



VOF Organic Maple Sap and Syrup Production Readiness Checklist

Vermont Organic Farmers, LLC (VOF)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

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Here's a list of most of the things that you as a prospective organic maple producer will need to have in place in order to be certified. It's meant to let you gauge how ready you think you might be and to help you identify the areas you need to focus on in order to be ready for the application and inspection process.

Land Use Verification	
	<p>Verification of land use histories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No substances prohibited in organic production have been applied to any stands used for sap collection in the last three years, • No whole tree harvest (removal of entire trees with crowns in tact to a landing) has occurred in any stands used for sap collection in last three years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Form: Verification of 3 – Year History of New Sugarbushes
	<p>Verification of co-management rights on any leased parcels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used when certified producer's crew does the tapping, repairs, and sap collection on a parcel not owned by the producer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Form: Land Use Affidavit
	<p>Verification of neighboring land use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No prohibited substances have been used on neighboring properties, including utility corridors, railroad beds, or guard rails, if an adequate buffer is not in place (see "Buffers" section below). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Form: Neighboring Land Use Affidavit
Forest Management Plans	
	Each parcel from which sap is collected for use in organic sap or syrup production must be described in forest management plan submitted to VOF.
	Forest management plans must be current (less than 10 years since inventory date).
	Plans must meet current Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) program guidelines.
	Plans must be signed by consulting forester, land owner and county forester.
	<p>Plans must meet VOF guidelines (this could be a separate addendum or update) and name maple sugaring as a principle management activity or objective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Form: VOF Forest Management Plan and Addendum Requirements Checklist
	<p>Map shows all features required by VOF guidelines, or, has an overlay that shows these features.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reference: VOF Sugarbush Map Requirements

Buffers and Adjoining Land Use	
	<p>Adequate buffers in place between tapped trees and neighboring parcels, utility corridors or road infrastructure if a signed neighboring land use affidavit or equivalent documentation is not on file.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15' to residential properties • 30' of dense hedge row to conventional production or utility corridors • 50' of grass to conventional production or utility corridors
Tapping Guidelines	
	<p>Ability and willingness to follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VOF tapping guidelines • All applicable sections of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) "Rule." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reference: VOF Guidelines for Certification of Organic Maple Sap & Syrup
	<p>Pressure treated lumber not in contact with any tapped trees.</p>
Food Grade Equipment	
	<p>Sap and syrup must only touch food grade equipment.</p>
	<p>If galvanized buckets are used, must submit an annual lead test.</p>
	<p>If bronze filter pumps or brass fittings are used, must submit an annual lead test.</p>
	<p>All plastic must be documented food grade, including sap pumps.</p>
Filtering Media	
	<p>Swimming Pool Filters: As of 9/30/15, swimming pool filters from the following companies meet the requirements for plastics and filter materials under Vermont law: Dayton, Dynamo, Hayward, Pac-Fab Superflow, Pentair, Sta-Rite.</p>
	<p>Approved sand to use in swimming pool filters: must use "clean" sand.</p>
	<p>Diatomaceous Earth: must be documented as food grade. Natural DE, Calcined DE and Flux Calcined DE are all approved for use as filtering media.</p>
	<p>Wool or felt liners are allowed as filtering media.</p>
Defoamer	
	<p>Certified organic vegetable oil, with an organic certificate if possible, and always a receipt, or...</p>
	<p>OMRI reviewed and approved food grade surfactant intended for use in food products, with an organic certificate and a receipt.</p>

Record Keeping System	
	Allow for full traceability of inputs and ingredients from purchase through production to sale.
	Readily auditable from raw "ingredient" through finished product production through sales.
	Ensure that the amount of finished product produced and sold balances with the production capacity of the operation.
	Sap producers: Production and sales records, receipts for all inputs (including spouts, tubing, hired labor), forest activity records (tapping dates, tap pulling dates, thinning dates), shared equipment cleaning records.
	Syrup producers: Boiling log, canning log (if applicable), processed product production logs (if applicable), lot numbering system in place for bulk and retail containers, defoamer receipts and certificates (if applicable).
	Maintain all records relevant to operation for 5 years, including materials receipts AND spout number verification.
Additional Documentation	
	Current documentation (less than 2 years old) that wash water (if not from a municipal source) is "bacteriologically acceptable for human consumption" (no E. coli or total coliform detected).
	Verification from equipment manufacturers that all equipment parts that contact sap or syrup are food grade, made for contact with potable water, or lead free, as applicable.
	Annual lead test results from a composite sample of early, mid, and late season syrup if any of the following are used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galvanized buckets • Bronze filter pumps • Brass fittings not stamped "lead free"
	Current organic certificates and receipts for purchased sap.
	Receipts for all inputs related to the production of organic products.
Annual Certification Cycle	
	Willingness and ability to complete the annual certification cycle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic System Plan (OSP) or "application" update, • Certification fee payment within 120 days of the OSP due date (or 120 days after application submission for new producers), • On-site inspection, • Address any points of improvement, conditions for continued certification or non-compliances within the timeframe specified by VOF in the certification decision notification, if applicable.