

# Farmers sound off on bill recommendations

**By Ann Depperschmidt**

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GREELEY — Jerry Hergenreder is like many other Colorado farmers.

His Longmont farm borders a new subdivision. His college-aged son is considering a more profitable career instead of running the family farm. Farming, Hergenreder said, just isn't what it once was.

"Young people would like to continue farming, but we need to make it more economically viable," he said.

Then he spelled out the acronym for Future Farmers of America — FFA. "Father Farms Alone. That's how I feel," he said.

Hergenreder was one of hundreds of people who filed into the Island Grove Regional Park Events Center in Greeley on Monday for a 2007 Farm Bill Forum. The event, hosted by U.S. Secretary of Agricul-

ture Mike Johanns and U.S. Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., brought in people from all over Colorado — Kit Carson County, Phillips County, the Oklahoma border — to offer suggestions on writing the 2007 farm bill.

For three hours, potato, sugar, beet, corn, dairy, wheat and other farmers lined up behind two microphones to each give two minutes' worth of suggestions. Some of their concerns dealt with federal crop insurance, the need to plan for unexpected fuel and fertilizer price increases and international trade among many other topics.

But most people seemed concerned about the future of the industry.

"There's no way my third generation that's taking over can survive," said Bob Sakata, who owns Sakata Farms in Brighton.

He said one way to create a

more economically viable agriculture environment would be to eliminate estate taxes.

"It's not our fault the city came right up to our farm and increased the land value," Sakata said.

Amanda Ramos, a past state Future Farmers of America treasurer, said the 2007 farm bill needs to address marketing U.S. agricultural products in a global arena to help make farming more profitable in the future.

"This would start a great tradition of our competitiveness in global markets," she said.

The secretary of agriculture said the variety of opinions — Greeley was the 36th stop on a nationwide tour — helped make the forum successful.

"But you can understand some of the challenges we face when crafting farm policy," Johanns said.