

## **International Maple Syrup Institute Report**

### **May 2018**

The Board of Directors Meeting of the International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI) was held at the American Maple Museum in Croghan, NY on Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was very well attended with diverse representation from both the United States and Canada. Representation at the meeting was from maple producer associations, maple packers/processors, maple equipment manufacturers/vendors, small maple enterprises, maple researchers, maple marketing specialists and others.

Some attendees from the IMSI Board meeting stayed over for the 2018 Maple Hall of Fame Inductions which were held at the Museum on Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations are extended to Dr. Eric Randall of New York State and Bruce Gillilan of Vermont on the occasion of their induction into the Hall.

Philippe Breton of Lapierre Equipment and Martin Desilets of Dominion and Grimm were appointed to the IMSI Board of Directors at the Board meeting on Friday. There are 30 IMSI Board members representing the various interested of maple industry stakeholders in both Canada and the United States.

### **Crop report:**

The maple production season was long in many areas. Some maple producers tapped in January and early February and benefited from milder temperatures at that time. However, the season dragged on in many areas as producers awaited a return to warmer temperatures conducive to sap. In the northern areas, the warmer temperatures never came and the season dragged on into May. In some cases, producers endured the negative impact of localized wind damage, equipment damage due to freeze-up and deep snow in some areas. It was especially important to check out tubing installations frequently to minimize losses.

The different states and provinces provided their preliminary reports on the 2018 maple production season. Generally, for maple operations located further south within a state/province and/or south facing slopes, the crop ranged from good to excellent. Most operations located further north or on north facing slopes did not produce as expected, and report production levels from 25 to 50 % of a normal crop. A few notable discouraging areas were northern New Brunswick, northern Ontario, the eastern region of Quebec, near and around Quebec City, northern Wisconsin and northern Ohio. Overall, the maple crop was about two-thirds of the 2017 crop. The crop in Quebec is expected to be down from 150 million pounds in 2017 to about 100 million pounds in 2018.

Some areas experienced an unusually high amount of nitre in the maple syrup prior to filtering and the sap sweetness was very low.

### **Maple Syrup Supply & Demand:**

Growth in maple syrup production capacity in the U.S. is estimated at one million taps. A planned expansion by 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.

Going into the 2018 production season, in most areas, overall supply was still very good with about 80 million pounds of maple syrup in the Federation's strategic reserve. Also some packers/processors have held inventory surplus to their needs over the past two years. It is expected that the smaller crop in 2017 will lead to a drawdown both on the strategic research and on packer/processor inventories. This should lead to some re-balancing of supply and demand in advance of the 2019 maple production season. Overall, it is expected that there will be a sufficient supply of maple syrup to meet demand in 2018.

Everyone reported that sales are strong with up to an 11% increase in this quarter. The strategic reserve is meant to deal with annual crop fluctuations such as this and all indications is that the industry will be able to meet North American and World demand in the upcoming sales year. An interesting fact is that organic maple syrup is now 36% of the intake into the strategic reserve, but demand for organic syrup has leveled off. It is not sure 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.

### **Codex Application for Maple Syrup:**

We have reported that the IMSI was supporting the development of an international Codex application for maple syrup in the past. The process to apply for Codex certification is complicated and lengthy. A final certification would put maple syrup in the world's food data base and should increase international sales as well as awareness about real maple products over time. An application is reviewed in June of each year by the Codex Council in Rome where the Codex headquarters is. There is an issue with a standard definition for maple syrup between the US and Canada, so outreach by the IMSI is now occurring to petition the FDA in the US to review their definition with the intent of harmonizing with Canada's. This will delay the Codex application by at least one year.

### **IMSI Social Media :**

After the September 2017 launch of the IMSI social media campaign, significant progress has occurred. About 250,000 Facebook users have viewed the IMSI posts since then. Some state /provincial maple associations "piggy backed" on the IMSI messages and augmented the messages which they have developed . Unfortunately, the IMSI social media platform got hacked in February and considerable effort has been expended to fix that. A very long and demanding sugaring season in 2018 also interfered with efforts to keep messages regularly updated. The IMSI's social media task team will be reviewing messages and approaches as we head into summer with the objective to getting messaging back on track.

### **Lead Elimination from Maple Operations:**

Over the winter the Quebec Federation, in collaboration with Centre Acer, began extensive educational outreach with producers in Quebec. Some media interest occurred which highlighted the issue in various Quebec media. Lack of understanding from some parties caused some heightened media attention but in the end the reporting was contained and largely positive. Discussion occurred at the IMSI table about being diligent and not over reacting on any non compliant outliers. The North American Maple Industry has been proactively dealing with the lead issue for over 25 years and we are generally in a good position.

Progress on meeting the requirements of the California Proposition 65 Maple Agreement was reported as very good in Canada and the United States. Aside from the Agreement, the overarching goal of the IMSI is that lead containing equipment be eliminated from maple production and packing operations as soon as possible. Much progress towards this goal has been achieved since 1995. It is time to complete the task.

### **Quality Assurance Roundtable Discussion:**

The IMSI table is a collection of some of the most astute maple industry leaders. At times, we conduct a round table discussion on relevant issues and brain storm potential solutions. Everyone is asked to provide feedback and some common ground on quality issues is shared. A few items that we need to pay attention to in the near and longer term:

- There is still “alternate equipment” that producers are using that is not food grade and is makeshift in nature. This sends an image that maple production can be done with inferior supplies and “jury rigged” to meet the situation. Often, these show up on You Tube as the sure fire way to make maple syrup. It damages the industry’s credibility and renders it visually as a simple “Mickey Mouse” procedure.
- What to do to manage RO water as it is expelled from the RO?
- There was broad consensus regarding the need to continue to provide education to small producers and other producers as needed on syrup quality, lead elimination and the importance of utilizing proper equipment
- There should continue to be concerted effort in the development and execution of 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification programs; some argue that raising awareness and education need to be complemented by self -regulation
- There is evidence that off-flavored syrups are entering retail markets; this is potentially very damaging to the maple syrup industry.
- There is a need for additional training in the recognition of off-flavored syrups, but of equal importance is recognition of good quality syrups
- Blending of off-flavoured syrup with good flavoured syrup is discouraged
- Use less harsh chemicals in cleaning of RO’s and tubing.
- When new tubing is installed, do not collect first runs of sap due to the potential for added off-flavours in the syrup
- Utilize defoamers that are acceptable and do not potentially contaminate maple syrup.

A point that was emphasized during the discussion was need to identify issues such as the potential for contaminants in maple syrup or the potential for negative environmental impacts early on and resolve them instead of reacting to issues later as they may come to the attention of government regulators or become a focus of attention. In general, agricultural practices are coming under increasing scrutiny by both the public and governments, a trend that is expected to continue. For its part, the maple industry must demonstrate that they are at the top of their game in selecting equipment and applying best practices so that the potential for issues is minimized.

### **International Maple Syrup Institute Grading School:**

The International Maple Syrup Institute Maple Grading School began as the New England Maple Grading School and was the brainchild of Henry Marckres, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets; Sumner Dole, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; and Kathy Hopkins, University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Armed with a grant from the Maine Agricultural Center and support from Leader Evaporator, the International Maple Syrup Institute and the Maple Digest, the first school was delivered in 2004 in Lancaster, NH. It was intended to be a one-time presentation but because of continuing demand it has been held annually and has been adopted by the International Maple Syrup Institute as a signature event offered in accordance with the IMSI mission to protect the quality and integrity of maple products. Its location has moved around to make it more accessible to producers across North America.

Numerous condensed versions have been offered both by IMSI faculty and by other Extension personnel who have attended the school. Schools have been offered in eight states and three provinces. Newsletter articles, producer reference cards, and continuing discussion on maple grades and grading topics have kept producers interested in participating in the school and in producing the best quality maple products possible. The continued success of the school has helped promote the wholesome image of the maple industry and shown that its participants are high quality producers of unique products.

Six years of evaluation results show that 80% of participants have increased their knowledge about producing high quality of syrup by 2-6 steps on a seven step scale. The continuation of the school provides an excellent platform to discuss with and educate the industry about the process of developing some version of a more standardized grading and nomenclature system for pure maple syrup.

### **FDA Nutrient Facts Panel Added Sugar Update:**

The IMSI continues to support efforts to encourage FDA to drop the added sugar requirement from the FDA's new Nutritional Facts Panel Rule. Since January of 2018, the IMSI has taken the following actions related to the Added Sugar file:

- Sent a letter to the Commissioner of FDA responding to the FDA's proposed Added Sugar Guidelines for maple syrup, honey and cranberries which were announced in March of 2018;
- Filed a copy of the letter to the Commissioner of FDA to the appropriate FDA Docket as input to FDA's consultation process on the guidelines;
- Encouraged and assisted state associations to bring the issue the FDA's Added Sugar requirement to the attention of elected officials within their respective jurisdictions;
- Served to coordinate the efforts and craft the response to the Added Sugar issue;

- Helped coordinate efforts with representatives of the American honey industry

It is believed that the collective efforts of the IMSI and state-level associations are making a difference. IMSI members, individual producers and others are encouraged provide their input regarding the Added Sugar requirement to the FDA by the revised deadline of Friday June 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Docket reference for comments is “the The Declaration of Added Sugars on Honey, Maple Syrup, and certain Cranberry Products” (Docket No. FDA-2018-D-0075).

For further information regarding the Added Sugar file, contact Dave Chapeskie ([agrofor@ripnet.com](mailto:agrofor@ripnet.com)) or emma marvin ([emma@butternutmountainfarm.com](mailto:emma@butternutmountainfarm.com))

### **Health Canada Consultations (Front-of-Package Labeling):**

The IMSI has also been very active in reviewing proposed new labeling rules north of the border. This review has been conducted in collaboration with the Maple Industry Council (CIE) which represents packers and processors as well as with the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers. The IMSI’s input to Health Canada was provided through the formal government consultation process. The IMSI is strongly opposed to putting what would be the equivalent of warning labels on the front-of-package label of maple syrup, because of its sugar content. The IMSI also advocated for labeling which does not in any way mislead the consumer.

2018 Maple Grading Schools

May 18-19, 2018

West Virginia

October 24-25, 2018 TBD

Keene, NH

If you need additional information or have any questions, please contact Kathy Hopkins at 207.474.9622 or [khopkins@maine.edu](mailto:khopkins@maine.edu). Registration Deadline: October 15, 2018.

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### **FDA Food Safety Modernization Act and 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 working on a new Safe Food for Canadians Act.

State/Provincial level Associations in both the United States and Canada are encouraged to stay abreast of these regulatory developments and take every opportunity 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.

**Upcoming IMSI Meetings (2018):**

IMSI Summer Board of Directors Meeting – Wednesday, July 18, 2018, Saratoga, NY (In Conjunction with New York State Maple Producers Summer Meeting)

IMSI Fall Board of Directors Meeting – Friday, October 26, 2018, Concord, NH

IMSI Annual Meeting – Saturday, October 27, 2018, Concord, NH

Dave Chapeskie,  
Executive Director,  
International Maple Syrup Institute