



# ORGANIC MAPLE PRODUCTION

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## Guidance

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Maple sap, syrup and other value-added products are eligible for organic certification under the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). Organic sap and syrup must comply with the regulations for organic crop production and may be certified under the wild-crop harvesting practice standard or the organic crop practice standard depending on management practices. Producers creating value added products would also need to comply with the organic handling regulations.

### NOP REGULATIONS AND PCO POLICY

#### CERTIFICATION

Sap collected from certified sugarbush areas may be used to produce certified organic maple syrup and other maple products. Producers are required to complete an Organic System Plan, be inspected annually and abide by USDA organic regulations and PCO Policy.

All clients harvesting maple sap are required to complete the Maple Organic System Plan (OSP). PCO's Maple OSP outlines required information to be submitted for review, such as a description of the harvest area and a description of the ecosystem management and harvesting practices. It also requests that clients disclose the presence of rare, threatened or endangered species in the area, information on adjoining land, and outline the recordkeeping system.

- Maple sap and syrup bottling is covered under *Crops Post Harvest Handling*. This means that clients bottling maple sap and syrup are only required to be certified for crops or wild crops and complete the Maple OSP.
- Clients purchasing certified organic maple and/or producing value-added products, such as maple candy, sugar, or cream are required to be certified for processing and handling and to complete the Processing and Handling OSP.

In order to become certified, applicants are required to submit the completed Organic System Plan(s), along with the certification fees, to PCO prior to harvest or processing of the product they wish to certify. After the application is reviewed, inspections will take place. Please note: initial inspections of maple sap and syrup operations will be conducted during the tapping and production season (typically February through April).

The annual inspection will ideally be inspected while sap is flowing. PCO will review the inspection report and notify applicants on certification decisions and any additional requirements for certification.

#### FOREST & SUGARBUSH MANAGEMENT

Management practices must maintain or improve all-natural resources of the operation including soil, water, woodlands, and wildlife, as applicable to specific site conditions. Harvest areas must be described in your organic system plan.

USDA standards require that organic production areas be free from prohibited materials for three years. If you have not managed harvest areas for at least three years, you will be required to provide a land use affidavit to determine eligibility dates of the land.

For adjoining land, additional safeguards may need to be put in place by the land manager to prevent spray drift or contamination from adjoining land practices. These may include adjoining land use agreements with neighbors, written notifications to highway departments, electric companies, etc., or physical buffer space between organic harvest areas.

Maps will need to be sent in with maple application or renewal. Full maps must include area(s) to be harvested, adjoining land information, buffer zones and non-point sources of potential contaminants.

**TAPPING**

Spout placement and tapping is based on the health and vigor of the tree and may be determined by examining the leaf canopy during both winter and summer. Tapping trees with poor health and weak crowns is prohibited, unless they are being taped for thinning purposes consistent with your forest management plan. Tree diameter for determining number of taps (as noted below) must be measured at breast height.

PCO’s policy on tapping for organic maple syrup production are as follows:

Number of Spouts	Tree Diameter
0, unless marked for thinning purposes consistent with an establish forest management plan	Less than 10”
1	10” to 14”
2	15” to 18”
3	19” to 22”
4+	prohibited

- Successive year tap holes must be rotated at least 6” horizontally and 12” vertically.
- Taps can be no deeper than 2.5” unless approved by PCO. Operator must demonstrate that a deeper tap hole depth does not pose any risk to the health of the tree.
- Double tapping, or tapping a previously tapped tree during the same year, is allowed.
- Reaming, or reestablishing a previously drilled tap during the same season, is allowed, as long as the new tap is the same diameter as the originally established tap.
- Vacuum pumps are permitted, provided that pressure levels are monitored to be as low as possible at the tap.
- Spouts must be removed within 60 days after the end of sap flow.

**PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT & METHODS FOR SYRUP PRODUCTION**

Galvanized equipment must not come in direct contact with organic maple products and any equipment repair procedures and materials must not contaminate organic maple products. Lead soldering materials are prohibited. All other equipment, such as spouts, tubing, collection equipment like bags or plastic buckets, must be free from synthetic fungicides, preservatives or fumigants. If bags or containers are being reused from previous years, organic product must be thoroughly cleaned and pose no risk of compromising organic integrity.

Cleaning and sanitation materials must be reviewed by PCO and follow applicable restrictions.

The use of reverse osmosis, ultra-filtration and ultraviolet light is allowed. Settling tanks and untreated filters, paper, wool, orlon, diatomaceous earth and nylon must be reviewed by PCO prior to use.

Processing aids, such as defoamers, must be explicitly listed as allowed in the USDA organic regulations at §205.605. Processing aids must be 100% organic for production of maple syrup labeled “100% organic.”

## **LABELING**

All labels must be reviewed and approved by PCO prior to use and be compliant to Subpart D of the USDA organic regulations. Labels for syrup that include the statement “100% Pure Maple Syrup” or a similar statement must not misrepresent an “Organic” product as “100% Organic.”

## **VALUE ADDED PRODUCTS**

Operations processing value added products, such as maple sugar or maple candies, must be able to trace all raw, organic ingredients from source to sale of the final product. Records, such as invoices, lot numbers and sales records, will be needed to verify compliance. All labels must be reviewed and approved by PCO prior to sales.