

M A S S A C H U S E T T S SUGAR BUSH NEWS

The Newsletter of the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association

2013 Season a Big Improvement over 2012

The 2013 sugaring season in Massachusetts made up for 2012's dismal crop, though it was not without its challenges. Some very early runs in mid-February left many producers scrambling to get their taps in. Then, just when the season seemed to be well under way, a deep freeze settled in that stopped the sap from running through much of the middle of March, particularly for those in the Hilltowns where much of the state's syrup is produced. But the eventual warm-up was slow and steady, with some producers still boiling in mid-April.

Most members reported that they produced an 'average' amount of syrup, with many reporting above average crops and nearly everyone reporting production levels well above 2012. Sugar levels in sap were definitely better than last year, and many producers said they made light syrup throughout the season, with very little dark or Grade B produced. A handful of members used the new spout design and reported that sap did indeed run longer, and quite a few installed new evaporators and reverse osmosis machines this year that helped them keep fuel costs down.

The NASS survey results, released on June 12, reports that Massachusetts sugarmakers produced 63,000 gallons of syrup, a big improvement over 2012's 40,000, and even a bit better than the bumper crop of 2011. With 280,000 taps, our .225 gallons per tap average was the poorest among all states surveyed. MA is still ranked number nine in the U.S. in terms of production.

Though the pricing and sales data in the report lags by a year, it is worth noting that while MA sugarmakers ranked second in the nation in 2011 for retail sales, selling fully 55% of their syrup at retail markets, that number dropped to 39% following 2012's poor season, and bulk sales nearly doubled. This resulted in a significant drop in the average price per gallon – from \$57 to \$51.50 – between 2011 and 2012.

Summer Picnic: August 4 Davenport Maple Farm in Shelburne

The Mass Maple summer picnic will be held Sunday, August 4, at Davenport Maple Farm in Shelburne. The 3rd, 4th and 5th generation of Davenports on the farm just commemorated the 100th year of their family sugaring on this land, and when they bought the property in 1913 there was already a lean-to built against the ice house with a flat pan in it, so the practice even pre-dates their arrival.

The Davenports now set 3500 taps on their 365-acre farm, and boil on a 40"x10' evaporator with Revolution pans. The farm also sells raw milk, fresh eggs, and hay. Their sugarhouse restaurant is open during the spring and is known for the Finnish pancakes, fresh baked bread, and gorgeous views.

The Davenports will prepare a meal for us: Sloppy Joes (from beef raised on their farm), baked beans, cole slaw, tossed salad, corn on the cob, and homemade maple ice cream. The meal will begin at 1:00 p.m., but the farm will be open from 10:00 a.m. for an open house, with hay rides and walking tours available through the sugarbush.

Please fill out and return the enclosed form by July 22 to reserve your spot at the summer picnic!

The Big E is Coming!

The Big E will be held September 13-29 this year. The Mass Maple booth relies on members to volunteer their time to make candy and cream, sell products, and educate visitors about the maple industry. MMPA relies heavily on income from the Big E to cover our expenses throughout the year. To reserve your timeslot for volunteering, please call booth manager Andy Schmidt at 413-446-4128 or email windsorhill5@yahoo.com.

We are always looking for photographs to include in the slideshow on display at the Big E. Send pictures to winton@massmaple.org. And if you have any educational display items – antique sugaring tools, tree identification materials, etc – that you would be willing to lend MMPA for the Big E, please let us know.

Notes from the President....

This spring Mona and I stopped at Madava Farm in New York. A new operation, two or three years old, located about 75 miles north of Manhattan in Dover Plains. The all brick sugarhouse looks more like a mansion as you drive up to it. This year they had about 20,000 taps set on 800 acres and hope to increase to 60,000 in the next few years. Everything about the operation is "state of the art" right down to the bottling room and sample area. All their syrup is bottled in pint and quart glass bottles and sold at high end gift shops and specialty food stores, throughout the city, under the Crown Maple label. Madava farm is a short ride from route 23 in Great Barrington.

Most of our members had a good season with lots of light syrup, I'm told. Not so for all of us. I, for one, didn't make a single quart of light. It looks like prices are going to stay steady this year.

This year's summer picnic is a week later than in the past, so we don't conflict with Vermont's Maplerama. Please sign up early, so the Davenports will have a count for food

ordering. This is their 100th year in making syrup and we have been invited to help them celebrate!

The time is here to sign up for your shift at the Big E. Andy Schmidt will manage the booth again this year and will be ready to take your requests for time and days. Don't forget, the booth is what pays most of our bills.

Have a great summer.

Ed Parker, President



Massachusetts Maple Producers Association Board of Directors

The Massachusetts Maple Producers Association is a non-profit organization representing more than 250 producers in our state. The Association is governed by a board of directors, and daily operations are conducted by a coordinator who serves at the discretion of the board. If you have any questions, problems or suggestions, please let one of the following people hear from you. The board relies on your input to keep them informed on issues of importance to you.

Name	Term Expires	E-mail Address	Town
Keith Bardwell	2015*	kbardwell@massmaple.org	Whately
Cynthia Cranston	2016*	kbardwell@massmaple.org	Whately
Pat Delaney	2016*	pdelaney@massmaple.org	Belchertown
Missy Leab	2015	missy@iokavalleyfarm.com	Hancock
Ed Parker – President	2014*	eparker@massmaple.org	Granby
Andy Schmidt - Vice President	2016*	windsorhill5@yahoo.com	Windsor
Chip Williams	2016*	cwilliams@massmaple.org	Deerfield
Stan Zawalick	2014	szawalick@massmaple.org	Florence
Paul Zononi	2014	pzononi@massmaple.org	Haydenville

*Those Directors with a * next to their term expiration date will have served two consecutive terms as directors, and cannot be re-elected without at least a one year break.*

Containers

Mass Maple Warehouse	212 Reynolds Rd., Shelburne, MA 01370	413-625-2900
Devon Lane Farm Supply	357 Daniel Shays Hwy., Belchertown, MA	413-323-6336
North Hadley Sugar Shack	181 River Drive, Rte. 47, Hadley, MA	413-585-8820
Red Bucket Sugar Shack	Kinne Brook Rd., Worthington, MA 01098	413-238-7710
Bascom Maple Farms	56 Sugarhouse Road, Alstead, NH 03602	603-835-6361

Main Office

Winton Pitcoff - Coordinator/Treasurer	winton@massmaple.org	Plainfield
Mass Maple Association office	PO Box 6, Plainfield, MA 01070	413-628-3912
E-mail: info@massmaple.org	Mass Maple Website: www.massmaple.org	

Classified Ads

Welcome New Members

Maple Producer's Marketing Group Forming: Are you currently selling drum syrup? Would you like to get more money for your quality syrup? Would you consider cooperative marketing? Then please call Bill at 413-339-4045.

The following people joined MMPA in the last six months. If they're neighbors of yours, stop by and welcome them!

Online Sugarhouse Directory

Remember that you can make changes to your online directory listing at any time. Check out the directory at <http://www.massmaple.org/directory.php> and if you have any changes contact Coordinator Winton Pitcoff at winton@massmaple.org or 413-628-3912, or mail changes to MMPA, PO Box 6, Plainfield, MA 01070. Please note that being a member of Mass Maple does not mean you are automatically included in the directory – you must let us know that your sugarhouse is open to the public and that you would like to be listed.

Gerald Balchuinas, Phillipston
Reid Bertone-Johnson, Northampton
Maurice Brazie, New Marlborough
Lawrence Bruffee, Shelburne Falls
Richard Brunelle, Oxford
Douglas and Cooper Deane, Ashfield
Shawn Derby, Hancock
Gerard Durette, Westport
Frank Ezoid, Westfield
Becky Fahey, Ipswich
Andrew Ferrindino, Hampden
Brendan Gerry, Charlemont
Lyle Kalesnik, Blandford
Jeff & Joshua Kingsbury, South Deerfield
Brian Kleeberg, Greenfield
Clayton Landry, Gardner
Kyle Nartowicz, Colrain
Terry Nickl, Belchertown
Bart Niswonger & Eliza Lake, Worthington
Kevin Ritchie, Pepperell
Derrick Rodgers, Becket
Henry Sarafin, Huntington
Justin Schur, New Braintree
Nicole & Robert Warren, Monson

Do We Have Your Email Address?

If you haven't been getting emails from us, it's because we don't have your email address. Don't miss out on news and events between the printed newsletters. Send your email address to winton@massmaple.org.

MMPA on Facebook

If you use Facebook, look for the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association page and 'like' it. We use it for news and event notices.

DO YOUR GIFT SHOPPING WITH MASS MAPLE

Get all of your gift shopping done AND support MMPA!

Does your favorite sugarmaker have the **The North American Maple Syrup Producers Manual**? We've got it for only \$35!

Then there's our great DVD -- **Making Maple Candy & Cream**. \$25

And don't forget Mass Maple **tshirts** (\$10), **sweatshirts** (\$15), **hooded sweatshirts** (\$23) and **caps** (\$12). Limited quantities of some sizes, so order soon!

Everything's available online, at:

<http://www.massmaple.org/buy.php>

Mass Maple Warehouse

212 Reynolds Road • Shelburne, MA 01370
413-625-2900

SUPPLIES: The warehouse is well stocked with all sizes of maple syrup jugs, maple cream jars. Other syrup containers stocked include three sizes of glass maple leaf bottles and five-gallon plastic containers for bulk packing. The warehouse also has cardboard cartons for all size of jugs, gift boxes and maple candy boxes. Many other materials are available: Posters, recipe booklets, coloring books, labels, hang tags, producer manuals, instructional and educational videos, etc.

HOURS: The warehouse is open seven days a week, on a "call ahead" basis only. During the maple season if no one can answer the phone, a message on the answering machine will indicate the hours for that day when someone will be home. Otherwise, please leave a message and someone will return your call. Please be sure to call ahead for everyone's convenience - don't be disappointed by arriving unannounced and finding no one there to assist you. Terms are cash or check only upon pick-up – no charges.

UPS: We can ship only full cases of jugs. You will be billed for the cost of the jugs plus UPS charges. Call in your order to the warehouse (413-625-2900) and we will send it out with a bill. Partial cases of jugs and glass of any quantity cannot be shipped safely.

Proposed Guidelines for Participation in the Massachusetts Commonwealth Quality Program

Over the last two years MMPA members and board members have worked together to devise a set of guidelines to be used for Massachusetts sugarmakers who wish to participate in the Commonwealth Quality Program. The guidelines were developed based upon the Association's own Quality Control manual and the Handbook of Best Management Practices for Massachusetts Maple Syrup Farms.

Participation in the program will be voluntary and will be largely self-regulated, with participants self-auditing their operations using this checklist. Participation will allow sugarmakers to display the Commonwealth Quality seal on their products. The seal serves to identify locally sourced products that are grown, harvested and processed in Massachusetts using practices that are safe, sustainable and don't harm the environment.

To participate in the program, sugarhouses must be located in MA and at least 75% of the sap they process must be from trees in MA. If participants purchase syrup in bulk to bottle or use for value-added products, at least 75% of what they purchase (averaged over three years) must be from other CQP-participating producers.

This draft is being circulated to members for a final round of input. If you have any questions, suggestions or comments, please email winton@massmaple.org or call 413-628-3912 by August 1. For more information about the Commonwealth Quality program in general, see <http://www.mass.gov/agr/cqp/>.

For each of these items, score your operation as follows:

Never - 0 points
Sometimes - 1 point
Usually - 2 points
Always - 3 points

There are a total of 129 possible points. The threshold for participation in the program is 97 points.

LEAD

- Lead levels must be less than 250ppb. (Must be tested annually if using any galvanized or soldered equipment.) (*This item is required for*

participation in the program.)

SUGARBUSH

- Sugarbush management is done in accordance with the state of Massachusetts' best practice guidelines. (Found at <http://www.mass.gov/agr/cqp/sectors/forestry/sustainability-requirements.htm>)
- Trees are tapped using practices to ensure long term sustainability and tree health.

TAPPING

- Tubing and buckets are cleaned annually.
- All taps are removed at the end of the season.

COLLECTION

- All sap is collected and stored in clean, food grade tanks.
- Sap is processed into syrup as soon as possible.

BUILDINGS

- The exhaust from any engines is diverted away from sap or syrup.
- The interior of buildings are neat and clean.
- Debris (ash, etc.) is prevented from falling into tanks, pans, or other containers or surfaces that will contact sap or syrup.
- Birds, bats and rodents are excluded from buildings where sap is stored and syrup and other products are processed.
- All surfaces which could contact sap or syrup are clean and free from dirt, mold, debris and evidence of pests.
- Buildings used for processing sap and syrup have floors that have a washable surface.

FOOD CONTACT MATERIALS

- No rusty metal tanks, buckets or spouts.
- No buckets, tanks or other containers that were originally made for a non-food product.
- No use of non-food-grade diatomaceous earth.
- Only food-grade tubing or pipe used for sap or syrup transfer.
- Sap transfer pump not used for pumping non-maple liquids other than clean water.

- No tanks or buckets with painted interiors.

EQUIPMENT

- Reverse osmosis machine cleaned according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Evaporator cleaned and rinsed before use.
- Sap filters are clean with no mold or unsuitable odors.
- Pool filters used for sap filtration, use clean sand or food-grade diatomaceous earth.
- Only food grade lubricant is used in the filter press pump.

SANITATION

- Hand washing station consisting of clean flowing water, soap, and disposable towels is available.
- A clean water source is available for cleaning equipment (a well, town water, permeate or condensate). No pond or brook water is used for cleaning equipment.
- All interior trash containers are kept clean and emptied regularly.
- Animals are not allowed in the rooms where sap and syrup are being collected or processed.

FOOD ALLERGENS

- Sap and syrup prevented from being contaminated by allergens.
- No animal products (dairy, fat, etc.) are used as a defoaming agent.

CONTAINERS

- Empty bulk and retail containers are stored and handled in a sanitary manner.

PACKING

- Syrup is finished at density greater than 66% Brix at 68°F.
- Density is checked by properly calibrated hydrometer or refractometer.
- Syrup is graded using a current-year approved grading kit.
- Syrup with off flavors or odors is not bottled for retail sale.
- All syrup in retail containers is packed at a minimum of 180°F.
- All retail containers are inspected for foreign debris and/or inverted prior to filling.
- Jugs are filled to the proper level in accordance

with manufacturer's specifications.

- All filled drums and containers are coded and the producer has kept production records for both bulk and retail that relate the code on the container to the date and batch number.
- All retail containers labeled with the name and address of producer.
- Packaged and bulk syrup is stored in a clean, cool, dry place.

SAFETY

- Pesticides and herbicides and other chemicals or fuels not related to sugarmaking are not kept in any room where sap or syrup is present.
- Any chemicals are stored in their original containers with the label intact.
- Any chemicals are stored in a way that ensures they will not come into contact with sap or syrup.



Maple Grading School Coming to VT

The International Maple Syrup Institute Maple Grading School is for maple producers, bulk syrup buyers, state inspectors, and others needing to accurately grade maple syrup or judge maple product entries at fairs and contests. Quality control issues are also addressed. This school provides a strong scientific base combined with intensive hands-on exercises. This approach enables participants to learn how to grade or judge maple products with confidence.

Over 200 participants have attended the International Maple Syrup Institute Maple Grading School since 2004. They increased their knowledge about grading maple syrup and saved money by increasing their profits, increasing their sales, or reducing their costs.

The school will be offered October 4-5, 2013 at the Franklin County Sugarmakers Association in Fairfield, VT. If you need additional information or have any questions, please contact Kathy Hopkins at 207-474-9622 or khopkins@maine.edu. Registration Deadline: September 30, 2013. More details are available at <http://extension.umaine.edu/maple-grading-school/>

New England-wide Collaboration Creates Educational Resources for Farmers and Landowners

New England's young farmers have new opportunities as the majority of our region's experienced farmers near retirement. And because our nation's appetite for local and regional food continues to grow, it is more important than ever to cultivate opportunities for the farmers who will produce that food. Currently, 25 percent of farmers in the United States are over age 65, and only 5 percent of today's farmers are under age 35.

Thanks to the Land Access Project (LAP) (<http://www.landforgood.org/LAP/>), a New England-wide collaboration focused on farmland access, young farmers have a brighter future today, including clearer paths to acquiring farmland. More than two dozen individuals, organizations and agencies throughout the region have worked on LAP, which has been led by Land For Good, a regional nonprofit.

Since the project began in 2010, task forces have created several easy-to-use handbooks to educate farmers, service providers and non-farming landowners. Topics include transferring farms, making land available for farming, and gaining access to farmland:

- A Landowner's Guide to Leasing Land for Farming
- Leasing Land to Farmers: A Handbook for New England Land Trusts, Municipalities and Institutions

- Successful Farm Transfer Planning for Farmers without an Identified Successor
- Farm Succession and Transfer: Strategies for the Junior Generation
- A Team Approach to Farm Transfer Planning Assistance
- Farmland Tenure Innovations: Policies and Models to Improve Access to Land in New England (April publication date)

LAP has also launched the New England Farmland Finder, a free, simple and searchable website that serves as a farm property clearinghouse for the region. Landowners and land managers can post available properties here.

LAP-sponsored workshops throughout New England over the last 18 months have educated more than 200 farmers, landowners and agricultural service providers about legal, financial and practical aspects of acquiring and transferring farmland.

To learn more about the Land Access Project visit www.landforgood.org/LAP/.

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2013 New York State Maple Tour

The 2013 New York State Maple Tour is scheduled for July 14-16. It will be hosted by the Catskill Area Maple Producers Association and centered at the Hudson Valley Resort & Spa, Kerhonkson, NY in Ulster County. The tour opens with a reception, registration and trade show on Sunday afternoon July 14. On Monday and Tuesday, July 15 and 16, the tour will feature visits to a variety of maple operations, both larger and smaller.

This tour features the scenic Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains area of Southeastern New York. The New York State Maple Tour has never visited maple operations in this area before. Sites include niche marketing, energy saving technologies, organic production, and will include sugarbush sites. Cost is set at \$195 per person to include the tour, meals and the annual banquet. Registration and tour stop information is available at www.cornellmaple.com and www.nys-maple.com.

The tour host site is the Hudson Valley Resort and Spa, 400 Granite Road, Kerhonkson, NY 12446. Mention New York Maple Producers Association for the special room rate of \$119.

2013 NAMSC/IMSI Annual Meetings and Technical Presentations

The annual meetings of the North American Maple Syrup Council and the International Maple Syrup Institute will be held October 23-25, 2013 at the Delta Beausejour hotel in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Wednesday, October 23: NAMSC/IMSI board meetings, Welcome Reception.

Thursday, October 24: NAMSC/IMSI annual meetings, Taste of New Brunswick.

Friday, October 25: Technical Session, Awards Banquet

Saturday, October 26: Tour

If you're interested in attending and would like to receive more information as it becomes available, email winton@massmaple.org.

VT Maplerama July 25-27

Vermont's Maplerama will be held July 25-27 at Jay Peak Resort. See http://vermontmaple.org/ai1ec_event/2013-maplerama/ for details.



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Notes on Mass Maple Jugs

If you purchase Mass Maple jugs, 100% of the syrup put into those jugs **MUST** be from Massachusetts. If you buy in bulk and are unsure about where the entire product comes from, please do not use these jugs. The warehouse has Allstate jugs available.

If you sell in Mass Maple jugs, you **MUST** add a label or hang tag with the name and contact information for your sugarhouse. Federal regulations require this.

The artwork on the Mass Maple jugs is owned by MMPA and may not be copied, in whole or in part, for any reason. Photos of your jugs in advertising or on your website are acceptable.

All of the plastic jugs we sell are 100% BPA free.

New glass bottles available at warehouse

Members have noticed these etched glass jugs and some have begun bottling syrup in them. MMPA carried a limited amount at the Big E booth and they sold out quickly. The Association has purchased two pallets of these jugs to sell to our members, and they are available at the warehouse.

The jugs are sold in cases of 12. A case of the 500 ml size is \$34.20 and a case of the 250 ml size is \$24.

The etching is done by Artisan Printing of Vermont (www.apofvt.com), a company run by Vermont Sugarmaker Bill LaPorte.



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FDA Requirements for Registration of Maple Syrup Production Facilities

In 2003 the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) issued amendments to the food safety laws which required domestic and foreign facilities that manufacture, process, pack, or hold food for human or animal consumption in the United States to register with FDA by December 12, 2003.

As of today under the FDA regulation maple syrup producers are required to register their facility if they manufacture maple syrup from sap collected from trees they tap or from sap purchased from others. FDA Registration is also required if the facility makes other maple products for human consumption and / or sells maple syrup or maple syrup products to consumers from the sugarhouse, farm or other outlets.

According to the FDA's website, failure to register "is a prohibited act under the FD&C Act. The Federal government can bring a civil action against persons who commit a prohibited act, or it can bring a criminal action in Federal court to prosecute persons who are responsible for the commission of a prohibited act, or both".

What is confusing the issue is that regulations being proposed under the 2011 Food Modernization Act may ex-

clude maple syrup. However, note that this exception is about excluding maple syrup from the proposed new food safety regulations only. It does not exclude maple syrup producers from registering their facility under the FDA guidelines.

Mass Maple suspects that this news may not be well received by some producers so please understand that we do not make the regulations nor do we enforce them. We are simply passing on this important information to you. It's up to you to decide whether you qualify to register and we trust that you will represent the best interests of your sugaring operation during that decision process.

FDA Requirements for Registration of Maple Syrup Production Facilities

New registrants must complete the FORM FDA 3537 (9/12) on line which is simple to fill out but rather lengthy (10 pages). There is no cost to register if you register directly to the FDA. Facilities that are presently registered must update their registration information on file with the FDA every two (2) years. For more information you can visit: <http://goo.gl/FX3Sr>



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PRINT FORM FDA 3537 (9/12) - To help facilitate registration print a blank form from: <http://goo.gl/e7VOR>. Then you can mail the completed FORM FDA 3537 to:

U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, HFS-681
5100 PAINT BRANCH PARKWAY
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20993

or fax it to: 301-436-2804

REGISTER ONLINE The FORM FDA 3537 can be completed online and your account / pin set up with your user name and password at the FDA website.

Please note that if you want a copy of the FORM FDA 3537 to fill out manually before you go on-line (recommended) you can access and print a copy from the link above;

Access the FDA Website for new registrations at <http://goo.gl/1CLUK>

- Click on: LOGIN / CREATE AN ACCOUNT (top center of page)
- (New Page) then scroll down to bottom left corner and under NEW USER, click CREATE AN ACCOUNT
- Then select FOOD & DRUG FACILITY REGISTRATION, then select FOOD FACILITY REGISTRATION
- Now create your account and continue with the registration process.

tration process.

- If you forget to do something it will let you know by not completing the page. You cannot skip sections of the registration process.

Important Note: "Maple Syrup" is not specifically listed in Section 10a of the FDA Form 3537 therefore under Category select No.17 – "Food Sweeteners" then under Type of Activity select "Manufacturer / Processor."

Notes:

- There is no fee or charge to register if you do so directly on the FDA website or by fax or mail.
- The online process will take a while especially if you do not have the information handy. It is best to fill out a draft of the FORM FDA 3537 before beginning the registration process on line.
- If you stop entry too long after starting the registration process the program will quit and will not save anything you entered to that point and you will need to start the form all over again.
- Once you have registered you must update your data on file with the FDA every two (2) years. Suggest marking your calendar as they will not remind you. If you miss the update deadline you may be required to re-register your facility.



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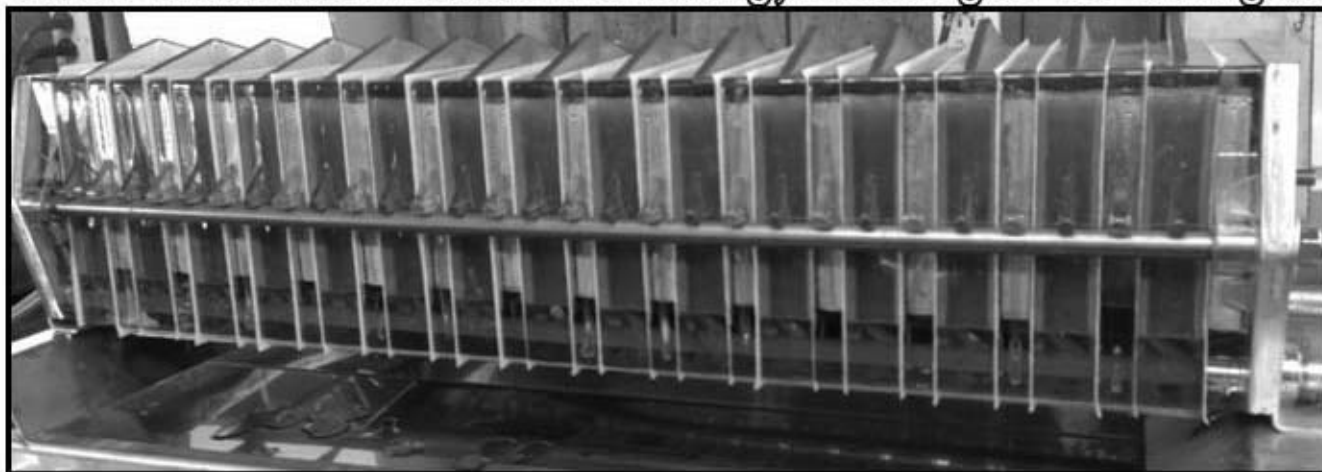


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Organic Maple Production – Marketing Opportunity or Road to Contempt

by Stephen Childs, NYS Maple Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension

The making of maple syrup has long been regarded as a pure and natural process. As a result of this long standing view of maple production most producers feel that maple syrup is an organic product. Often maple producers seeking organic certification are looked on with contempt as someone thinking they're a little better than the rest of the producers, or trying to cast a negative view of non-organic syrup. After all, only a very tiny percentage of maple woodland is treated with any kind of pesticide and then only in emergency pest situations. Fertilizing maple sugar bushes is probably even more rare. With some extra paper work, a few minor changes, and some certification costs most maple producers could likely qualify as an organic operation.

For a maple producer marketing mostly near home to a rural population, being certified organic would likely be an extra headache with little benefit. After all, many of the rural population have some sense of how maple syrup is made and have little concern with the safety and healthfulness of the products. For producers selling into suburban or urban settings or outside of the northeastern United States, the organic certification may just get a producer in the door of new markets and at favorable prices. Clearly many suburban, urban and customers outside of the northeast have little real understanding of what is involved in making maple syrup. The organic label seems to remove many concerns for them.

I believe organic maple should be seen as positive for producers for these reasons. First, it can open maple markets with non-traditional customers here in the northeast. Second, it can open new distant markets outside the northeast. Third, it can improve the return to producers from those markets. I'm sure other states and Canada are seeking the best ways to access those markets as well, we shouldn't just hand them over because some prefer to have contempt for this organic idea. In fact, a few non-maple pancake syrups have already begun offering organic syrups made from organic corn.

What does a maple producer have to change to become organic? First, a producer must understand how the certification system works. The USDA has put together what is called the National Organic Standards. The USDA rules require that all producers and handlers that make an organic claim for their products must be certified by a USDA accredited certification organization. The only exceptions are for farmers with less than \$5,000 in gross organic sales and retailers that do not process food. These small organic producers can sell product as organic but not certified organic and their products cannot become a component of a certified organic processed food. These

small operations must also follow the rules and keep the records required of certified farms.

The USDA has approved about 100 businesses and Associations to be organic certification agencies at this time. A maple producer can use any of these approved certification agencies that certify maple production. The most local USDA accredited certifying organization is Baystate Organic Certifiers. To take a look at their guidance document and certification form, see: <http://baystateorganic.org/forgrowers.html#maple>

To be a certified organic producer a maple producer would need to adhere to these key points:

- Become a member or client of a USDA accredited certifying organization. The list is available at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/Accredited.html>
- Work with that certification organization put together an Organic System Plan for your farm.
- Abide by the Production and Handling Standards
- Use only approved substances as listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute.
- Be inspected by the certification organization.
- Pay member and certification fees. These vary with different certifying organizations and the size of your operation.

The Organic System Plan is set by the certification organization and tailored to the individual operation. The plan would include a description of all woods and sugarhouse practices including how often various practices happened. It would include a list of all substances used. A plan for monitoring of management practices and a description of the record keeping system is necessary. Record keeping would include such things as woods activities and history, sap harvest and processing times, cleaning and sanitizing of equipment, syrup storage and sales records.

There are no federal standards for organic sugarbush management or maple syrup processing. Producers and certifiers must take what is available in the National Organic Program Final Rule for crop production and processing and apply it to maple syrup production to develop the Organic System Plan. I checked with a couple of USDA accredited certifying organizations that certify maple producers to see what the rules of production would look like. Though the rules vary with different certifiers, my impression is that most maple producers would only need to make minor modifications to their production practices to be in compliance.

A few areas of change might include the use of organic certified de-foamers and equipment cleaners. One certifier did not allow the use of UV for sap treatment or galvanized sap buckets but others did. There were restrictions on the number of taps per tree and sizes of trees but these were in line with the general recommendations. In all

cases the woods must have had no un-approved pesticide used for three years prior to certification. Water used in the business would need to be tested. The biggest issues to becoming Certified Organic would be selecting a USDA accredited certifying organization, putting together the Organic System Plan and then living up to that plan and keeping the necessary records.

The cost to certify your operation versus the benefit to your income and marketing needs is where the decision to participate should rest. Realize that being organic could build consumer confidence into a whole new group of clients. I suggest producers abandon the contempt for organic and encourage quality marketing and client building on every possible front.



Maple resources online

Massachusetts Farm Energy: Best Management Practices for Maple Sugaring

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/programs/energy/energy-bmp-maple.pdf>

Maple Nutritional and Health Benefits Information (poster and rack card)

<http://www.internationalmaplesyrupinstitute.com/projects.html>

Connecticut Maple Syrup Producers Manual

http://www.ctmaple.org/uploads/1/1/7/9/11794542/connecticut_maple_syrup_producers_manual_2005.pdf

Cornell Maple Program Publications

<http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu/pubs/index.htm>

Maple Flavor Wheel

http://www4.agr.gc.ca/resources/prod/doc/sci/maple-erable/maple-erable_eng.pdf



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Maple Syrup Taps, Yield, and Production – States and United States: 2011-2013


State	Number of taps			Yield per tap			Production		
	2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013	2011	2012	2013
	(1,000 taps)	(1,000 taps)	(1,000 taps)	(gallons)	(gallons)	(gallons)	(1,000 gallons)	(1,000 gallons)	(1,000 gallons)
Connecticut	71	70	78	0.239	0.157	0.256	17	11	20
Maine	1,470	1,500	1,500	0.245	0.240	0.300	360	360	450
Massachusetts	245	250	280	0.253	0.160	0.225	62	40	63
Michigan	495	430	490	0.248	0.151	0.302	123	65	148
New Hampshire	420	440	460	0.286	0.173	0.270	120	76	124
New York	2,011	2,070	2,200	0.280	0.174	0.261	564	360	574
Ohio	405	410	440	0.309	0.244	0.352	125	100	155
Pennsylvania	503	501	583	0.254	0.192	0.230	128	96	134
Vermont	3,300	3,500	3,800	0.345	0.214	0.347	1,140	750	1,320
Wisconsin	660	600	740	0.235	0.083	0.358	155	50	265
United States	9,580	9,771	10,571	0.292	0.195	0.308	2,794	1,908	3,253

The 2013 United States maple syrup production totaled 3.25 million gallons, a 70 percent increase from 2012. The number of taps increased to 10.5 million, an eight percent gain over the previous year. Yield per tap climbed 58% to .308 gallons.

On average, the season lasted 37 days, much better than the 24 day season in 2012. The 2012 average price per gallon in Massachusetts was \$51.50, down from \$57 in 2011.

See <http://www.usda.gov/nass/PUBS/TODAYRPT/crop0613.pdf> for more data on the 2013 U.S. maple season.

Production numbers from Canada have not yet been made available.



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