Beet Growers Refuse Negotiation Until 1974 Payments Satisfactory

Elected representatives for the sugar beet growers in five states met in Denver Wednesday to discuss a 1975 sugar beet contract with the Great Western Sugar Company. After presentation of sugar company proposals, growers refused to negotiate further because company representatives declined to commit an additional payment on the 1974 crop.

The approximately 60 Grocer Association Directors present unanimously agreed that they should not negotiate a 1975 crop contract until satisfactory terms for additional payments on the 1974 crop were established. Great Western growers say that to date they have received less than growers for any other company in the area.

When questioned by growers representatives, sugar company representatives admitted that there is nothing to legally prevent them from making an additional payment to growers. It is contrary to reports that the company had taken the position an existing class action lawsuit prevents them from doing so.

Attending the Great Western Contract Negotiations from Lexington were Wayne Young and Paul Stieb, president and vice president, respectively, of the Central Nebraska Beet Growers Association. Mrs. Stieb joined her husbands in Denver.

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Beet Growers Discuss Getting Added Payments

By United Press International

A total of 75 of the 80 sugar beet growers in the Big Springs area turned out for a meeting called by the Nebraska Beet Growers Association to discuss prospects for receiving additional payments for 1975 beets from the Great Western Sugar Co.

Harry Weber of Mitchell, former association president and longtime leader of beet growers, addressed the gathering.

A similar meeting at the University of Nebraska Panhandle Station in Scottsbluff drew a crowd of some 350 growers.

Several small beet producers confirmed that Great Western has sent checks which reflect an average of $19.49 per ton to growers who produced less than 12 acres of beets during 1974.

A federal court judge in Denver has ruled that such small producers will be excluded from a class action lawsuit filed by the Davis Cattle Co. of Goodland, Kan., now pending in U. S. District Court, foreseeing such discussions outside of approved legal procedures,” the company said. GWS said they are ready willing and able to continue negotiations for an acceptable contract on the 1975 beet crop and to settle on reasonable terms the Davis Lawsuit which clouds the company’s ability to make a prudent additional payment at this time.

The statement continued, “Based on sales to date of refined sugar from the 1974 crop, more money in terms of the growers’ share of the returns was paid to farmers in the first payment than the company has received or is likely to receive from sugar sales by March, 1975. Notwithstanding this fact and the abnormal price fluctuations and fluctuations, the company, in keeping with its growers contracts and its desire to develop strong grower and company relationships, wishes to make an appropriate second crop payment at the earliest possible date.”

Grower presidents said that they saw no point in continuing to negotiate the 1975 contract when they don’t know where they stand on the settlement of the crop they harvested last fall.