

BUSINESS

THE DENVER POST
Mon., April 11, 1977 7

and FINANCE

Colo. Beet Industry End Forecast

Colorado's sugar-beet industry will die within the next two years unless farmers start getting more money for their beets, a state official predicts.

Felix Sparks, director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, said the state's sugar-beet industry will collapse because it can't compete with cheap foreign sugar produced in countries with low labor costs.

"The sugar-beet industry is going to die because it can no longer operate at a profit in competition with cheap labor in foreign countries," he said. "We can't meet foreign competition and pay American minimum wages," he said.

Sugar-beet farmers who have invested large amounts of money in equipment that can be used only for sugar beets will have to switch to other crops "and it's going to be rough the first two or three years," Sparks said.

Earlier this year Great Western Sugar Co. closed its processing plants in Longmont and Brighton and its molasses plant in Johnstown.

At that time Great Western President Jack Powell said no other closings were likely for at least a year at the firm's 14 other plants, including seven in Colorado.

"There just are not many sugar beet processing plants left in Colorado," Sparks said. "If the situation continues, all are going to close because they cannot operate at a profit."

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Pay More Money For Sugar Beets Or Industry Will Die—Sparks

DENVER (AP) — Colorado's sugar beet industry will die within the next two years unless farmers start getting more money for their beets, a state official predicts.

Felix Sparks, director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, said the state's sugar beet industry will collapse because it can't compete with cheap foreign sugar produced in countries with low labor costs.

"The sugar beet industry is going to die a natural death in any event because it can no longer operate at a profit in competition with cheap labor in foreign countries," he said. "We can't meet foreign competition and pay American minimum wages," he said.

Sugar beet farmers who have invested large amounts of money in equipment that can be used only with sugar beets will have to switch to other crops "...and it's going to be rough the first two or three years," Sparks said.

He also predicted revenues from this year's sugar beet crop will decline considerably from last year's levels.

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