



International Maple Syrup Institute Activities and Accomplishment Report (2017/18)

Established in 1975, the International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI) provides an open forum for the discussion of industry and government policies affecting the integrity, quality and local and international markets for pure maple syrup. The IMSI also works to bring about greater uniformity in the customs and standards adopted by those engaged in the maple syrup industry. The membership is comprised of maple syrup producer associations, maple packers, equipment manufacturers, individual enterprises and others. The IMSI communicates and collaborates regularly with officials of the North American Maple Syrup Council (NAMSC) in pursuit of overall industry goals. The IMSI celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2015, a very important milestone for the maple syrup industry.

Supply, Demand and Pricing of Maple Syrup:

The maple industry is a growth industry in both the United States and Canada. Growth in maple syrup production capacity in the U.S. is currently estimated at about one million taps per year. A planned expansion of five million taps is underway in Quebec over a two year period. Production capacity in Ontario and New Brunswick is growing by up to 5 to 7% each year. This growth in production capacity helps underline the importance of supporting effective promotion and marketing strategies both in North America and overseas.

Going into the 2018 production season, supply was very good in most areas with about 80 million pounds of maple syrup in the Federation's strategic reserve. Some packers/processors have also held inventory surplus over the past two years. This may lead to some re-balancing of supply and demand in 2019. It is expected that there will be a sufficient supply of maple syrup to meet overall demand in 2019.

Bulk syrup rates in Quebec are currently being negotiated between the Federation and the Maple Industry Council. Some level of decrease in the Federation's syrup inventory is anticipated in 2019 due to stable and in some areas increasing demand and a reduction in the 2018 crop compared to 2017 of about 30 million pounds. The strategic reserve is meant to deal with annual crop fluctuations such as this and all indications are that the industry will be able to meet North American and World demand leading up to the 2019 maple production season. Generally, packers are holding good inventories.

Sales of real maple products continue to be strong, with global demand gradually increasing. An interesting fact is that organic maple syrup is now about 30 million pounds of the intake into the strategic reserve, but demand for organic syrup has leveled off. It is not known what that may mean in the sales season ahead. It is possible that some producers may drop their certification because of the current demand situation.

Despite some uncertainties regarding very important factors over which the maple industry has no direct control such as Canada-U.S. exchange rates, more demanding regulatory requirements by government agencies, the outcome of trade negotiations and packer/processor mergers, the future looks very bright. We need to continue with promotional strategies which emphasize the benefits of real maple products as a sweetener alternative. At the same time, raising consumer awareness about the many ways that maple products can be utilized in preparing food products year-round is very important. We also need to stress that the maple industry is sustainable and that maple producers are responsible land stewards. The benefits to local and regional economies should also be stressed.

Tariffs in Canada and the United States:

In late May, the Canadian government announced proposed tariffs on a variety of products entering Canada from the United States, including maple syrup. This was in direct response to U.S. tariffs being placed on Canadian aluminum and steel products entering the United States. Following this announcement, the Canadian Maple Advisory Committee, with representation from Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, sent a letter, with rationale, recommending that maple syrup be removed from the proposed list of products to which the new Canadian tariff would apply. Subsequently, the Canadian government chose not to remove maple syrup from the listing and so a new tariff of 10% on maple syrup entering Canada took effect on July 1st. We understand that there is an exemption to recoup the expenses associated with the tariff on any of the syrup imported into Canada which subsequently re-enters the United States. Now that the decision has been made by the Canadian government to impose the new tariff, the Canadian Maple Advisory Committee will be again expressing their opposition to the new tariff and reiterating its potential negative impacts.

FDA Nutritional Facts Panel Added Sugar Issue:

We are making very good progress towards addressing this issue but it is not over yet, despite some media coverage suggesting otherwise. The Washington, DC based lobbyist retained by the IMSI is helping stickhandle our position with wording to advance through the U.S. House and Senate. The IMSI position remains unchanged in that we are requesting an exemption for single-ingredient maple products. We are hopeful that the added sugar issue will be resolved soon.

FDA Review and Consultations on the Definition of Healthy Foods, Including Labeling Implications:

The FDA has currently initiated dialogue, including public consultations, on the definition of healthy foods. This includes a review of what constitutes healthy foods with potentially broader food labeling implications than the nutritional facts panel requirements. The IMSI retained a Washington DC based lobbyist Dr. John Goldberg to participate in an initial round of FDA sponsored public consultations scheduled in July of 2018. John has prepared a report from the meeting which is available upon request from the IMSI Executive Director.

USDA Dietary Guidelines Review:

The USDA has initiated a review of their Dietary Guidelines for Food. There has been some initial consultation by FDA to determine the scope of the study. We are hoping to be able to nominate a maple research specialist to participate directly on their advisory committee when the scope of the review has been finalized and the door opens for Advisor Committee Nominations.

FDA Food Safety Modernization Act and Health Canada Safe Food for Canadians Act:

The IMSI continues to monitor the roll out of the FDA's new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The U.S. State governments are being assigned responsibility for implementation and interpretation of the new FSMA requirements. All maple syrup producers in the U.S. may be ultimately impacted by FSMA. Exporters of maple syrup to the United States will also be affected by the new FSMA requirements.

The Canadian government is also working on a new Safe Food for Canadians Act. The IMSI has input into proposed regulatory amendments related to labeling in cooperation with the Canadian Maple Advisory Committee and the Maple Industry Council.

State/Provincial level Associations in both the United States and Canada are encouraged to stay abreast of these regulatory developments. Every opportunity should be taken to learn about any new or

proposed requirements related to food safety and help state government officials to interpret and apply the rules in a practical manner which is workable for maple producers.

Harmonization of U.S. and Canadian Nutritional Information on Maple Syrup Product Labels:

In 2016, concern was expressed that current nutritional labeling of maple syrup is quite variable and that it would be very advantageous to develop harmonized labelling specifications that are ready for the roll out of new FDA labelling requirements. Harmonization would set one standard for industry application in the United States, removing inconsistencies and some confusion, which is associated with existing labels. The IMSI has been facilitating follow-up with maple quality assurance specialists employed by maple packers and maple researchers from both Canada and the United States. The aim has been to come up with standardized nutritional label specifications for maple syrup and maple sugar. Generic nutritional facts panel label provisions have now been developed by the maple industries quality assurance specialists with input from maple researchers at UVM, Proctor and Centre Acer. Some details are still being worked on, such as attempts to align the serving size for maple syrup.

Codex Application for Maple Syrup:

Codex Alimentarius is an international certification program for food products which are sold in markets around the world. It provides a definition for various food products and outlines food quality and safety assurance standards which are the accepted norm for a variety of different food products. A Codex certification for maple syrup would help raise awareness regarding the definition of pure maple syrup and quality assurance standards among government officials in global markets. Over time, it would also help elevate awareness regarding the uniqueness of maple syrup among consumers around the globe and help position the maple industry for market expansion in both North American and overseas markets. Now that there is a standardized North American grading and classification system in regulations for maple syrup, it is serving as a very important building block for the maple industry's Codex application.

The IMSI, in collaboration with the Federation of Maple Syrup Producers in Quebec, will be applying to the international body responsible for Codex applications to obtain Codex certification for maple syrup. The Federation of Maple Syrup Producers in Quebec is serving as the lead IMSI member with input from the IMSI Board of Directors as required. The Federation is also serving as primary liaison with the Canadian government on this file. The Canadian government is very supportive of a Codex application from the maple industry and is willing to help stickhandle the application. The FDA and USDA have also been made aware of the Codex initiative and their input is being sought in advance of filing the application. Representatives of the Canadian government presented on Codex at the IMSI's Board of Directors meeting in August 2017 in Ottawa. The representative from Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada advised the group that it may take from 3 to 8 years for a decision to be rendered on the Codex application since it requires a multi-country consensus which takes time.

The Federation has prepared two supporting documents for the Codex application for maple syrup which were presented by Simon Trepanier of the Federation at the IMSI Board meeting on Friday, May 12th in Croghan, NY. These documents have been distributed to the IMSI's Board of Directors for comment. A copy of the Codex Application documents can be obtained from the IMSI's Executive Director upon request.

In 2018, the IMSI filed a petition with FDA to amend the FDA's standard of identity, or legal definition, for maple syrup. In order to advance the International Codex application it is necessary that the FDA

definition align with the definition in state level regulatory instruments, as well as the Canadian definition.

IMSI Issues Identification and Needs Analysis - A Look Ahead:

The IMSI Board of Directors engaged in a brain storming session to identify issues seen as important to the North American maple industry going forward. Some of the issues brought forward at the session were:

- Uncertainty regarding the outcome of ongoing trade negotiations and merger of processors/packers.
- Negative impact of tariffs.
- Concern about maintaining the right balance between supply of syrup in the medium and longer-term.
- Margins on bulk syrup sales being lower and future prices unknown.
- Need for an economic analysis of the U.S. maple syrup industry.
- Concern about off-flavored syrup being sold in some sales outlets.
- Need for stepped up awareness and education focused on product quality.
- Potential that some of those involved in expansion of production may not have a long-term commitment to the industry.
- Need to continue to monitor and proactively engage in regulatory initiatives by both Federal Governments – U.S. and Canada.
- Need to stay focused on the intent of taste descriptors in the classification/grading system and product quality assurance.
- Need to fully support the new maple grades and color classification system for maple syrup; there is a very good market for very dark syrup provided that it is of good quality.
- Need to stay vigilant regarding eliminating any potential contaminants in real maple products.
- Need to stay connected and communicate effectively (consensus that we are doing this very well now).
- The maple industry will continue to change and we need to stay nimble.
- Need to respect and understand the special needs of small producers.
- Need to pay attention to RO water discharge issues, especially pH and temperature attributes.
- Need to develop a viable recycling option for sap collection system components (tubing, fittings, etc.).
- Need to review the scope and priorities of the IMSI (including re-active versus pro-active emphasis).

North American Marketing Strategy and Implementation Plan for Maple Syrup:

In 2015, both the Board of Directors of the IMSI and the NAMSC endorsed a marketing strategy for maple syrup primarily focused on North America. The IMSI has finalized work on the development of a generic marketing program based on a goal to double sales of maple syrup over the next 7 years. Representatives of maple producer associations, maple packer representatives, educators, marketing consultants and individual producers have assisted the IMSI in the development of this plan. The IMSI has also developed a marketing implementation plan (MIP) which outlines a number of work activities that would be beneficial to the maple syrup industry. This plan was approved by the IMSI's Board of Directors in May of 2016.

A Task Team with representatives from the U.S. and Canada has been established to focus, initially, on the development of uniform messaging regarding maple syrup and other real maple products.

The Maple Slogan and Messaging Theme: As a first step the IMSI sponsored a survey and solicited input directly from consumers regarding the slogan messaging. Dr. Michael Farrell of Cornell University led the design of the survey and arranged for its implementation in collaboration with the Task Team. He also analyzed and presented the survey findings in a number of meeting forums in 2017. A copy of the survey is available upon request from the IMSI's Executive Director Dave Chapeskie.

The IMSI Slogan and Messaging Themes Task Team identified five potential overarching slogans for the North American maple syrup industry and solicited input on these slogan options in a round of consultations in 2017. The IMSI also requested input on suggested maple messaging themes which the IMSI and individual IMSI members should place emphasis on in their promotion and marketing efforts going forward. The results from these consultations were shared with IMSI members and others. In August of 2017, the IMSI Board of Directors selected a final overarching slogan for the maple syrup industry which can be adapted for different real maple products. The slogan is *"Real Maple Syrup – A Natural and Nutritious Choice"*.

In 2018, the IMSI initiated a review of maple nutrition and health benefits information with the view to updating the awareness and educational resources which were published and disseminated to IMSI members up until then. This review will extend into 2019. The Institute has also worked to set up a scientific advisory committee to provide advice and guidance on the interpretation and use of related research information. In 2018, the IMSI entered into a partnership with Leader Evaporator to promote maple products in the United States. This project was initiated in September of this year. The IMSI also continues to support International Maple Month activities in cooperation with the North American Maple Syrup Council (NAMSC). The Program objectives and implementation plan for Maple Month will be reviewed in advance of the 2019 maple production season.

IMSI Social Media Campaign:

The IMSI Social Media Task Team met in Saratoga Springs, NY in advance of the Board of Directors Meeting. Brad Gillilan, IMSI Director and Project Lead, provided an update on progress achieved since the IMSI's social media Facebook page (English language) was launched in September of 2017. As of the meeting, there were 800 site followers. Unfortunately, the site was hacked earlier this year which caused an unfortunate disruption in the postings for awhile. Aside from this problem, the postings have been refreshed monthly. Lots of content has been put forth, tied mostly to the seasons. IMSI Board consensus is that we have made very good progress in implementing the IMSI's social media campaign. In Saratoga Springs, subject themes for message posting were identified through to the end of the 2018/early 2019 calendar year. The themes are summarized below:

July/August 2018	- Add a little maple to your summer-time (BBQ, cooking with maple)
September/October 2018	- Get out and experience maple (focus on color, fall fairs)
November/December 2018	- Sharing maple with family and friends (gifts, Christmas)
January/February 2019	- Sharing the story of making maple products (equipment, product quality, classifying syrup)

IMSI members and others are strongly encouraged to re-post the IMSI posts on their Facebook and other social media venues to add to the overall effectiveness and reach of the IMSI Facebook initiative. They are also encouraged to send in articles and pictures for the different themes on an ongoing basis to Dave Chapeskie, IMSI Executive Director (agrofor@ripnet.com).

Maple Water Labelling Recommendations and Related Research:

In 2015, an IMSI Maple Sap Water Committee chaired by Lyle Merle developed labeling recommendations for maple sap water products in consultation with maple sap water companies. These recommendations were distributed to government regulatory authorities in both Canada and the United States following their approval by the IMSI Board of Directors. In December 2016, the FDA responded formally to the IMSI's recommendations. FDA interpretations do not align well with the IMSI's recommendations. Consequently, the IMSI will be applying formally to FDA seeking amendments which are more in alignment with the IMSI's position. Before a formal application is put forward to FDA, the IMSI will conduct a round of consultations with IMSI members and representatives of the maple sap water industry.

The IMSI has also been active in working to facilitate attempts by maple researchers from Centre Acer and the University of Rhode Island to secure financing for developing a standard of identity for maple sap. Findings from this research would be very helpful in advancing the development and expansion of the maple sap water industry in North America. In 2018, Dr. Navindra Seeram received some research financing to begin the work of developing a standard of identity for maple sap water.

IMSI Maple Awards:

The IMSI continues to administer the Lynn Reynolds Memorial Leadership Award and the Golden Maple Leaf Award and, as of 2017, the IMSI President's Award. The Lynn Reynolds Award recognizes the excellent service contributions of individuals to the North American and international maple syrup industry. The Golden Maple Leaf Award recognizes the exemplary contribution of individuals, groups and organizations in advancing the North American Maple Syrup Industry. We are seeking nominations from IMSI members for the IMSI Annual Awards for 2018. Recipients of these awards through to 2017 are published on page xxx of this program booklet. Award nominations and requests for information regarding the awards should be sent to Dave Chapeskie (agofor@ripnet.com).

IMSI International Maple Grading School:

The IMSI continues to sponsor the International Maple Grading School which is greatly valued by the IMSI membership. Two grading schools were scheduled in 2018, one in West Virginia and one to be held in Keene, NH on October 24th and 25th, 2018. The registration information for the Keene, NH School is posted at <https://extension.umaine.edu/register/product/2018-maple-syrup-grading-school-keene-nh/>.

The school held in West Virginia was the first held in that area of the country and attendance was comprised of 29 maple producers from West Virginia and Virginia. On the post-training evaluation, 79% of the participants responded that their knowledge gain was three steps or more on a seven step scale. When asked what they would do differently as a result of knowledge gained through the school, course participants listed 14 different quality control practices which they would implement. These included paying more attention to color and clarity of syrup, more confidence about rejecting off-flavours in the final product and raised awareness regarding the importance of classifying and grading syrup.

Other IMSI Activities:

The IMSI continues to provide an effective forum for ongoing communications among maple syrup producers, packers, equipment manufacturers and others. This includes quarterly Board of Directors meetings held in both Canada and the United States, which provide an excellent forum for communications and dialogue regarding issues of importance to the maple syrup industry. Discussions regarding the maple crop including supply, demand and pricing are a feature of this dialogue. The IMSI

regularly gives input into government policies, which have the potential to affect the maple syrup industry.

The Executive Director of the IMSI helps address many requests for both administrative and technical information and serves in an advisory role to its members and others on an ongoing basis. The IMSI Executive Committee members meet regularly to map out and discuss the IMSI's program agenda, deal with program requirements and issues and help address ongoing and emerging issues affecting, or that may potentially affect, the maple industry.