bushes/shrubs, or vines that suffered 15% or greater losses (no fact sheet available).