



New York State Maple Producers' Association

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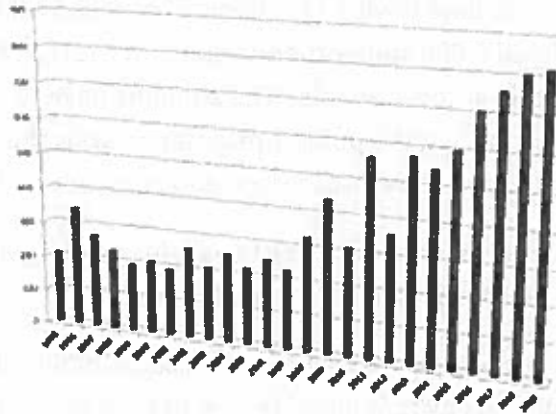
Testimony for Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on the Environment and Agriculture

January 27, 2020

My name is Helen Thomas and I am Executive Director of the NYS Maple Producers' Association. We represent the Maple Farmers of NYS – membership is currently over 700.

Maple has traditionally been a second crop for many farmers – as the first crop of the year, the proceeds gave farmers “seed money” to finance the other crops that followed in the year. In recent years, maple is becoming the primary crop for some farmers, as they stop their dairy or crop operations altogether. Maple production in NYS continues to rise – production is up 35% in the last 5 years, continuing the trend that has seen production triple in the last 15 years. We currently rank second in the US.

NY Maple Production
(in 1000 gallons)



Our members have relied heavily on the research done by the Maple Program at Cornell. Many of the techniques used in the field today are a result of their research. The use of reverse osmosis to reduce energy consumption is an environmental benefit we are proud of, and the research has helped ensure high quality of products that use this technology. Significant research has been done on sanitation in all aspects of production. These sanitation principles have been directly responsible for a significant amount of the increase in production. We strongly support continued funding for this research.

The larger crop yield has meant a greater benefit to the local rural economies. In addition to the jobs created, the NYS Maple Association has sponsored the agritourism event "Maple Weekend" for 25 years. The promotion monies we receive from NYS this year are enabling 186 maple farms to open to the public to show them sustainable agriculture at its sweetest. We are proud that our event has become the model for other states – and this year even Ontario, Canada, will be using some of our approaches to start developing a similar event.

Throughout the year, promotion funds help us maintain advertising on social media - we have 2 facebook pages: maple weekend and NYS Maple. We have started an e-newsletter and the signups for that have tripled in the last year. We supply recipes and other printed materials to members for sales support, and maintain a website NYSMaple.com. We are supporting the 2020 NYS Ag in the Classroom "Schoolyard Sugaring Contest" with funds to purchase supplies the schools need to tap trees and make syrup.

Part of the promotion funds received by the Maple Producers support our presence at the NY State Fair. This was our second year for a "Maple Day" at the fair. This day means we have displays and demonstrations about Maple in addition to the Maple Booth that is open for the entire run of the fair. We are extremely proud of the traveling educational exhibit that was created with the NYS educational funds. The "Maple Experience" trailer was at the state fair on Maple Day and had about 2500 people come through the exhibit that day. Since then it has been on the road so far for 20 days to visit 22 schools as well as 5 other public events, interacting with an estimated 6,000 students and adults. We recruit FFA chapters to bring their students to be the presenters at these events. The students have to learn about maple in order to teach it, and equally valuable are the public presentation skills they learn. To date, we have had FFA groups from 9 schools become presenters, and more are on the waiting list.

We are extremely grateful for the support in past years for maple promotion and education, and ask that it be continued to maintain these vital programs.

NYS Grown and Certified has over 60 maple producers participating already. We encourage our members to get an agricultural environmental review of their property and adopt the best practices that qualify them for this program. Participants benefit from the sales resulting from customer trust. Some have also been able to take advantage of the grant funds available to improve their environmental practices. We ask for continued support for this program.

As an alliance partner of the NY Farm Bureau, we support their efforts on behalf of all of NYS agriculture, and add our support to the programs and legislation they champion.

Thank you to you all for the continued support of all of NYS agriculture.