

Front Page

Administration considering new tariffs, import quotas to aid sugar industry

By DAN MORGAN
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Carter administration is considering new duties and restrictive import quotas on foreign sugar to bring slumping domestic sugar prices up to the level set by Congress in the 1977 farm bill.

The action, if taken, could add several cents a pound to raw sugar prices — a 35 per cent increase — and eventually could mean that American consumers would have to pay more.

Administration officials said Monday that they had agreed to speed up their timetable for dealing with the sugar

situation after a showdown with Sen. Robert Dole, R-Kan., last week.

Raw cane sugar traded in New York City Friday for slightly more than 10 cents a pound. The 1977 farm bill, which President Carter signed into law last month, established a minimum domestic price of 13½ cents a pound.

Administration officials said it appeared that sharply increased tariffs, and possibly tightened import quotas, will be required to get prices up to that level.

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Farm & Ranch

Near record beet harvest expected

The 1977 sugar beet harvest will begin Wednesday, September 28 at part of the stations of the Billings Great Western beet growing area. Factory operations under the direction of Delbert Smith, Factory Manager, are scheduled to start on Saturday, October 1.

Stations which will be open on Sept. 28 are: Factory, Billings West, Big Horn, Hysham and Hardin in the Billings area. Also opening on Wednesday are Toston, Townsend and Chinook. On Sept. 29, Pompeys Pillar and Maudru stations will open followed by Victor and Corvallis on Sept. 30. All receiving stations will be open on Oct. 1.

Growers will be able to harvest approximately 5½ per cent of the crop each day up through Oct. 14. Limits after that date will be the capacity of the receiving station equipment.

The 1977 crop has made excellent progress after a spring which saw a shortage of germinating rainfall, according to Smith. While the absence of rainfall has its disadvantages, Smith expects yields will equal or

exceed the record tonnage in 1976 when 20.25 tons per acre were harvested.

That forecast is based on samples taken Sept. 1 of each year. This year's samples indicate a higher tonnage and higher sugar content and purity than those taken last year. Growers have irrigated one to two times more this summer than is customary.

The factory personnel are in the final stages of completing an extensive boiler conversion program which began in 1976. Part of the factory will use coal in place of natural gas which is in short supply for industry users as well as other people in the country. Coal is now arriving for stock piling.

For the first time growers in the Billings district will be paid for their beet crop based upon purity and sugar content. The Billings growers were joined by the Wheatland, Wyoming people who subscribed to this unique method of payment for the crop. In effect, this method will reward growers for excellence. Those growers who produce higher quality beets will receive more than those growers whose quality is less. This quality factor is called purity.