

Voluntary Certification Program for Vermont Maple Producers

The attached document is the current version of the rules and standards for the new certification program for Vermont maple operations. Under consideration for more than a decade, this program has been developed primarily at the request of the buyers and resellers of bulk Vermont syrup (maple packers). This is a voluntary, fee-based program.

This document spells out the items that inspectors will examine when visiting your maple operation. Inspectors will be employees of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Foods and Markets, and will be under the direction of Chief of Consumer Protection and maple expert Henry Marckres. Next to each rule is a number indicating the maximum deduction possible for that item. Inspectors will have the discretion of deducting no points (meets the standard), or 1 or more points depending on the effort by the producer to meet the standard. Note that no single item other than lead contains enough points to disqualify a producer from being certified.

The logistics of this program, other than the actual inspection, will be handled by the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association. Producers wishing to be certified must first contact Mary Croft of the VMSMA (802-763-7435) mcmapple@wildblue.net. An appointment will be made for the inspector and the producer to meet at the sugarhouse. After the inspection, producers who pass will be issued their certificate, which will also be registered by the VMSMA. Inspections are expected to begin in the spring of 2013. It is anticipated that recertification will take place approximately every 3 years.

The fee for this inspection will be \$200 for VMSMA members and \$300 for non-members. An additional fee will be charged to those producers who must have a syrup lead test due to the use of lead containing equipment in their operation.

Producers interested in becoming certified in 2013 are strongly encouraged to attend one of the presentations on certification which are being held at all three January 2013 Maple Conferences.

For additional questions, please contact:

Matt Gordon, VMSMA Executive Director—(802-498-7767) mgordon@vermontmaple.org

Henry Marckres, VT Agency of Ag—(802-828-3458) henry.marckres@state.vt.us

Tim Wilmot, UVM Extension—(802-899-9926) timothy.wilmot@uvm.edu

A committee of the Vermont Maple Industry Council (VMIC) has been working on this program since 2010. Past and present committee members include Jacques Couture, Orleans Co. producer, Richard Green, Rutland Co. producer, Henry Marckres, VT Agency of Ag, Haven King, syrup buyer for *Maple Grove Farms of Vermont*, a St. Johnsbury VT packing company, Kerry Sedutto, President of *The Sugarman*, a Hardwick, VT packing company, Ellie Valentine, Quality Assurance Manager of *Butternut Mountain Farms*, a Morrisville, VT packing company, Matt Gordon, Executive Director of the VMSMA, and Tim Wilmot, UVM Extension (committee chair). Other members of the VMIC have also reviewed and suggested modifications of these rules during their development.

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This document outlines the requirements that are the responsibility of the producer and the inspector. Please read carefully and be prepared to show or describe to the inspector the necessary aspects of your food-safe operation, as listed below.

In order to be certified, the operation must not have more than 10 points total deducted during the inspection. The numbers opposite each item indicate the maximum points that the inspector can deduct. Deductions of less than the maximum may be made according to the interpretation of the inspector and the effort of the producer to comply.

BUILDINGS (including those used for sap storage, pumping, reverse osmosis, boiling, and canning):

The inspector will confirm the following:

- All light bulbs over sap or syrup, including over tanks, releasers, boiling pans, filters, and canning equipment, are protected by shields or slip on tubes to prevent broken glass from falling into food contact equipment, sap or syrup. **5**
- The exhaust from vacuum pump(s) or other equipment producing petroleum fumes is located in a way to prevent contamination of sap or syrup with fumes. **5**
- The interior of the buildings are neat and clean. **5**
- There is protection to prevent loose debris (flaking paint, etc.) from falling into a tank, pan, or other container that will contact sap or syrup. **5**
- Birds and bats are excluded from these buildings. **3**
- All surfaces in these buildings which could contact sap or syrup are clean and free from dirt, mold, debris and evidence of pests at the time of use. **3**
- The producer will document the startup cleaning procedures used for tanks pans, and all food-contact equipment. **3**
- The building(s) used for reverse osmosis, boiling, and/or canning must have floors that can drain and are washable. Dirt floors are prohibited. **3**
- A check valve is present between the vacuum pump and releaser. **3**

FOOD CONTACT MATERIALS:

The producer and inspector will confirm that sap or syrup does not contact any non-food-grade materials, including but not limited to the following:

- Rusty metal tanks, buckets or spouts. **5**
- Buckets, tanks or other containers that were originally made for a non-food product. **5**
- Non-food-grade diatomaceous earth. **5**
- Compressor without a settling bowl. **5**
- Non-food-grade tubing or pipe used for sap or syrup transfer. **5**
- Sap transfer pump also used for pumping non-maple liquids other than clean water. **5**
- Bronze gear pump used for sap transfer. **5**
- Tanks or buckets with painted interiors. **5**

LEAD:

If the operation uses any lead-containing equipment which contacts sap or syrup, such as galvanized buckets or storage tanks, lead soldered pans, and/or a bronze gear pump to transfer syrup, the

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inspector will open a randomly selected container (barrel or retail unit) and take a sample for analysis. The cost of analysis will be about \$30 and will be paid by the producer. **If the results are less than 250ppb, no points will be deducted**; if the results exceed the VT State limit of 250ppb, the operation cannot be certified. **11**

FILTERS:

The producer will confirm the following:

- Sap filters are clean at the time of use with no evidence of mold or unsuitable odors. **3**
- Pool filters, if used for sap filtration, use clean sand or food-grade diatomaceous earth. **3**
- Filter press and filter papers are clean with no evidence of mold or unsuitable odors. **3**
- Only food grade lubricant is used in the filter press pump. **3**
- Any diatomaceous earth used is food grade and is kept in its original bag, which when opened should be placed in a clean dry container with a lid. **3**

SANITATION:

The inspector will confirm the following:

- Hand washing station consisting of clean flowing water, liquid soap, and disposable towels. **5**
- The availability of a clean water source for cleaning equipment (a well, town water, or condensate from clean source). No pond or brook water is used for cleaning equipment. **3**
- All interior trash containers are kept clean and emptied regularly. **3**
- Domestic animals are not allowed in the rooms where sap and syrup are being collected, boiled, packed or otherwise processed. **3**

FOOD ALLERGENS:

The producer will confirm the following:

- Steps have been taken to prevent contamination of sap or syrup by allergens (milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish, crustacean/shellfish) by prohibiting practices such as using a container containing a food allergen residue, using a defoamer that contains an allergen such as dairy, heating foodstuffs such as eggs or hotdogs in or over the evaporator, and/or not washing hands between eating food allergens and handling equipment that contacts sap or syrup. **10**

CONTAINERS—BULK AND RETAIL:

The inspector will confirm the following:

- Drums and other bulk containers are stored and treated in a manner to prevent contamination with petroleum containing products and other chemicals. This includes the prohibition of placing petroleum containing equipment, containers of cleaners, pesticides, herbicides, tools, etc. on top of empty or full drums. **5**
- Drums and other bulk containers not actively being filled are protected from debris and pests via sealed bungs or other means. **5**
- All retail containers used for syrup packaging are stored in a manner that will prevent contamination, with debris, animals, or other sources, prior to filling. **5**

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- Any epoxy-lined drums used for syrup storage are in good condition with no evidence of the epoxy lining flaking off. **3**
- The producer will verbally describe the packing process used for drums and retail containers. **3**

The producer will confirm the following:

- All bulk syrup containers are cleaned and inspected for foreign debris, rust, and unsuitable odors prior to filling. **3**
- All syrup in retail containers is packed at a minimum of 180°F. **3**
- All retail containers are inspected for foreign debris and/or inverted prior to filling. **3**

PRODUCT CODING:

The inspector will confirm the following:

- 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. **10**

PESTICIDES, HERBICIDES, AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS:

The inspector will confirm the following:

- Pesticides and herbicides are not kept in any room where sap or syrup is present. **3**
- Any motor or tool using a petroleum product is located a suitable distance away from sap or syrup and any equipment that does or will in the future contain sap or syrup. **3**
- Any motor or tool using a petroleum product must have secondary containment to avoid a petroleum spill if it is located in the same room as sap or syrup. **3**

MAPLE EQUIPMENT CLEANING CHEMICALS:

The inspector will confirm the following:

- All chemicals are in their original containers with the label intact. **5**
- All chemicals used for cleaning equipment are stored in a secure space and properly separated by type, such as acids separated from bases. **5**
- A Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is present for every chemical used in the maple operation, including but not limited to cleaners for tubing, pans, and reverse osmosis membranes. **3**
- Personal protective equipment consisting of a minimum of impervious gloves and apron, goggles or face shield, and eye wash are present in the area where equipment cleaning chemicals are used. **3**
- There are appropriate methods and equipment for neutralizing and disposing of waste water solutions resulting from cleaning maple equipment. **3**

The producer will confirm the following:

- For each equipment cleaning chemical used there is at least one designated individual who is responsible for using, storing, and disposing of the chemical, as well as instructing anyone else who might use that chemical. **3**
- The responsible individual for each chemical must be familiar with the basic safety information for that chemical, and be able to describe it to the inspector. **3**