

## **MOFGA Certification Services Organic Maple Syrup Certification Guidelines**

**Important:** *It has come to our attention that **isopropyl alcohol** (isopropanol) is not approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for use in maple syrup tubing systems in the United States. Therefore, we no longer allow it for sanitizing maple drop lines, taps, or tubing. Please let us know what you will be using instead if you are currently using an alcohol-based sanitizer.*

MOFGA Certification Services, LLC (MCS) guidelines for maple syrup production are consistent with the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) standard. Weed and pest control, fertilization, cleaners, sanitizers and facility and forest management must all be in compliance. For each tapped stand, producers must complete a field history which documents management activities, including materials/products applied to trees or land for the past three years. Please note that if you plan to sell organic syrup in Canada, Chilean (sodium) nitrate is not allowed as an input.

Species diversity provides stability to the forest ecosystem. Producers must manage sugar bush using accepted forestry practices such as thinning that selects for healthy, vigorous trees and a stand composed of mixed age maples, as well as other tree species. Production practices must maintain or improve stand natural resources, including soil and water quality and wildlife habitat.

Producers are expected to minimize impact to the forest and trees. Nails and other hardware inserted into tree trunks to hold up lines must be avoided. Paint cannot be applied to trees because paint is a synthetic substance and is not permitted in organic production (NOP 205.601). Producers are expected to select trees that are healthy and to tap in a sustainable way. Only sap collected from inspected sugar bush may be used in production of certified organic maple syrup.

We realize that many maple syrup producers do not own the sugar bush they tap. Each landowner may have their own standards concerning tapping and forest management. These standards may differ from those of MCS and the NOP. If you seek certification from MCS, you must be prepared to meet MCS standards regardless of what the landowner permits or what you have negotiated in your lease agreement. For instance, we do not allow tapping of trees that are less than 10 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH). Please review the MCS standards carefully before applying for certification.

### **INSPECTION & FEES**

Inspection of maple operations will take place during spring production. We must receive new applications and updates by mid-February. Certified maple syrup producers will automatically receive their renewal paperwork in the mail in January. Application forms are available on our website after January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year OR you can call or email us and we will send the paperwork to you. Fees are based on estimated gross syrup (or sap) sales for the calendar year.

### **LEAD**

MCS recommends that producers periodically test their equipment and products for lead contamination. MCS reserves the right to test for lead if inspectors observe equipment that may pose a lead risk. Evaporator pans and galvanized buckets manufactured before 1995 may contain lead. Evaporator pans should have smooth, non-corroded surfaces. Pits, crevices and poor welds raise concerns about lead contamination. For more information about keeping lead out of maple syrup see the University of Vermont publication <http://www.uvm.edu/~pmrc/LeadOut.pdf>.

**TAPPING** (DBH is tree diameter at breast height which is 54 inches from tree base).

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Phone: 207-568-4142, Email: [certification@mofga.org](mailto:certification@mofga.org), Web: [www.mofgacertification.org](http://www.mofgacertification.org)

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GD-2017-7-(Final)

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### A. Recommended

1. Health spouts.
2. One tap per tree per season.

### B. Permitted

1. Standard metal taps.
2. Lead free metal sap buckets and food grade plastic buckets.
3. Plastic tubing system.
4. Vacuum pumps are permitted with monitoring of the pressure levels at taps. Producers should maintain as low a pressure as possible.
5. Multiple taps per tree are permitted based on the size of the tree (see chart below).

#### Guidelines for number of taps per tree

Trunk Diameter at Breast Height in inches	Trunk Circumference at Breast Height in inches	Number of taps
10-20	31-63	1
21-25	64-79	2
>25	>79	3

### C. Not Permitted

1. Galvanized buckets that pose a risk of lead contamination.
2. Synthetic fungicides, antibiotics, fumigants, sterilants, etc. in contact with trees.
3. Excessive tapping.
4. Tapping trees in poor health or with weak crowns.
5. Tapping trees less than 10" DBH.
6. Successive year tap holes closer than 6" side to side and 12" up/down.
7. Sap collection containers previously used for holding a prohibited substance.
8. Leaving spouts in trees 60 days after the end of sap flow.
9. Re-tapping a previously tapped tree during the same season ("double tapping") or reaming (freshening) the tap hole.

### PUMP STATIONS AND SAP STORAGE

#### A. Recommended

1. Stainless steel tank.
2. Lids to prevent debris from falling into sap.

#### B. Permitted

1. Food-grade plastic holding tank.

#### C. Not Permitted

1. Equipment that routinely emits oil or other prohibited materials into environment.
2. Gas and diesel engines in the same enclosed space as the sap collection tank.
3. Galvanized metal storage tanks or containers are not allowed.

### FILTRATION AND PROCESSING OF SAP

#### A. Permitted

1. Sand or cloth or felt filters\*.
2. Reverse osmosis\*.

NOTE: How filters and filtering equipment are maintained, cleaned and stored must be disclosed in the

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*organic maple plan. All materials and products used to clean, disinfect and store filters must be listed. Only those approved by MCS can be used.*

### **B. Not Permitted**

1. Use of materials that release toxic substances by oxidation, chemical reaction, or diffusion.
2. Cleaning agents and sanitizers that are persistent. Fabric filters must be well rinsed before reusing.

### **EVAPORATION OF SAP**

#### **A. Permitted**

1. Certified organic defoaming agents are required.  
*CAUTION! Dairy products and oils derived from soybeans and peanuts are known allergens. If an allergen-containing defoamer is used, we recommend providing information about it on your label.*
2. Air injectors in evaporator are permitted provided that a carbon filter is used and the air intake is outside the building and away from exhaust fumes. A protocol for changing the filter is required and records must be kept.

#### **B. Not Permitted**

1. Synthetic defoaming agents (**IMPORTANT:** Please contact MCS if changing your defoamer, we cannot certify syrup made with a synthetic defoamer).
2. Meat products for defoaming.
3. Defoaming agents that are not certified organic.
4. Evaporator pans in poor condition. Evaporator pans manufactured prior to 1995 may require additional verification to rule out potential lead contamination.

### **FILTRATION OF SYRUP**

#### **A. Permitted**

1. Paper, felt, or synthetic fiber used to filter syrup. If filters are washed and reused, cleaning agents and rinsing protocols must be disclosed in organic system plan.
2. Food-grade diatomaceous earth or silica powder as filtering aid. *Syrup filtered with diatomaceous earth or silica powder may be labeled "Organic". The "100% Organic" label, however, must not be used.*

#### **B. Not Permitted**

1. Use of asbestos as a filtering material.
2. Products added to syrup to enhance taste, color, or texture.
3. Preservatives.

*NOTE: Remember that syrup having a density reading below 66% Brix is a violation of Maine state law.*

### **STORAGE & CANNING**

#### **A. Recommended**

1. Stainless steel drums for bulk storage.
2. Glass containers for retail packaging.

#### **B. Permitted**

1. Metal containers with food-grade coatings and plastic tops are permitted.
2. Epoxy painted metal drums provided that the paint is not flaking, chipping or cracking. Producers must have a protocol to check for this.
3. Food grade plastic containers.

#### **C. Not Permitted**

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## **MOFGA Certification Services Organic Maple Syrup Certification Guidelines**

1. Materials or practices that do not meet the State of Maine handling or sanitation requirements.
2. Galvanized metal storage barrels.
3. Drums with chipped epoxy paint, rust or other imperfections that can impact syrup quality.

### **PRODUCT LABELING**

Barrels should be labeled with a lot number that can be traced back to a production date. Organic syrup should be identified as such and include the name of the certifier.

### **CLEANING & STORAGE OF EQUIPMENT**

#### **A. Permitted**

1. Approved chlorine materials may be used up to the maximum labeled rate for disinfecting and sanitizing lines, pans, tanks and other sap or syrup contact surfaces. Rinsing is not required unless mandated by the label.
2. Biodegradable detergents, vinegar, sodium bicarbonate, food-grade hydrogen peroxide, sodium hydroxide and phosphoric acid are permitted. Producer must take steps to ensure that equipment is thoroughly rinsed to avoid contamination.
3. Propylene glycol for filter storage provided that adequate rinsing is done and before sap is processed.

#### **B. Not Permitted**

1. Storing filters or equipment near pesticides, fumigants, or other volatile substances. For example, mothballs, a common household pest repellent, must not be used inside production facilities for rodent control or for any other purposes. Items used in maple syrup production must be kept clean and free from contaminants.

### **Records**

Section 205.103 of the National Organic Standards specifies that certified operations must maintain records concerning the production and handling of agricultural products that are intended to be sold, labeled or represented as organic. Records must be sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the NOP Rule.

*All producers must keep the following records and have them available at the time of inspection:*

1. Field activity log for all forest activities such as thinning, line and pump station maintenance, tapping and tap removal.
2. A field history for each separate tract of land to be tapped.
3. Receipts for purchased inputs (de-foamers, filters, DE, cleaning materials).
4. Standard operating procedures for cleaning/sanitizing of equipment, pans etc., including full names of all materials used OR cleaning logs.
5. Pest control records (if applicable).
6. Traceable lot numbers must be displayed on retail and wholesale containers.
7. Production and sales records for the current and previous year. These records may be kept by the barrel or by pounds produced and sold. We expect that sales records will balance with production records, meaning that you can account for all syrup produced. Please track any amounts going to friends and family.
8. Current State of Maine maple license.