

INTERNATIONAL MAPLE SYRUP INSTITUTE REPORT

May 2017

International Maple Syrup Institute Update:

The most recent meeting of the Board of Directors of the International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI) was held on Friday May 12, 2017 at the American Maple Museum in Croghan, New York. Attendees were able to view the new Hall of Fame Room which has been nicely restored and presented. Some IMSI members stayed over to attend the Maple Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on Saturday. Congratulations are extended to John Henderson(Ontario) and Tom McCruum(Massachusetts) for achieving this high honour.

Maple Crop Reports:

An annual spring tradition of the IMSI is to share preliminary crop reports from the different jurisdictions in the United States and Canada. For most areas, the maple production was at a normal level or above normal depending on latitude, elevation and regional weather patterns. Vacuum systems were very effective in enhancing sap yields, especially areas where weather was not ideal for good sap flows. In some areas, the maple production season was protracted beginning in January and extending into May.

In United States (Connecticut, Massachusetts, lower areas of Pennsylvania and Ohio and the south western U.S.), production was 50 % to 75% of a good crop at best. Production in Michigan and Wisconsin was better in the northern areas of these states. At higher elevations in Vermont, New York State, New Hampshire, Maine and even Pennsylvania, the production was very good. However, the sugar content was lower than normal, especially in the producing areas further south in the U.S.

In Canada, preliminary reports indicate that Quebec had a bumper crop, especially in the easternmost part of the province. Thirty percent of the Quebec crop is certified organic. As has been previously reported, this organic maple syrup is the first to be sold out of the strategic reserve. A research-based report will be available in June confirming the size of the Quebec crop. Ontario had a strong crop outcome in the southern part of the province, especially those that caught February sap runs. In the northern part of Ontario, crop volume was variable, from 50 to 90%. New Brunswick had a strong year in the north part of the province but very poor in the southern coastal areas. Nova Scotia had a good year but frequent snowstorms made production and managing mainlines a challenge.

Overall syrup quality and flavour was reported as very good. Production of lighter syrups was experienced in some areas where the weather remained cool throughout the production season. Darker colour classes were more prevalent where there were intermittent warmer temperatures. The use of modern maple production equipment combined with the application of best management practices helped ensure the production of high quality maple syrup.

Supply, Demand and Pricing of Maple Syrup

It was reported that the demand for maple syrup continues to grow in the international marketplace. At the same time there is concern regarding whether or not increases in demand will be able to keep up with production increases over the next few years. This points out the importance of continuing to develop new markets for maple syrup both in North America and overseas. For example, with the fast-paced lifestyle of young people, there is ample opportunity to work towards full integration of real maple into fast food offerings as well as restaurant menu's.

Retail prices are stable and sales remain very good in most market areas. Packers from the U.S. reported that profit margins for syrup derived from bulk purchases remain tight.

Labeling and Nutritional Fact Panel(s):

The IMSI engaged in ongoing consultations with regulatory agencies in both Canada and the United States. In Canada, the IMSI has provided input to Health Canada (HC) regarding Front of Package (FOP) labeling and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regarding other aspects of labelling, including the need to eliminate maple misrepresentation in the marketplace. The IMSI has also been in liaison with the FDA regarding the Added Sugar line requirement on the new FDA Nutritional Facts Panel (NFP). An update regarding the status of dialogue with FDA regarding the NFP and the added sugar issue is appended to this meeting summary. Response has been slow due to ongoing consultations and the amount of overall agricultural commodity feedback to the respective agencies. IMSI will be requesting a 5-year extension to the date when labels for maple syrup must be compliant with the FDA's new NFP requirements.

The IMSI is now pursuing an expanded list of beneficial minerals/vitamins to the standardized NFP in addition to the mandatory nutrients currently included in the standardized NFP for maple syrup prepared earlier by a team of Quality Assurance Specialists and Maple Researchers working under the auspices of the IMSI. The IMSI has also asked the technical working group of QA experts from the packing/packing industry to begin work on a parallel NFP for Maple Sugar. Given the increased demand and interest in maple sugar, the board viewed this as an important and proactive move. The working group has accepted the challenge and is working on that now.

Lead Reduction Update Cal Prop 65:

The agreed upon timeline of achieving complete lead elimination in maple syrup under the California Proposition 65 agreement with maple packers/processors is 2020. Major packers have been communicating with their syrup suppliers on the appropriate quality standards that will be accepted. It is incumbent on all producers, packers and equipment vendors to work towards total lead elimination regardless of points of sale or commercial status.

IMSI Marketing Slogan Development and Messaging:

An IMSI Task Team is continuing work on the development of a generic marketing slogan for maple syrup and the selection of marketing themes. IMSI Directors, IMSI Members and others will be consulted before a slogan is selected and messaging themes are finalized and made available to IMSI members and others.

Social Media Planning:

At the January 2017 IMSI Board meeting in Verona, NY, a task team was struck to begin a social media strategy for the maple syrup industry in North America. Brad Gillilan from Leader Evaporator has agreed to lead the IMSI's Social Media Task team . A planning document has been prepared to guide the IMSI's engagement in Social Media . A detailed implementation plan outlining a set of guidelines for launching messages strategically beginning in September 2017 was also developed recently. The implementation plan was endorsed by the IMSI Board of Directors and key monthly messages are presently being identified. The intent is to share this with all parties interested in promoting maple syrup strategically on a monthly basis and to have a timely and consistent messaging for all to follow.

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 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 North American as well as overseas markets.

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 in developing an application for Codex certification 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 stick handle the application. Representatives of the Canadian government have been invited to participate in discussions related to the Codex application at the IMSI's next Board of Directors meeting on Friday August 18th in Ottawa, ON.

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 . This documents have been distributed to the IMSI's Board of Directors for comment.

Extension, Research and Regulatory Update:

Mark Isselhardt joined the IMSI Board of Directors meeting by teleconference and provided an overview of an assessment that he has been working on regarding the level of maple extension support in the United States. His work demonstrates that extension services have been seriously eroded from past levels. It was mentioned that the IMSI and state level maple associations can assist by sending letters of support to maintain extension and research services to program administrators at the state level. A copy of Mark's report can be obtained from the IMSI's Executive Director upon request.

Yves Bois of Centre Acer and Henry Marckres updated the IMSI Board regarding quality assurance training, which will be offered in 2017.

Henry Marckres provided a report on behalf of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM). He mentioned that Arson Tebbatts formally of WCAX Channel 3 is the new Secretary of VAAFAM and that Alyson Eastman is the new Deputy Secretary. Alyson had been working on the agricultural Committee. Henry also announced that he will be retiring from the VAAFAM on October 31st, 2017.

Maple Sap Water:

The IMSI plans to make a formal recommendation to FDA that the regulatory body adopts labelling recommendations for maple sap water and other water related products which were developed earlier. FDA was apprised of the IMSI's recommendations in 2016 but in order for them to consider the recommendations, they must be submitted utilizing submission protocols.

The IMSI has been working to help facilitate financial support for Standard of Identity research for maple sap water.

Royal Winter Fair Maple Contest :

Officials responsible for the prestigious Royal Winter Fair maple contest in Toronto are encouraging maple syrup producers and packers from the maple producing states and provinces to consider placing entries in the maple products contest. The Royal Winter Fair is long established and very popular show held at Exhibition Place in Toronto in November of each year.

Further details can be obtained from Dave Chapeskie, Executive Director, IMSI at agrofor@ripnet.com

IMSI Annual Award Nominations:

The IMSI Directors and members are reminded that nominations for the IMSI's Lynn Reynolds Memorial Leadership and Golden Maple Leaf Awards for 2017 are being accepted from IMSI members. Nominations must be submitted to the IMSI's Executive Director by Thursday August 31st. Guidelines for the two IMSI Awards are appended to this meeting summary.

Winners of the Awards will be announced at the Banquet for the NAMSC and IMSI Annual meetings in Levis, Quebec in October.

Upcoming IMSI Meetings:

The next IMSI Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Friday August 18th, 2017 at the Sheraton Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario.

The fall IMSI Board of Directors meeting and the IMSI's annual Meeting will be held at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel in Levis, Quebec on **Sunday October 22nd and Monday October 23rd, 2017 respectively**. An overall program outline will be available in June 2017.

For further information contact:

Dave Chapeskie,
Executive Director,
International Maple syrup Institute
E-mail: agrofor@ripnet.com