

Maple Syrup Production in Indiana for 2007

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Shortly after the close of the 2007 Maple Syrup season, 166 questionnaires were sent to all known producers of maple syrup in Indiana. 70 individuals promptly responded to the questionnaire resulting in a 42% response rate, down slightly from the 45% response rate in 2006.

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. 18 questionnaires were returned from the south region and 52 came from the northern region.

Of the producers that responded to the questionnaire, only 30% of these folks produced syrup in 2007, a significant drop from the 70% reported in 2006. 11 producers from the southern region and 39 producers from the northern region reported production in 2007.

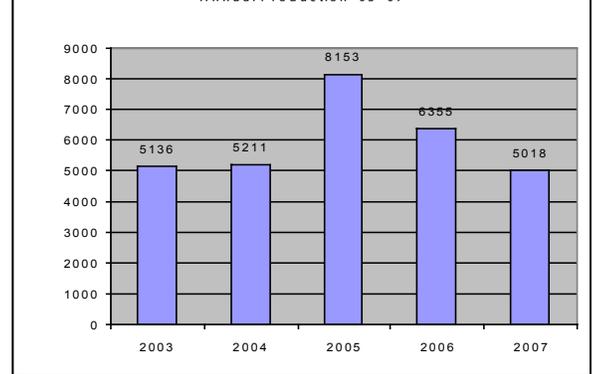
It should be noted that 13 large producers accounted for almost 75% of the state's total syrup production of 5018.75 gallons. The total number of gallons produced was about 27% lower than the 6355.75 gallons produced in 2006. Northern producers accounted for 3964.75 gallons compared to 5663.5 gallons in

2006 while southern producers generated 1054 gallons, significantly higher than 292 gallons reported in 2006. Figure 1 compares the total number of gallons produced each year from 2003 through 2007.

There are 31 counties in the state that have at least one active maple syrup producer. Elkhart County was once again the county with the most reported sugar camps – 31. Elkhart County was once again, the home to the largest sugar camp, producing almost 750 gallons of syrup.

The state average for the opening date was 2/25/07 and the closing date was 3/19/07. Regionally, the average opening dates were 2/28/07 and 2/21/07 for the north and south respectively. The average closing dates were 3/25/07 for the north and

Figure 1



records of sap inflow. The average amount of syrup produced per camp was slightly over 100 gallons, down slightly from 122 gallons per camp reported in 2006. Almost all the sugar water was produced at the producer's own sugar bush(es), however in 2007 producers did purchase around 1700 gallons of sugar water from outside producers.

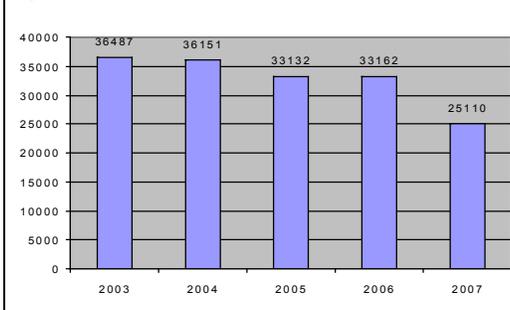
Of the 25,110 taps, almost 39% of the state's syrup production was accounted for via producers using only buckets for sugar water collection. Almost 10,800 buckets were used in 2007 for collection purposes. The amount of sugar water collected solely by buckets accounted for total syrup production of 1913 gallons in the north and 32 gallons in the southern region. 56 Indiana maple syrup producers used an average of 284 buckets in their collection operations. Figure 2 shows the total

number of taps used each year from 2003 to present.

Buckets continue to remain the most popular way to collect syrup regardless of the region. The largest single producer utilizing buckets hung 1140 buckets in the northern region and 74 buckets in the southern half. Several producers reported using plastic bags and tubing in addition to buckets for the collection of sugar water. Figure 3 shows the number of producers per type of tap used in 2007.

Although plastic sap collection bags have yet to really catch on, 11 producers used 1650 collection bags. Many of these producers also used buckets and or tubing as well. Producers using only bags to collect sap set on the

Figure 2



3/14/07 for the south.

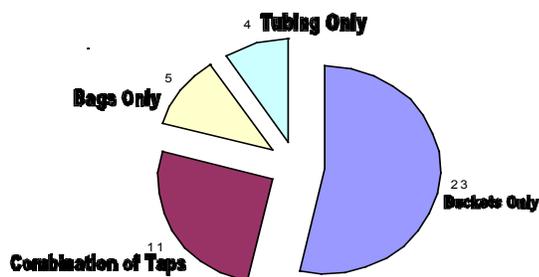
The average amount of sugar water (sap) needed to produce a gallon of syrup was 44.8 gallons in the north and 45.1 gallons in the south. The state average was 45.3 gallons of sap to produce

a gallon of syrup.

The average amount of sap needed in 2006 to produce a gallon of syrup may not be wholly accurate, as quite a few producers do not maintain accurate

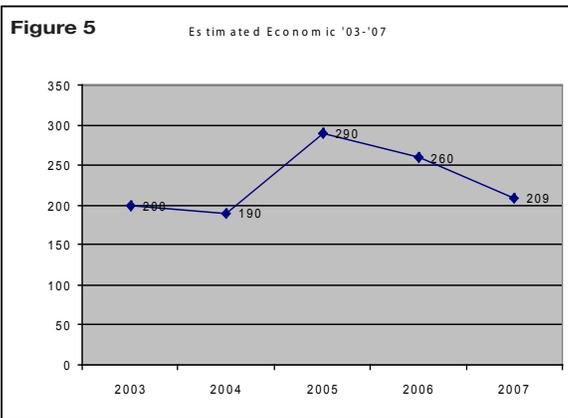
Figure 3

Tap Type Breakdown 2007



for 165 gallons in 2007. On a regional basis, those using only plastic sap collection bags were split pretty evenly between the two regions. Three northern producers using 1355 bags collected 136.5 gallons of syrup. Three producers in the southern region using only plastic bags collected 28.5 gallons and set 153 bags for collection.

A number of producers are trying tubing for sugar water collection and are slowly changing over as terrain, dollars and results allow. Statewide, 13 operations (9 in the northern region and 4 in the south) used over 199,000 feet (38 miles) of tubing for collection purposes in 2007. Those using only tubing produced 1927 gallons of syrup. This was an increase from the 2006 figure of 1657 gallons. This amounts to 481 gallons per producer.



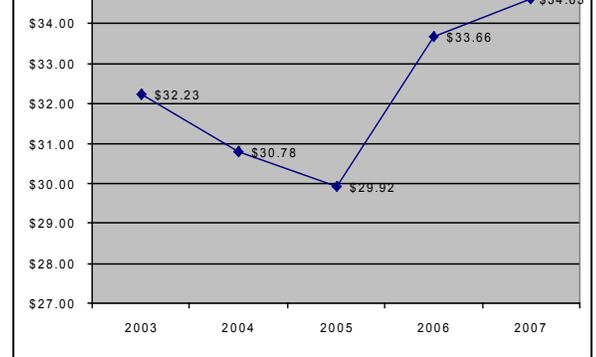
The statewide average price received for a retail gallon of syrup was \$34.63, which is less than a dollar higher than the price reported for 2006. With only 2 producers from the south reporting, we did not feel comfortable documenting an average price for the southern region. Northern producers averaged \$34.55 per retail gallon. The average statewide price received for a quart of retail syrup was \$13.39. Considerably more surveys were returned this year with information about pricing per pint. The state average per retail pint was \$6.94. Statewide wholesale average gallon price was \$28.20. Figure 4 compares the average price per retail gallon of syrup since the year 2003.

most likely will not reflect the true income generated from Indiana's producers. The statewide reported syrup income for 2007 (multiplying the average \$/per gallon X reported production) is almost \$174,000.00. 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 almost \$209,000.00. Assuming this figure to be realistic, the average dollar return per tap hole is \$8.32, a little higher than the \$7.84 reported in the 2006 maple syrup producer's survey. Figure 5 shows the estimated economic impact for maple syrup production during the past 5 years.

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 that normally promotes good syrup flow. 14% of the

producers reported the 2007 season was below average, 47% as average, and 39% as above average

Overall, 64% of the produced syrup is sold at a retail level. Of those reporting sales, over 38% of those respondents reporting production, 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 substan-



tial 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 2006 were less favorable to a good tapping season compared to 2005 but the conditions reported for that year were about as close to perfect as could be.

Some 29 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, 2008.

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 is only as good as the data received. To be able to more accurately report maple syrup production figures, we'll continue to need a high response rate.

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.

