



ORGANIC FACT SHEET

MAPLE SYRUP ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

QUICK FACTS

- Maple trees can be certified as an organic crop.
- Maple woods must be managed organically for 36 months before certification.
- Processing your own maple syrup does not require a handler certification.
- Processing aids need to be approved for organic production.

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION OF MAPLE WOODS AND MAPLE SAP PRODUCTION

Maple syrup can be certified organic. The trees (sugar bush) need to be managed as an organic crop and must follow the USDA National Organic Standards. Syrup production and handling is included in the specialized Maple Organic System Plan and syrup production is considered on-farm value-added handling that does not require a separate handling (food processing) certification scope.

Maple woods must be managed organically for 36 months before certification. All inputs used during this time must be allowed for organic production including pesticides and fertilizers. Producers need to provide three years of field history for each stand of trees. The field history must document all activities for the previous 36 months, including inputs applied to trees or land, and all management activities (pruning, tapping, planting, etc.). Only sap collected from inspected and certified sugar bush may be used in production of certified organic maple syrup.

If the woods has never had an application of a prohibited material, or it has been some time since the last application, the woods may immediately qualify, or take less time to transition to organic. To determine how long each woods will take to transition, simply determine the last date a prohibited material was applied and then move forward 36 months. That is the date when that maple woods can be certifiable as organic.

Producers need to manage their sugar bush using sustainable forestry practices such as thinning that selects for healthy, vigorous trees and a diverse stand composed of mixed young and mature maples, as well as other tree species.

While there are no NOP Standards that specify the number of taps per tree, the size of tap holes, or vacuum pressure to remove sap, if any of these practices appear excessive or harmful to the trees, an operator may be asked to modify their organic system plan.

Other important considerations:

- Paint is a synthetic substance and is not permitted in organic production (NOP 205.601).
- All inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, processing aids, cleansers, sanitizers) must be approved for organic production (National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances).

For new applicants, the certification process can take three to six months. It may take less time, but this is dependent upon the complexity of your operation, your ability to provide required information, and inspector location and availability. Due to the early nature of the maple sap season, plan to apply for certification well in advance of your first sap run. Call MOSA to ensure that we can meet your timeline.



MOSA Certified Organic
122 W. Jefferson St.,
Viroqua, WI 54665
phone: 844-637-2526
fax: 608-637-7032

CONTACT mosa@mosaorganic.org
VISIT mosaorganic.org

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ORGANIC MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCTION

Food grade equipment, in well maintained and cleaned condition, is required for organic maple syrup production.

Depending on which state you live in, and the size of your operation, you may be required to be licensed as a food production facility if you intend to sell products at retail stores. Some states allow on-farm and/or farmers market sales without a food license. Check with your state department of agriculture to verify your food and food safety licensing requirements.

Synthetic defoamers are prohibited, unless they are on the National List (ex: Silicon Dioxide). There are acceptable natural methods of defoaming such as organic vegetable oil, organic butter, organic cream and other organic agricultural products.

Synthetic filtering aids are prohibited unless they are on the National List (ex: activated charcoal, and cellulose). Natural filtering aids such as silica and diatomaceous earth are allowed.

A clear description and documentation of all cleaning procedures, and a list of all cleaning and sanitation products is required. A clear water rinse may be required unless you are using cleaning products on the National List such as hydrogen peroxide, peracetic acid, peroxyacetic acid, and chlorine-based materials.

If reverse osmosis is being used instead of evaporation, special care must be given to how the filters are cleaned. The cleaning procedure and cleaning products must be approved by the certification agency before use.

Maple syrup producers that are licensed by the state, or get their water from a municipal source, do not need to submit water tests. Maple syrup producers that are NOT licensed by the state and have non-municipal water sources need to submit annual water tests showing safe nitrate and total coliform bacteria levels.

Pest control products must be on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited substances and all pest control plans need to be documented in the Maple Organic System Plan.



COMMERCIAL MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCTION

If you are a commercial processor of organic maple syrup (you buy sap or syrup for further processing and/or reselling, or provide processing services) you are considered a “handler” by the USDA and will need to be certified organic as a handler. If you also manage your own organic maple woods in addition to processing sap/syrup from other operations, you are considered a producer-handler and need to meet the requirements for both operation types.

A handling operation must complete the Handler Organic System Plan (HOSP), an Organic Ingredients and Processing Aids (OIPA) form noting all of your suppliers, and complete Organic Product Profiles (OPP) listing the ingredients for each sku/product (i.e. maple syrup and DE/defoamer). All labels that make an organic claim must be approved before use to ensure they comply with organic regulatory requirements. If you are private labeling products, then you must submit Private Label Agreement forms and labels for each arrangement.

To protect organic integrity, handlers must keep records of their organic ingredient suppliers and verify that they are certified organic for that ingredient, annually. Records must include all purchases, copies of current organic certificates listing the ingredient purchased, volumes used during production, and be traceable from final product back to purchase. Nonagricultural (nonorganic) ingredients used in or on processed organic products are allowed if on 205.605/606 of the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. Products with 95% or more organic content can be labeled as “organic.” Products with 70%- 95% organic content may be labeled as “made with organic,” once nonorganic ingredients are approved. All ingredients must be approved prior to use.

Handlers must submit a facility map and flowchart for their operation. A facility map must clearly show all areas of organic and nonorganic production, equipment, and storage. A product flow chart must show the movement of all organic ingredients and products from incoming/receiving through production/handling to outgoing/shipping. If you also produce nonorganic products in the same facility, you must keep documentation, and have SOPs for equipment cleaning in between conventional and organic processing. To prevent commingling, a plan and SOPs are required to show how the organic and nonorganic products are kept separate at all stages of production, and sale.

Pest control products must be approved for organic use, and be documented on your Handler Input Inventory list.

MOSA Certified Organic has been certifying organic maple syrup since 1999 and currently certifies nearly 60 maple syrup operations including well known brands Maple Valley Cooperative, Nova Maple Syrup, Hamel Syrup, and Driftless Gold among many others. We have the experience you need to access the growing organic marketplace! Call us toll-free at 844-637-2526 or visit us at mosaorganic.org to get started.