



# Maple Syrup Inquiry Overview

Below you will find links to an overview podcast, PowerPoint presentation, survey information sheet, and practice interviews for NASS's Maple Syrup Inquiry. The practice interviews can be used to enter data in CATI or CAPI to get familiar with those data collection instruments.

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Strategic Planning and Business Services Division  
Strategic Planning Branch  
Workforce Performance and Staff Development Section

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# Enumerator Training

## Maple Syrup Inquiry



**United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service**

**Workforce Performance and Staff Development Section**



# Survey Overview

- The Maple Syrup Inquiry is conducted:
  - As a result of the North American Maple Syrup Council requesting in 1988 that NASS reinstate the maple syrup program.
  - Due to increased demand for data regarding the maple syrup industry.

# General Survey Information

- Project Code: **192 – Maple Syrup Survey**
- Questionnaires:
  - Mail around April 20<sup>th</sup> each year
- Release:
  - *Crop Production Report*
  - Around June 12, 12:00 P.M. (EST)



# Additional Information

- Maple sap flows in the spring of the year.
  - Production and quality can vary from year to year based on weather conditions.
  - Optimal conditions are warm days (above freezing) and cold nights (below freezing).
- It takes around 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.
  - Can range between 20-60 depending on the year, weather, amount of sugar in the sap, etc.
  - A single tree can have multiple taps based on its age and diameter.
- The lighter the syrup color, the higher the quality
  - Darker colored syrup is considered a lower quality product.





Grade B

Grade A  
Dark Amber

Grade A  
Medium Amber

Grade A  
Light Amber



# Survey Questions: Screening

- Any taps set on the operation during the previous year **OR** current year?
- No?
  - Intend to set any taps in the future?
    - Yes/No/DK
      - All will route you to Conclusion
        - » Leave a note describing the situation
- Leave good notes if the operation is completely out of business (no agricultural activity)
  - What happened? New operator? Any other info?



# Survey Questions: Production Data

- First questions in survey ask for both previous year AND current year:
  - How many taps set on trees owned, leased from others, or tapped rent-free?
  - On how many acres were taps set?
  - Gallons of syrup produced?
    - Include syrup from sap purchased
  - How many gallons used to make value-added products?
    - (sugar, maple candy, etc.)
  - How many gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup?

# Survey Questions: Previous Year Unprocessed Sap

- During the previous year, how many gallons of unprocessed sap purchased from other producers?
  - Record gallons and price per gallon
- During the previous year, how many gallons of unprocessed sap sold to other producers?
  - Record gallons and price per gallon

# Previous Year Syrup Sold

- From the previous year production, record gallons sold and average price per gallon
- 4 categories:
  - Direct to consumer (farmer's market, etc.)
  - Wholesale (supermarkets, restaurants, etc.)
  - Bulk Wholesale (containers over 5 gallons)
    - Report sales in Gallons and \$/Gallon OR Pounds and \$/lb
  - Unsold (kept, given away, personal use)
    - Report number of Gallons

Report  
Gallons sold  
and  
Avg.\$/gallon

# Previous Year Sales, Cont'd.

- How much sold as Grade A?
- How much sold as processing grade?
  - INCLUDE all syrup sold at retail, wholesale, and bulk wholesale
- For the current year, were operation's maple products certified organic according to **USDA standards**?
  - Must meet USDA standards for organic production.



# Things to Watch Out For

- Syrup produced seems high or low compared to number of taps
- Sap to syrup ratio – high/low
- High/low prices
- Large change in amount of syrup produced from year to year
- Previous year's syrup production seems high
  - Did you purchase additional sap?
- No taps set during the previous year, but taps set this year
  - Why didn't they collect sap last year? What happened?
- Syrup produced this year, but not last year

# Conclusion

- Leave good notes
  - Any time you need to explain odd data
- Work through some practices
  - Before interviewing!
- Contact your supervisor/regional office with any questions specific to your area
- **Thank you and have a good survey!**



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## Maple Syrup Inquiry Information Sheet

Project Code to claim your time on your timesheet: **192** – Maple Syrup Survey

Reference Period: Current and previous year for taps and syrup production. Previous year production for sales data.

Questionnaires: One version. Mails out to producers around April 20<sup>th</sup> each year. Contacting operators with 100+ taps.

Release of information: NASS's *Crop Production Report*, published/posted around June 10 to 12 each year at 12p.m. Eastern Time

Purpose: To collect information on Maple Syrup production for the current and previous year, as well as sales data for the previous year maple syrup crop. Estimates set from this survey include current year and previous year maple syrup production, current and previous year taps, previous year price per container and previous year overall price per gallon.



## How is the data used?

Maple syrup producers, processors, and commodity markets rely on the results from this survey to make informed business decisions and to help promote the maple syrup industry. In addition, the data help inform policy decisions that directly affect maple syrup operations.



## Terms and Definitions:

**Maple syrup**- The liquid food derived by concentration and heat treatment of the sap of the maple tree to which nothing has been added.

**Sap**- A colorless liquid with a light, sweet taste that flows inside the maple tree. It is from this sap that maple syrup is produced. It takes approximately 30-40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup

**Sap run**- Period of time during which sap is flowing out of tapped maple trees. Will start/end earlier or later based on regional weather conditions.

**Sugar Percentage**- The amount of sugar in the maple sap. Affects how many gallons of sap is needed to make a gallon of syrup. Typically around 2% but 1-5% is considered a normal range.

**Sugarbush**- A group of maple trees used for the production of Maple Syrup, sometimes called a maple grove.

**Sugarhouse/Sugar shack**- Building which houses the equipment needed for turning the maple sap into syrup.

**Tap/Taphole**- A hole drilled into a maple tree, into which a metal spout (tap) is inserted. Sap will run from the tap into buckets or hoses for collection.

## A few things to watch out for:

- Pay attention to the specific include/exclude statements to know when to add or omit data items.
- Syrup produced compared to number of taps. Remember: a rough average is about 0.3 gallons of syrup per tap.
- Be mindful of high/low prices. Retail prices vary year-to-year and from state-to-state. A general average for retail sales is around \$40-75/gallon whereas bulk sales can be roughly around \$2.70 - \$5.00/pound or \$30 - 55/gallon. These prices continue to trend upward.
- Cases in which the operation didn't have taps last year but do this year OR had taps last year but don't this year. In these instances, leave good notes explaining the status of the operation.
- Out of business operations: \*REMEMBER\* Marking an operation as 'out of business' means that they are out of business for ALL agricultural production. This is not the same thing as just being not producing maple syrup. If the respondent reports being out of business, please leave a detailed note explaining what happened to the operation. Statisticians in the field offices really appreciate your notes when they're reviewing records!

# Maple Syrup Inquiry Practice

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Go through the data collection instrument and ensure you are familiar with all the different questions. Do this by making up your own answers to questions and noting how it affects the way you proceed through the instrument. Notice that production data is asked for the previous year AND current year, but sales data is only asked for the previous year.

Remember to not only use the provided numbers below, but also higher and lower numbers to check that edit limits exist, and what values will trigger them.

- **Yield: 0.350 gallons of syrup/tap** (you should put in the number of taps you want and then calculate the amount of syrup produced using the average of 0.350 gallons of syrup production per tap).
- **Price: \$35.90/gallon** (you should make up sales data based on this price per gallon)
- **Gallons of sap per gallon of syrup: 40** (can range as much as 20-60)



# Suggested practice examples to explore:

- A “normal” operation that taps trees, produces syrup, and sells the syrup.
- An Out of Business operation.
- An operation that’s in business but doesn’t sell their syrup.
- An operation that taps trees and collects sap but doesn’t produce their own syrup.
- An operation that doesn’t collect sap but does produce syrup.
- Use extreme values on items to check warnings are in place



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