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Lindsay Kazarick

Future Generations University

304-358-2000

[lindsay.kazarick@future.edu](mailto:lindsay.kazarick@future.edu)

## Sweet Appalachia: Building Creative Partnerships to Promote Success in US Maple Syrup

Franklin, West Virginia: Future Generations University Appalachian Program received notification of funding from the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service's ACER Access Program. Future Generations Appalachian program will receive \$500,000 over the next three years to promote regional markets that increase access and raise awareness about maple sap and syrup products across West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, Appalachian Virginia, and western Maryland.

This project will work with producers and communities to create the enabling environment for increased sales of Appalachian-produced maple syrup and value-added products within the Central Appalachian region. This project will work with producers and communities to build the network of support required for sustainable economic development.

"The Appalachian Program believes that the future of the Appalachian region lies in lifting up its land-based traditions," commented Joey Aloï, Program Director, Future Generations University Appalachian Program. "This grant will allow us to assist maple syrup producers in the Appalachian region, promote their products, develop new markets, and showcase both maple syrup and the Appalachian forest that makes it possible."

This initiative will be a collaborative effort between Future Generations University, the West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association, West Virginia Department of Agriculture, the Highland County Chamber of Commerce, the Kentucky Maple Syrup Producers Association, and New South Media.

"As the main sponsor of the popular Highland County Maple Festival, the Highland County Chamber of Commerce is excited to support this project to help further raise consumer awareness and producer opportunities regarding the delicious gift of maple syrup from our local area," said Chris Swecker, Executive Director of the Highland Chamber.

'Sweet Appalachia' aims to raise public awareness of domestic maple syrup through increased marketing, promotion, storytelling, and enhancing agritourism efforts. It will also create new market access opportunities for Appalachian maple syrup producers through direct-to-consumer marketing as well as brokering bulk and wholesale syrup sales across the region. For more information about this and other maple initiatives at Future Generations University visit <https://www.future.org/appalachian/program/>.

*About Future Generations University: Together with the University's global community of partner organizations, Future Generations gathers practitioners, students, academics, and community leaders to advance the well-being of people and the planet. The University promotes research, learning, and action toward inclusive and sustainable change worldwide. Headquartered in the heart of Appalachia, Future Generations scenic campus is located on top of North Fork Mountain in West Virginia at the headwaters of the Potomac River.*

*The USDA's Acer Access and Development Program falls under its Agricultural Marketing Division to support the efforts of states, tribal governments and research institutions to promote the domestic maple syrup industry. Acer supports Market Development and Promotion projects to improve consumer knowledge, awareness and understanding of the maple syrup industry and its products. Acer also supports the Producer and Landowner Education project to advance producer knowledge, awareness, and understanding of research, educational resources or natural resource sustainability practices affecting the maple syrup industry and its products.*