

Story Title 2015 New York State Maple (Producers) Tour

Program Franklin - Maple Production

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**Is this related to an
Equal
Program/Employment
Opportunity?** Yes

Executive Summary Even though each maple sugar-producing family's situation is unique, as are their values and their business strategies, they are united by a shared commitment to quality, self-sufficiency, sustainable forestry, and environmental stewardship.

**Issues/Needs and
Audiences** For many hard-working farming families, syrup production has become an increasingly important part of their livelihood. The sap collection and handling methods a maple syrup producer chooses will greatly influence both the quality and the quantity of the syrup produced and, as a result, the amount of profit that the producer will earn. To turn out hundreds, and in some cases thousands of gallons of quality maple syrup of exceptional flavor, well-established commercial maple producers employ advanced technologies, which make tapping and harvesting less labor-intensive and more cost-efficient. Opportunities to meet and build relationships with maple equipment dealers and peers from other geographic locations, and to learn and share successes stories are few and far between.

Extension Responses With that in mind, Franklin County Extension worked diligently with the Northeastern New York Chapter of the New York State Maple Producers Association to create a tour which would:

- showcase the multiplicity of this region's maple producers and their varied sugarbush management, collection, and marketing methods and strategies
- provide attendees with opportunities to exchange ideas and discuss cost and benefit options for making sap collection and syrup production more rewarding and less labor-intensive
- address the many variables connected to maple products production and marketing (e.g. supply uncertainty due to inconsistencies in stable production from season to season, [the volume of sap produced during a season will vary, depending on weather conditions and length of the sap season] which can create volatility and fluctuation between demand and supply)
- and promote possibilities for diversification and increasing

productivity and profitability.

**Accomplishments and
Impacts**

144 people participated. The Maple Tour facilitated an opportunity for maple producers, as well as others looking to become involved in making maple syrup or the maple syrup industry (including a small group of enthusiastic FFA students) to meet with area producers, as well as local and regional equipment suppliers, and each other to share and exchange ideas, techniques, markets, and the latest technological advances for sugarbush and forest management and collecting and processing maple (and birch) sap for syrup and other maple- (and birch-)related and value-added maple (and birch) products. Follow up has indicated that attendees have been able to effectively build friendships, trust, and diversified networks of colleagues and business associates who share advice and expertise.

Amid the confusion and stress of a fugitive manhunt within the tour area, participants all agreed the tour was one of the most educational and thoroughly planned and executed tours in recent years.

Collaborators

Northern NY Maple Producers Association, Cornell Maple Research Farm, Paul Smith's College, 1200 of our local, state and national law enforcement agencies.

**Special funding sources
(if any)**

Participant and vendor fees