

the Outlook

Very cold temperatures are set to impact Florida tonight into the weekend as a couple of cold fronts move through the region. Hard freeze warnings are posted for Northern Florida with freeze warnings as far south as Lake Okeechobee. Wind chill advisories are posted for most areas north of the lake, as winds up to 20mph will accompany these cold fronts. Light to moderate precipitation with the first system tonight into tomorrow will bring a chance of snow in the coldest northern areas of the state. A second dry impulse moves in from the north following the rain. A third wet frontal system expected Monday could bring upwards of a ½ inch of rain and gusty winds to the state. Cold air behind this system may once again bring freezing temperatures to the area, mainly to the northern half of the state.

The majority of the crops currently (squash, peppers, beans, tomatoes eggplant, etc.) are grown in the far southern part of the state at this time of year. While freezing temperatures are not expected in the region, the extended cold temperatures and winds will slow the growth rates throughout the area impacting production and quality. Many of these crops were delayed or had to be replanted after Hurricane Irma ripped through the region in September, disrupting typical planting schedules.

Of greatest concern with these expected temperatures is the upcoming strawberry crop located in West-Central Florida near Plant City. This crop was set to increase production as the year begins. The rain, cold temperatures, and possible freezing conditions will surely impact production and quality from this region following this extended cold event. The main concern will be temperatures reached and duration of the below-freezing conditions (how cold for how long). Of course, these very cold temperatures may extend further south than forecasted, further impacting the various crops in the region. We will be watching this cold air mass and associated rains closely this week to keep abreast of potential impacts on the various commodities. As always upcoming weather patterns will play a crucial role in supplies a quality going forward.

