February 4, 1999

Mild weather continues to prevail over the area. Significant rainfall fell on Sunday, January 24th 1999. The FAWN weather station at Immokalee reported a total accumulation of .72 inches. Rainfall reports from sites around LaBelle through Devils Garden indicate heavier amounts up to 2 1/2 inches fell in some areas. Heavy dews accompanied by dense morning fog have been a frequent occurrence through the period. Temperatures have been unseasonably warm with daytime highs generally reaching the low 80's and nighttime lows dropping to the mid 60's. In general, pest and disease activity has been remarkably quiet.

Late blight is widely present on potato around the region. Incidence is sporadic and infection levels are low to moderate. All samples diagnosed to date have been US 8. A predicted flare-up of late blight following a forecast of favorable conditions for the development of the disease on the weekend of January 23-24th did not materialize. Reports indicate that the disease appears to be under control in most fields with some increase in disease activity being noted in some locations. There have been no reports of late blight in tomato.

Tomato yellow leaf curl virus continues to be reported widely across the area. In general, the incidence of infection is low (less than 1%) and confined to a few plants per field. In most instances the disease is occurring on older plantings in the upper canopy. There have been no new reports of high infection rates (5-10%) in newly planted fields since those reported previously. Growers are doing a good job in monitoring their fields and removing infected plants. Despite vigorous roguing, newly infected plants continue to be identified in these fields often with very low white fly counts, indicating the ease with which the TYLCV can be transmitted. Growers would be well advised to source transplants from areas of the state with low incidence of TYLCV infection. Affected plants should be rogued-out upon identification. Use of imidacloprid to control whitefly is highly recommended. As the crop matures and whiteflies become apparent growers should implement alternate control strategies, including the use of IGR's. A major concern is carry-over to the spring crop and establishment of TYLCV in local plant houses.

A general increase in bacterial spot activity is being reported across the area. Incidence is sporadic and infection levels are light to moderate, with some reports of peppers being defoliated in a few instances. With the exception of bacteria and target spot on older tomato crops, the incidence of foliar diseases on tomato and pepper has been relatively low. There have been a few scattered reports of bacterial lesions appearing on tomato fruit.

Diamond back moths on crucifers have been identified in at least widely separated two locations.
Thrips counts have started to increase in numbers, especially in southern parts of the area. These are primarily common flower thrips (T. bispinosa), although some melon thrips (T. palmae) are being reported. Damage reports remain low. Sporadic, low levels of aphids have been observed in a number of areas primarily on cole crops, cucurbits, and pepper. Incidence seems to be increasing.

Armyworm activity continues to be noted by respondents from locations across the region. Sightings include beet, and southern armyworm depending on the location. Numbers and crop damage has been low. An isolated report of cucumber beetles specialty crops has been noted.

Pinworms are being caught in traps in scattered locations across the area. In at least one instance, counts have exceeded threshold levels at 10-13 moths per night. There have been only a few scattered reports of pinworms or eggs being found on plants.

An increase in the incidence of fusarium crown rot has been noted in tomato. Occurrence is sporadic but appears to have some correlation with fields that were flooded as frost prevention measure early in January.

Pepper weevils are beginning to be reported widely across the area particularly in older plantings and specialty peppers, although they have also been noted in some young fields as well. Damage has been low in most instances. Traps have indicated an increase in overall populations.

There has been an isolated report of aerial phytophthora occurring on pepper. This has reportedly been diagnosed as Phytophthora capsici.

A few widely scattered reports of spider mites on eggplant, specialty pepper, and watermelon have been received this reporting period.

Relatively high whitefly counts continue to be reported across the area on a number of crops, including tomatoes, peppers, melons and beans. This is particularly true on older plantings. With the presence of TYLCV in SW Florida, this should be a concern to local growers. Growers need to be especially diligent in cleaning up old crops promptly as white flies as well as leaf miners can build up rapidly in old unsprayed fields. Pepper weevils and aphid populations can also build up quickly in old pepper plantings. Poor sanitation can also act as a source of inoculum for the transmission of a number of diseases.

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The SW Florida Pest and Disease Hotline is compiled by Gene McAvoy and is issued on a biweekly basis by the Hendry County Cooperative Extension Office as a service to the vegetable industry.

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