4 Sugar Companies, Assn. Are Sued For Price Fixing

DENVER (AP) — The Colorado attorney general's office has filed suit in U.S. District Court in Denver charging four sugar companies and one sugar beet growers association with conspiracy to restrain interstate trade.

The suit was filed Thursday against the Great Western Sugar Co., Denver; Holly Sugar Corp., Colorado Springs; California and Hawaii Sugar Corp., San Francisco; American Crystal Sugar, Fargo, N.D., and the National Sugarbeet Growers Association, Greeley.

The suit asks that the defendants pay triple the amount of damages, which, the attorney general's office said, could run into millions of dollars.

The suit alleges that the defendants violated the Sherman Antitrust Act and Colorado antitrust statutes by fixing and raising the base price of sugar and by fixing and maintaining the effective selling price for sugar.

The suit also alleges that the companies discussed data and reached agreements on prepaid freight applications, for the purpose of maintaining uniform prepaid applications.

Robert Hill, an antitrust attorney in the Colorado attorney general's office, said the state is suing on behalf of state schools and institutions forced to pay higher sugar prices and on behalf of all Colorado citizens, also forced to pay higher sugar prices.

Three of the companies named in the Colorado suit, Great Western, Holly and American Crystal, pleaded no contest last week in San Francisco to charges of violating federal antitrust statutes. The companies did not admit to the government charges, but were fined $50,000 each.

A sweet fall - things look a lot better

The returns from the sugar beet samples taken July 14 are at the Great Western Sugar Beet Company in Billings. According to John Sherman of the Great Western Sugar the last half of the growing season will tell the story for farmers in this territory.

The stand for the beet samples was good, 123% stand, one of the best in many years. When the samples were taken, the weather was still cold and damp and the sugar beets were far behind the season. The average weight of the beet root was 2.3 ounces per root. The weight of the top was 7.4 ounces per plant.

Mr. Sherman emphasized the fact that a good stand will usually mean smaller beets, but probably better tonnage. A hot August is very important for this last half of the season and the growing conditions will be much better than they were in June when it was so cool.

A report published earlier this week in another newspaper reported a 15 ton estimate on sugar beets. Mr. Sherman felt this was far too pessimistic an outlook, especially considering the time and conditions these samples were taken in July.

Another sample will be taken August 29 and Mr. Sherman said he felt this would be a much better indicator of the kind of crop we could expect. Especially, he added, in view of the unusually cool part of the early summer.

The good stand makes company officials very optimistic, said Mr. Sherman. When the August 29 sample is taken the sugar per cent will also be taken at that time and this will give a much truer indication of the crops, along with the weight of the sugar beet and its tops.