



NASS 2022 Census of Agriculture West Virginia Maple Syrup

Written by: Mike Rechlin, Ph.D.

The National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) conducts a census of agricultural production for farms generating \$1,000 or more in agricultural products. The 2022 survey, compiled and released in 2024, provides data on maple syrup production from 2017 to 2022. The year 2017 serves as a reference point, coinciding with the Southern Syrup Research Symposium in 2018 and the start of the Future Generations University Appalachian Program's collaboration with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) to engage the syrup-producing community. Our efforts have focused on four key goals: 1) increasing sap and syrup productivity, 2) boosting producer profitability, 3) expanding tapping in West Virginia, and 4) diversifying the species being tapped.

The NASS agricultural census highlights progress on the first three goals. As shown in the table below, the number of West Virginia farms producing and selling maple syrup more than doubled from 97 to 200 between 2017 and 2022. Syrup production increased by 18%, from 11,065 gallons to 13,465 gallons, while the value of sales rose by 23%, from \$414,000 to \$587,000. Additionally, syrup yield per tap improved from 0.15 gallons to 0.19 gallons, approaching our goal of 0.20 gallons per tap.

An anomaly appears in the third column: despite the rise in the number of farms and total syrup production, the total number of taps decreased from 75,262 to 71,699. This decrease is attributed to Spruce Knob Maple, our state's largest producer, reducing their tap count from over 20,000 to approximately 16,500. Initially, they tapped trees as small as four inches in diameter, while the industry norm is ten inches. By removing 3,500 taps from underperforming trees, their per-tap production increased to over 0.25 gallons of syrup per tap in 2023.

Although these figures are below those expected in New England, the growth in the number of maple syrup producers is impressive. As we continue to make progress, it's time to reset our regional goal from 0.20 to 0.25 gallons of syrup per tap.

| Crop | Taps set | | Syrup produced | | Value of sales (\$1,000) |
|-------------------------------|----------|--------|----------------|---------|--------------------------|
| | Farms | Number | Farms | Gallons | |
| Maple syrup | 200 | 71,699 | 200 | 13,485 | 587 |
| 2022 | 97 | 75,262 | 97 | 11,065 | 414 |
| 2017 | | | | | |
| 2022 farms by number of taps: | | | | | |
| 1 to 99 taps | 143 | (D) | 143 | (D) | (D) |
| 100 to 499 taps | 24 | 4,611 | 24 | 920 | 45 |
| 500 to 999 taps | 15 | 9,405 | 15 | 1,342 | 46 |
| 1,000 to 1,999 taps | 7 | 9,000 | 7 | 2,010 | 99 |
| 2,000 to 2,999 taps | 7 | 15,169 | 7 | 3,198 | 186 |
| 3,000 to 4,999 taps | 3 | 13,100 | 3 | 2,673 | 152 |
| 5,000 to 9,999 taps | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10,000 taps or more | 1 | (D) | 1 | (D) | (D) |
| 10,000 to 14,999 taps | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15,000 to 19,999 taps | 1 | (D) | 1 | (D) | (D) |
| 20,000 taps or more | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2017 farms by number of taps: | | | | | |