Towater: Beet Contract Best We Could Secure

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SCOTTSBLUFF — With the successful conclusion Wednesday of contract negotiations, sugar beet growers and Great Western Sugar Co. have agreed on their first multiyear contract. Unlike the contract negotiated a year ago, which could be voided by either side, the new contract will be used for the 1977-78 beet crops so long as the individual grower wants to raise beets.

Lou Towater of Scottsbluff, president of the Nebraska Non-Stock Beet Growers Assn., says he believes the new three-year contract, based on one of three proposals presented by the growers, is a good one. "I'm not saying it's the best we ever had but I do believe it is the best one we could secure at this time.

"The three years," he added, "is a real opportunity to study purity and establish if it is a problem or not." Through the terms of the contract, the purity committee remains intact and there will be a one-cent-a-ton payment from both the growers and the company, as needed, to continue the purity committee's work.

The contract "uses a year-by-year, area-by-area diffusion juice purity average and sugar content average during the direct delivery period. This will derive a formula directly comparable to the 1960-66 base formula. Inasmuch as this diffusion juice formula would differ from the 1960-66 formula, a penalty or premium would be applied across the board to all growers. Under this proposal, harvest purity will still be taken," Towater explains.

Kenneth Carpenter, vice president of the association, adds that the restriction period on beet deliveries was shortened by four days.

Both sides, Towater says, made some concessions in negotiating the freight portion of the contract.
"The contract won't put anyone in business or out of business. The price of sugar will do that," Towater emphasizes.

The association officers are not planning to call a meeting to explain the contract to its members nor do members need to ratify it.
"We feel that the growers commissioned us to negotiate a contract and we did," Towater says.

Grower leaders from Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas and Wyoming participated in the negotiations. Growers in these four states supply about 90 percent of the beets delivered to Great Western.

Great Western Sugar Co., says Scottsbluff-Gering agricultural manager Don Redman, is planning to conduct meetings for beet growers as usual this year to go over the contract. Meetings have not yet been scheduled but, Redman says, they will be held soon after contracts are available.

Said Rep. Virginia Smith Thursday: "The agreement on the three-year contract between Great Western Sugar Co. and the sugar beet growers means much to the agricultural economy of the entire state. Both sides are to be congratulated for their work at the negotiating table in reaching this agreement on the price received by the growers and in sharing the cost of transportation.
"I, too, am hopeful this agreement will result in a stable, long-term relationship between the growers and Great Western."