

## Bergland names sugar task force

WASHINGTON — Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland announced the establishment of a task force on sugar and sweetener policy to advise how to help financially hard-pressed U.S. sugarcane and sugar-beet growers and the sweetener industry.

The task force will identify and evaluate options available to the administration on the domestic and international sugar and sweetener situation and make recommendations for possible administrative action or legislative proposals.

The task force is to make an interim report by mid-February.

World sugar prices dropped sharply last year, and U.S. growers have called on Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture for help. Growers presently operate without government marketing orders or production controls. The Sugar Act expired in 1974. This coincided with a period when world consumption sharply exceeded production. The law controlled sugar imports and production of sugarcane and sugarbeets.

Imports are now regulated under a presidential proclamation, with a nonrestricted quota of about 7 million tons and an import duty that was increased to 1.875 cents a pound from .625 cents last September. Sugar imports recovered to about 4.5 million tons in 1976, from 3.9 million tons in 1975, as compared to a more normal 5.8 million tons in 1974.

Raw sugar prices dropped almost 50 per cent in the United States between July and September last year, as supplies exceeded demand. The world crop in 1975-76 was about 90.2 million short tons (raw value), exceeding consumption by about 1 million short tons. The spot raw price (No. 12 contract) f.o.b. New York fell from \$16.60 per hundredweight on July 6 to \$8.90 on Sept. 9. It had recovered to \$11.50 on Jan. 21.

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The task force will be headed by Robert R. Stanberry Jr. of the Department's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and will also include members from the Foreign Agricultural Service and Economic Research Service.