



VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

491 EAST BARNARD ROAD, SOUTH ROYALTON, VT 05068

PHONE: 802-763-7435 — FAX: 802-763-7438

WWW.VERMONTMAPLE.ORG

House Committee on Agriculture and Forest Products

Vermont State House

115 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05633

January 22, 2015

Dear Chair Partridge and honorable committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with the House Committee on Agriculture and Forest Products. As you know, Vermont is a leading producer of pure Vermont maple syrup and associated maple products. The Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association (VMSMA) is a non-profit that works to promote and protect the integrity of Vermont maple syrup. Founded in 1893, VMSMA works to achieve its mission through providing a statewide forum for communications among Vermont maple industry stakeholders, promoting the stewardship of the culture of pure Vermont maple syrup production, and ongoing education for current and future maple producers. VMSMA also seeks to increase public awareness regarding the characteristics of pure Vermont maple syrup, including nutritional and health benefits, while helping to ensure that all Vermont maple syrup goes to market at a fair price.

Over the past decade, production of maple syrup has grown by leaps and bounds. In recent years we have seen Vermont ingenuity at its finest in the form of new equipment that is aiding producers in drilling better tap holes, new taps that promote improved tree health and vacuum pressure, wireless sensors which give the ability to check vacuum pressure in tubing remotely, and the creation of new value-added products that expand the market reach of Vermont maple syrup. Even still, we are tapping fewer than 5% of the maple trees in our state, meaning the resource base has potential for future growth.

One area of growth that we believe will be important to our industry's future is maple syrup as an ingredient in commercial food products. Currently, food labeling regulations allow for too much leeway in describing a products flavor, a situation that we believe creates consumer deception, especially around products described as 'maple.'

What follows is a summary of initiatives of the VMSMA. Thank you again for the opportunity to meet with you and please do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of assistance.

Matthew Gordon
Executive Director



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Leadership and Membership Information

Officers:

Chair: Sam Cutting, IV – Dakin Farm

Treasurer: Stephen Tetreault – Tator's Sugar Shack

Vice-Chair: Pam Green – Green's Sugarhouse

Secretary: Emma Marvin – Butternut Mountain Farm

Directors:

Maurice Trayah, Addison County

Jack Dix, Windham County

Rick Kobik, Bennington County

Don Bourdon, Windsor County

Jeff Goodwin, Caledonia County

Arnold Coombs, Coombs Family Farm

Megan Davis, Chittenden County

Sam Cutting, Dakin Farm

Jason Gagne, Franklin County

Gary Gaudette, Leader Evaporator

Paul Palmer, Lamoille County

Mark Bigelow, Maple Grove Farms of Vermont

Mike Emerson, Orange County

Emma Marvin, Butternut Mountain Farm

Donna Young, Orleans County

Peter Purinton, Purinton Maple

Pam Green, Rutland County

Kerry Sedutto, The Sugarman

James Buck, Washington County

Membership: 1002

Friends of Vermont Maple (non-voting): 226

Producers and associated businesses such as processors and equipment manufacturers (voting): 776

Mission:

- To promote and protect the integrity of pure Vermont maple syrup.

Objectives:

- To provide a statewide forum for communications among Vermont maple industry stakeholders, including maple producers, maple processors, maple equipment suppliers and others.
- To continue to enhance the highest quality standards for all pure Vermont maple syrup.
- To sponsor and promote the stewardship of the culture of pure Vermont maple syrup production.
- To continue the education of current and future maple producers.
- To proactively engage in legislation, policy and programs at all levels in Vermont and the U.S. which will benefit Vermont maple syrup industry stakeholders.
- To increase public awareness regarding the characteristics of pure Vermont maple syrup, including nutritional and health benefits.
- To be an advocate for research and innovation that benefits the Vermont maple syrup industry stakeholders.
- To take actions that promote and strengthen the sustainability of Vermont's maple resource, both natural and human.



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Labeling of Food Products – 6 V.S.A. § 481-499

Vermont treats maple syrup production as an important part of its still largely agricultural economy. By strictly defining the meaning of maple; whether products, sap or sugar or syrup, Vermont limits the commercial usage of the word. To properly refer to a product as maple or as a product derived from maple, Vermont law requires the product to be “only maple syrup, maple sugar, maple cream, or any other product in which the sugar content is entirely derived from pure maple sap and to which nothing has been added.” See 6 V.S.A. § 481(8).

The same statute goes on to include definitions for the following related terms:

(9) “Maple sap” means the unprocessed liquid derived from the maple tree (Acer).

(10) “Maple sap hydrometer” means a floating instrument which measures the specific gravity of a liquid and which contains a scale designed to determine the sugar content of maple sap.

(11) “Maple sugar” means the solid, crystalline produce of maple tree sap only.

(12) “Maple syrup” means pure maple syrup which is the liquid derived by concentration and heat treatment of the sap of the maple tree (Acer). Maple syrup shall not be processed in any manner which adds or removes naturally occurring soluble materials. This limitation does not preclude the use of approved filter aids used for the sole purpose of assisting the removal of suspended material or the use of defoaming agents approved by the secretary. Maple syrup shall comply with Vermont state grades, density, and flavor requirements.

(13) “Maple syrup hydrometer” means a floating instrument which measures the specific gravity of a liquid and which contains a scale designed to determine the density of maple syrup.

(14) “Packaged maple syrup” means maple syrup packed in containers of five gallons or less.

Vermont Maple laws protect the integrity of maple by restricting the use of terms “maple syrup” and “maple sugar.” The law specifically provides that “[i]t shall be unlawful to use the term ‘maple syrup’ or ‘maple sugar’, however modified, to describe any product, flavoring, sweetener, or food additive unless the product, flavoring, sweetener, or food additive so described meets the statutory definition of maple syrup or maple sugar.”

In addition, Vermont law protects the integrity of maple by strictly limiting when the word can be used in to market, sell or advertise a product. More specifically, the words "maple," "mapyl," "mapley," or words of similar import shall not appear in any manner on a container, label, menu, or advertisement of maple flavored products, unless:

(1) such words are printed in the statement of contents together with the percentage;

(2) such words are a part of the packer's name, provided that the packer's name cannot appear to be a part of the product name; or

(3) the words "blend," "sweetened," or "flavored" appear immediately before, after, above or below and in equal prominence to such words.

(d) The term "maple flavored" may only be used when 100 percent of the flavoring material is a pure maple product. If any artificial maple flavor is used, the label shall clearly and conspicuously state "artificial flavor."

The above-related provision also declares as misleading and deceptive the use of the terms even where immediately preceded by "artificial." Terms that are permitted by the statute include "artificial maple flavor," but only if modifiers of "maple," such as "artificial" and "flavor" feature no less prominently than the word "maple" on the label and other marketing copy.

Today, many products are using the modifier "maple" to describe either the flavoring or the source of the sweetening of the product. In most cases, these products contain no maple syrup or maple sugar.



Figure 1: Better Oats Maple & Brown Sugar Instant Oatmeal, front panel (left) and ingredient information (right)

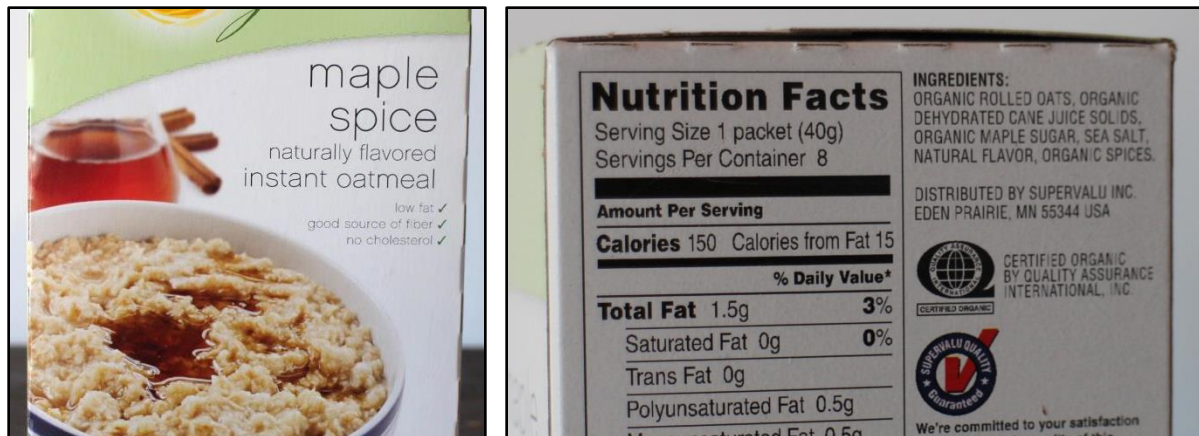


Figure 2: Wild Organics Maple Spice Instant Oatmeal, front panel (left) and ingredient information (right)



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In the case of the products in *Figures 1 and 2*, the item in *Figure 1* contains no pure maple product at all while the item in *Figure 2* contains organic maple sugar. The average consumer has no indication based on the primary display panel that one of these products contains pure maple as an ingredient and one does not.

The ingredient market for pure maple syrup or maple sugar is approximately a \$15 million business and industry stakeholders believe that the market for pure Vermont maple as an ingredient could double over the next few years. Put another way, **the market for maple syrup as an ingredient could grow to use in excess of one million gallons of maple syrup.**

Recent Production Trends for Vermont Maple Syrup

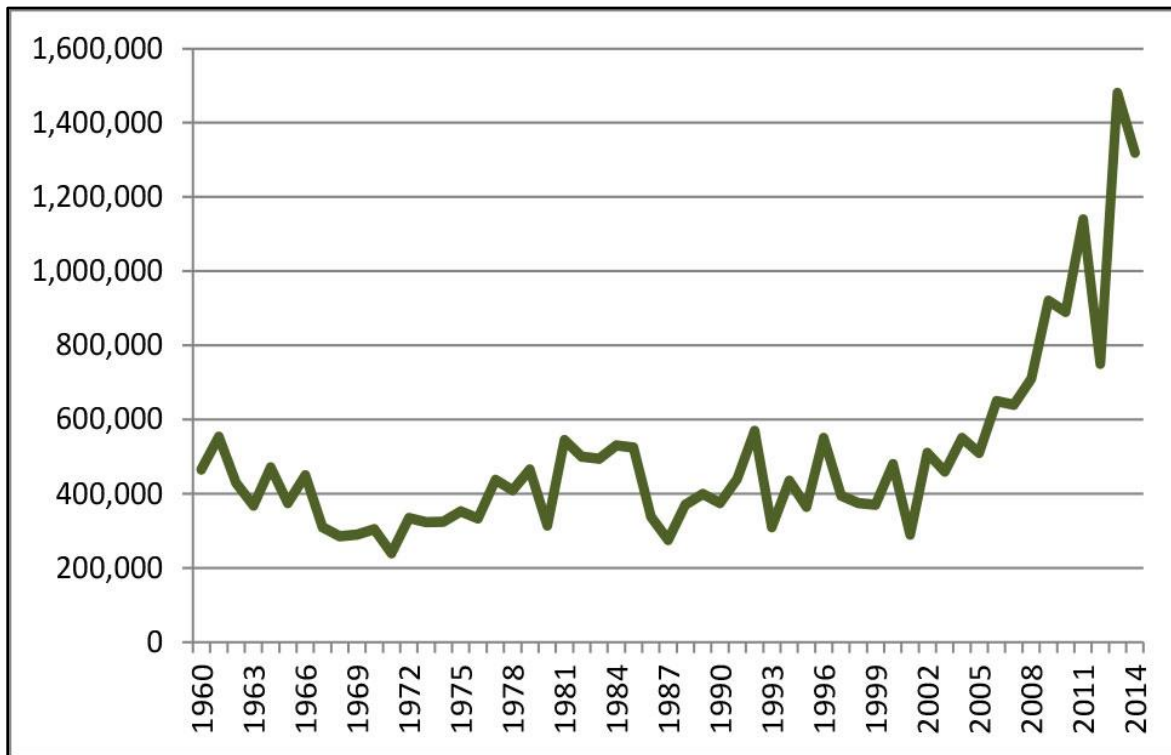


Figure 3: Gallons of syrup produced in Vermont, 1960-2014, Data from USDA-NASS

Vermont has seen a dramatic increase in the production of maple syrup over the past decade, driven by growing demand for maple syrup and favorable market conditions created by the formation of the Quebec Federation of Maple Syrup Producer's strategic reserve. This reserve, currently estimated at 75 million pounds of syrup, has created a more stable pricing system for bulk maple syrup producers and buyers.

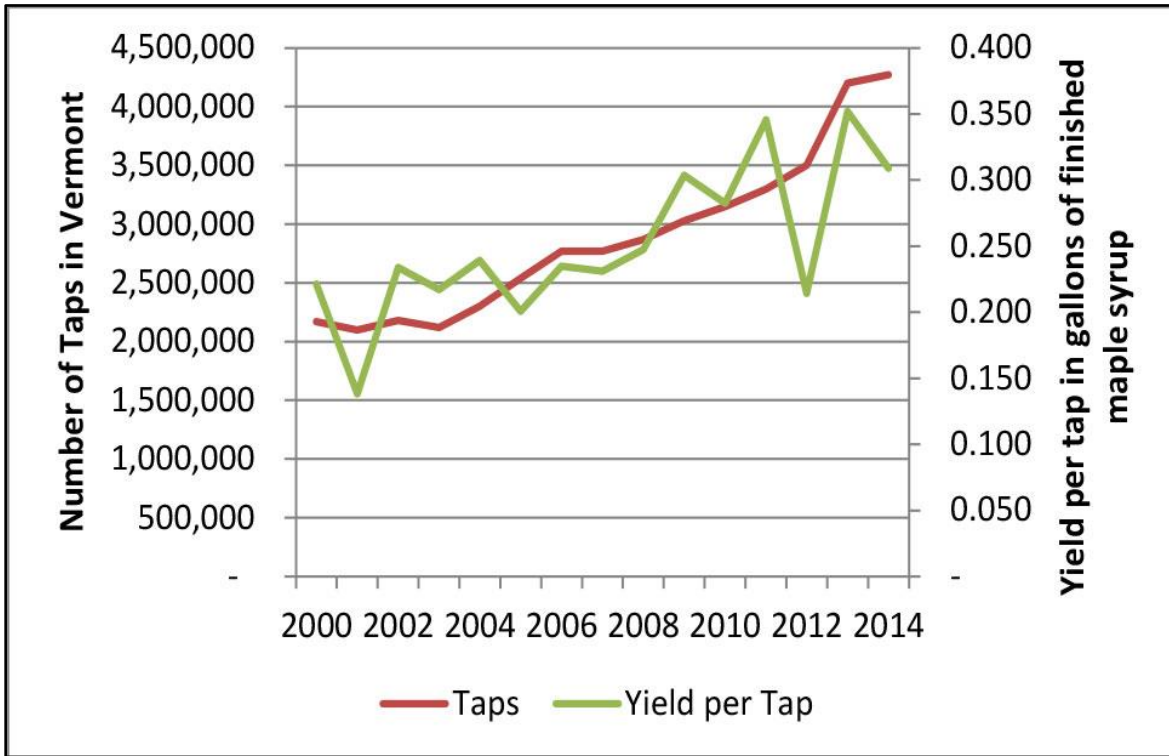


Figure 4: Number of Taps and Yield per Tap, Vermont, 2000-2014. Data from USDA-NASS

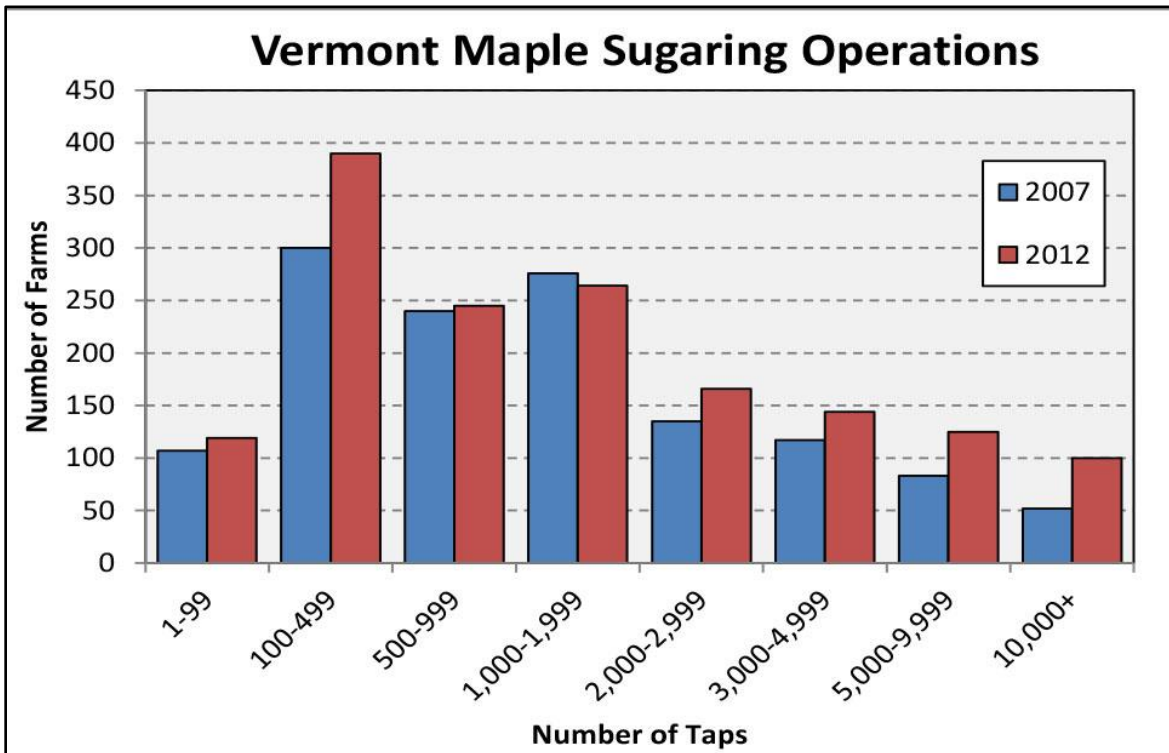


Figure 5: Vermont Sugaring Operations, 2007 vs. 2012. Data from USDA-NASS, chart courtesy of Dr. Tim Perkins, UVM Proctor Maple Research Center

Figure 4 shows that not only has the number of taps increased since 2000 but also the yield per tap, reflecting the improvements in technology used in maple sugaring, including vacuum tubing systems, reverse osmosis, and more efficient evaporators.

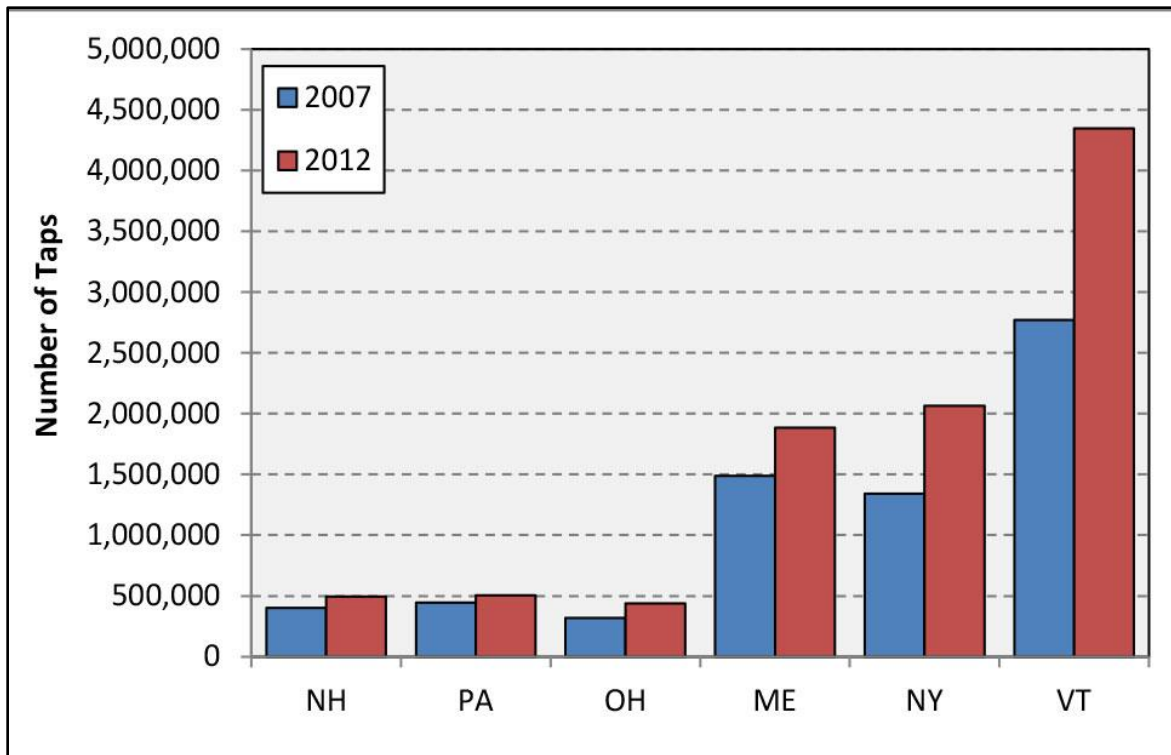


Figure 6: Number of Taps in Major Maple-Producing US States. Data from USDA-NASS, chart courtesy of Dr. Tim Perkins, UVM Proctor Maple Research Center

New Grades of Maple Syrup – Vermont and Elsewhere

In 2014, Vermont became the first state to adopt new grades of syrup consistent with industry-wide agreement through the efforts of the International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI). The new grades will standardize how maple syrup is graded from state-to-state and between the US and Canada. Beginning this year, all Vermont syrup will be using the new grades. Thank you again for the Committee’s support in adopting this new grading system.

