

Maple Syrup Production in Indiana for 2005

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Shortly after the close of the 2005 Maple Syrup season, 181 questionnaires were sent to all known producers of maple syrup in Indiana. 78 individuals promptly responded to the questionnaire resulting in a 43% response rate compared to a 48% response rate in 2004.

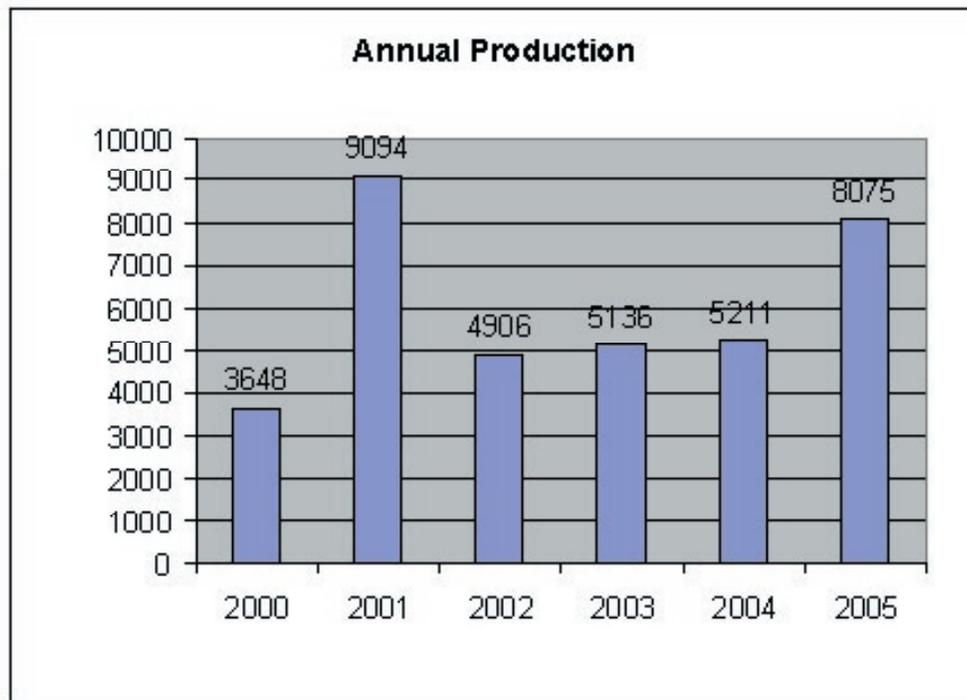
For the sake of comparison of similar climatic regions, the results were broken down per two major regions. The dividing line chosen was U.S. Route 40 bisecting the State into a Northern region and a Southern region. 17 questionnaires were returned from the south region and 61 came from the northern region.

Of the producers that responded to the questionnaire, 74% of these folks produced syrup in 2005, exactly the same percentage reported in 2004. 12 producers from the southern region and 46 producers from the northern region reported production in 2005.

50% of the states' total syrup production of 8075 gallons was accounted for by seven large producers. The total number of gallons produced was significantly higher than the 5211 gallons produced in 2004. 2005's total is the second highest (9094 in 2001) since we began collecting data. Northern producers accounted for 7128 gallons compared to 4817.2 gallons in 2004 while southern producers generated 947.05 gallons, a significant increase from 394 gallons reported in 2004.

The graph below reflects the total number of gallons produced each year from 2000.

There are 37 counties in the state that have at least one active maple syrup producer. Putnam County is the home to the



largest sugar camp, producing approximately 1000 + gallons of syrup. Elkhart County was once again the county with the most reported sugar camps – 32.

The average opening dates were 2/12/05 and 2/11/05 for the north and south respectfully. The average closing dates were 3/17/05 for the north and 3/18/05 for the south. The overall state average for the opening date was 2/10/05 and the closing date was 3/18/05.

The average amount of sugar water (sap) needed to produce a gallon of syrup was 42 gallons in the north and 44.5 gallons in the south. The state average was 42.5 gallons of sap to produce a gallon of syrup. The average amount of sap needed in 2004 to produce a gallon of syrup may not be wholly accurate, as quite a few producers do not maintain accurate records of sap inflow. The average amount of syrup produced per camp was 100 gallons, up from 84 gallons

per camp reported in 2004. Most sugar water was produced at the producer's own sugar bush(es), although in 2005 a significant increase was noted as producers purchased a little almost 36,000 gallons of sugar water from outside producers.

Almost 36,000 taps were utilized in 2005, an average of 460 taps per producer.

Of those 36,000 taps, almost 43% of the state's syrup production was accounted for via producers using buckets for sugar water collection. Over 13,500 buckets were used in 2005 for collection purposes. The amount of sugar water collected by buckets accounted for total syrup production of 3409 gallons in the north and 32 gallons in the south region. 44 Indiana maple syrup producers used an average of 305 buckets in their collection operations.

Buckets remain more popular in the north region. The largest single producer utilizing buckets hung 1600 buckets in the northern region and 60 buckets in the southern half. Several producers reported using plastic bags and tubing in addition to buckets for the collection of sugar water.

Although plastic sap collection bags have yet to really catch on, thirteen producers used 5742 (a considerable increase from 2003) collection bags. Many of these producers also used buckets and or tubing as well. Producers using only bags to collect sap set on the average, approximately 54 taps. Exceptions are present though with two individuals using over 100 bags for collection. Those using only bags for sap collection accounted about for 104.5 gallons in 2005. On a regional basis, those using plastic sap collection bags were split pretty evenly between the two regions. 8 northern producers using 932 bags collected produced 344 gallons of syrup and 5 southern producers using 420 bags produced 182 (up from 57 in 2004) gallons of syrup in 2005.

A number of producers are trying tubing for sugar water collection and are slowly changing over as terrain, dollars and results allow. Statewide, 19 persons (13 in the northern region and 6 in the south) used almost 262,000 feet (49+ miles) of tubing for collection purposes in 2005. Those using only tubing produced 2837 gallons of syrup. This is an increase from the data reported in 2004 (1679 gallons). This amounts to 567 gallons per producer.

The statewide average price received for a retail gallon of syrup was \$29.92. There was not sufficient data reported from southern producers to report an average price per gallon. Northern producers averaged \$29.48 per retail gallon. The average statewide price received for a quart of retail syrup was \$10.23. Although few surveys reported pricing per pint, the state average per retail pint was \$6.50. Statewide wholesale average gallon price was \$24.85; with little variation in wholesale gallon prices per region.

The statistics gathered via our 2005 maple syrup production questionnaire most likely will not reflect the true income generated from Indiana's producers. The statewide reported syrup income for 2005 (multiplying the average \$/per gallon X reported production) is over \$240,000.00. However, if one appreciates that which was consumed via the producers' family, given away, or simply not reported, the calculated dollar figure may very well conservatively grow to about \$290,000.00. Assuming this figure to be realistic, the average dollar return per tap hole is \$8.07 which is almost \$3.00 higher than reported in the 2004 maple syrup producer's survey. Sales do not appear to be a limiting factor for Indiana maple product producers; rather the inability to produce enough syrup due to the unfavorable weather and/or short tapping seasons were the greatest impediments to finding our maple fortunes. Prime tapping conditions center on below freezing temperatures of an evening with a fairly fast thaw in the mornings which normally allows for good syrup flow. Unlike last year when 55% reported below average conditions, 2005 survey data reported 46% as above average, 41% average, and only 14% below average.

Overall, greater than 71% of the produced syrup is sold at a retail level. Of those reporting sales, over 29% state that at least a portion of their production is given away or consumed domestically; of course these same producers tend to be smaller in scope and production. Packaging preferences show the majority favoring retail sales in gallon containers, fewer favoring quarts, with remainders sold in smaller units. A few producers offer maple sugar, creams, candies, cookies, etc., but apparently these maple products do not account for substantial percentages of any one producer's sales.

We are all aware that each sugar bush has unique characteristics and that no two bushes produce alike. Although Indiana is a relatively small geographic area, the variation in weather is significant as evidenced by prior years. As reported earlier, conditions in 2005 were much more favorable to a good tapping season as evidenced to the highest reported production since 2001.

44 respondents stated they would like to be listed in the Indiana Maple Syrup Producers Brochure. As time and funds permit, we are hoping to prepare an updated brochure. Additionally, we believe it would be beneficial to have "Indiana

generic" maple syrup articles on hand for the barrage of requests from reporters for local newspapers and other media come next February, 2006.

I sincerely thank all the maple producers for their prompt questionnaire responses. I have updated our maple database and will continue to be a contact for Indiana maple products. ***Please remember the data compiled in this report will be only as good as the data received. To be able to more accurately report maple syrup production figures, a higher response rate will be needed.*** Although our time is limited for personal visits to your operation, we do welcome your calls and inquiries on all facets of maple production. Special forest products such as maple syrup contribute substantially to many rural folk's income while offering wholesome therapy at the same time.