

Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia

Strategic Plan 2020

Growing the Maple Syrup Industry in Nova Scotia



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INTRODUCTION

The Maple Producers' Association of Nova Scotia (MPANS) is a Provincial Association whose members consist of any maple producer or potential producer in Nova Scotia or any associated representatives approved by the Board of Directors and who has paid their annual membership fee.

The purpose of the organization is to represent the maple producers of Nova Scotia by giving a voice and addressing needs and concerns. MPANS offers a collaborative and coordinated approach to growing the maple industry in Nova Scotia.

MPANS was founded in 1973 and currently has an annual paid membership of approximately 50 members operating in Nova Scotia. It is managed by a six-member board of directors who meet several times a year and host an annual meeting of the Association in January. The Association organizes an annual fall tour in which latest technological advances are discussed, hosts a website with resources for members and the general public and sponsors an annual workshop with presentations from expert advisors in the maple industry. It has partnered with Dalhousie University's Faculty of Agriculture to encourage scientific research on topics of value to Nova Scotia maple producers.

MPANS is a member of both the North American Maple Syrup Council and the International Maple Syrup Institute and pays annual membership dues based on MPANS membership numbers. It is represented on the board of directors of the Council and has twice hosted the joint annual meetings of the Council and Institute in Nova Scotia, most recently in 2014.

MPANS encourages the development, expansion and improvement of the maple industry in Nova Scotia by:

- Promoting the production of high-quality maple products produced with ‘Best Management Practices’;
- Promoting production practices that stress food safety and good hygiene;
- Developing a greater interest in scientific and labour saving methods of production;
- Promoting sound woodlot management practices;
- Promoting marketing methods leading to increased revenue for producers;
- Encouraging research and development projects related to production and marketing of pure maple products;
- Working with governmental, agricultural and other organizations to promote the interests of both producers and consumers of Pure Nova Scotia Maple Syrup; and
- Informing consumers about the quality and safety of maple products made in Nova Scotia and about the uses for pure maple products.

Nova Scotia’s maple producers are concerned with the long-term sustainability of the maple industry, sugar bushes and maple operations in this province. Producers are also concerned with producing quality and safe maple products for sale to consumers. These concerns have been addressed for Nova Scotia maple producers in the ‘Best Management Practices’ (BMP) manual. This BMP manual was guided by the North American Maple Syrup Producers Manual produced by Ohio State University Extension in cooperation with The North American Maple Syrup Council.

Although Nova Scotia produces about 1% of Canada's total production of maple syrup, its markets and production is growing, and producers are keeping pace with technological advancements to take advantage of the growing world market for maple syrup. The maple industry in Nova Scotia also enjoys the advantage of having a maple syrup packaging and distribution firm in the province with significant domestic and foreign markets.

According to a statistical overview of the Canadian maple syrup industry prepared by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in 2017, the number of maple farms in Nova Scotia increased from 152 in 2011 to 187 in 2017 with an increase in taps from 372,000 to 446,000 between 2013 and 2016, and production of 57,000 gallons of maple syrup in 2017. The gross value of maple syrup produced in Nova Scotia in 2017 was \$3,712,000 up from \$2,225,000 in 2013 and the value of syrup exported from Nova Scotia was \$520,000 in 2017 (see Table below).

Industry Overview:

Nova Scotia	2011	2013	2016	2017
Number of Maple Farms	152		187	
Number of Maple Taps		372,452	446,300	
Maple Syrup Production (gallons)		37,000	48,000	57,000
Gross Value (\$)		\$2,225,000	\$3,200,000	\$3,712,000
Export Value (\$)		\$341,000	\$558,000	\$520,000
Export Volume (kg)		51,105	62,237	49,940

**information referenced from Agriculture & Agri Food Canada: Statistical Overview of the Canadian Maple Industry 2017*

This strategic plan provides guidance for continued growth of the industry in Nova Scotia.



MISSION, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Mission

The Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia is a member driven association of maple syrup producers and professionals working towards the common goal of bettering the maple syrup industry in Nova Scotia.

Vision

Produce a quality maple product that is valued by consumers and contributes to the sustainability of rural Nova Scotia.

Goals and Objectives

The Maple Producers Association of Nova Scotia's aim is to provide consumers with a high-quality, all-natural alternative sugar that is produced locally, using sustainable practices. Through consumer education, MPANS aims to inform consumers of the nutritional health benefits provided by this natural product that supports rural Nova Scotia communities.

Below are several overarching goals of MPANS

- Increase profitability for producers
- Increase yields through efficiencies
- Grow number of maple producers in Nova Scotia
- Improve Sustainability
- Understand potential for growth and expansion
- Develop Quality assurance programming
- Develop Marketing Strategy
- Increase participation in the Association
- Build organizational capacity

SITUATION ANALYSIS

During the summer of 2019, representatives of MPANS participated in a facilitated analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that characterize the present state of the maple industry in Nova Scotia. This analysis includes both internal and external attributes and helps us understand how these factors will play a role in the success of the organization going forward.

The top five strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified, which allows us to narrow our focus on those activities that could have the largest impact on our overarching objectives.

Strengths

- A natural, healthy, quality, product
- The unique story of maple syrup making
- MPANS – a base to build capacity
- Buy local movement – a marketing advantage
- Agri-tourism opportunities

Weaknesses

- Yields, lower than industry average
- Limited extension support
- Connection between industry and support (NSDA, AAFC, NSBI, etc.)
- Marketing – consumer education
- Producer education and technology transfer

Opportunities

- Product diversification (barrel aged, unfiltered, organic, etc.)

- Agri-Tourism
- Strategic partnerships (Packaging, research, Agri-Tourism)
- Membership development (increasing membership, tie to bulk sales eligibility)
- Market research
- Increased production by adoption of industry research and best management practices
- Increased bulk syrup sales to local and Quebec packers

Threats

- Capital investment
- Climate change
- Demographics need for new entrants to follow senior producers
- Industrial forest management
- Potential price instability for bulk sales

The top five items from each category of the SWOT analysis were organized into a matrix which allowed us to generate, compare and develop strategic options resulting from the internal-external analysis. This exercise demonstrates how we can use our strengths to capitalize on our opportunities and mitigate threats. This also helped us to understand how our weaknesses impact our opportunities and how they can be taken advantage of by our threats.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following are the strategic priorities that will be the focus of this plan as they will have a direct impact on our overarching objectives.

1. Develop extension support
2. Improve producer education and technology transfer
3. Quality product
4. Marketing and Agri-Tourism
5. Build capacity within MPANS

1. Develop Extension Support

MPANS has been operating without extension support since 2016. Prior to that time the organization benefited from part time professional support from a maple specialist employed by the Department of Agriculture and later through an arrangement with Perennia. The maple specialist provided much needed advisory services to the members, administrative support and a first point of contact and liaison with government and private partners. It is important that the Association has staff support to ensure continuity and coordination of its programs and activities, to provide advisory services to producers and guidance for the volunteer board of directors.

Activities:

- Explore other industries to assess how their organizations operate with or without extension support and determine any opportunities.
- Survey maple producers to assess what need(s) are no longer provided or available and would assist their operation and the industries.
- Identify potential funding opportunities or supports to hire an extension person or organization.

2. Improve Producer Education and Technology Transfer

Maple producers in Nova Scotia need an aggressive and ongoing education program to address issues of lower than average yield within the industry to keep abreast of the latest technological advances in sap collection, processing and value added product development and diversification. Training opportunities range from entry level fundamentals to attract and inform new entrants to the industry, and to provide exposure to the latest knowledge and technology for experienced producers. MPANS sponsors at least one technical workshop a year but additional resources are required to fund more frequent presentations by leaders in the industry from other jurisdictions.

Activities:

- Sponsor and encourage equipment field days.
- Establish maple boot camp basic training and mentorship programs for entry level producers.
- Encourage use of the international maple production handbook.
- Promote professional development info sessions/workshops (partner with Dalhousie University's extended learning program, Nova Scotia Community College, other educational facilities).
- Update and improve the Best Management Practices manual to act as a resource for maple producers.
- Engage with Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture Knowledge and Technology Transfer Specialist.

3. Quality Product Assurance

It is essential that consumers can rely on a safe and a consistently flavourful supply of pure maple syrup. A few instances of poor-quality syrup in the marketplace can bring discredit to the entire industry. The application of best management practices in the production of syrup and a continuing education

and improvement program can assure the highest possible standards for the end product.

Activities:

- Develop and promote the Best Management Practices manual.
- Apply International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI) standards on density, flavour and clarity when assessing product quality.
- Require MPANS members to adopt and adhere to the Best Management Practices manual as a condition of membership.
- Provide consumer education on the effects of reverse osmosis and vacuum on syrup quality.

4. Marketing and Agri-Tourism

Maple syrup production in North America continues to expand with new entrants to the industry and more efficient production methods. Fortunately, worldwide demand is also expanding, and export markets are increasing. Interest in purchasing local products and greater realization of the comparative health benefits of pure maple syrup is creating increased demand in the domestic market. As a small producer in the national marketplace, Nova Scotia has an opportunity to educate the regional market on the advantages of using local maple syrup. We are also well positioned for the export trade to Europe with at least a one-day shipping advantage to European markets compared to other Canadian centres.

Activities:

- MPANS Membership label and NS product identification. Create a Nova Scotia MPANS logo that will indicate a local, high-quality product produced by members that adhere to Best Management Practices.

- Utilize nutritional and health benefit information provided by the International Maple Syrup Institute for promotional material.
- Create a “Maple trail” theme program providing consumers with day trip ideas to sugar camps and maple related Agri-tourism. Promote as the first crop of the season.
- Develop a recipe/cookbook/poster to educate consumers on how to use maple for foods other than just pancakes.
- Prepare “request for proposals” to get proposals from marketing companies to determine what avenues would work for maple.
- Develop a marketing strategy and implement (including development of a brand).
- Engage with Buy Local Development Officer at Perennia.

5. Building Capacity within MPANS

MPANS is a small organization with a membership averaging a few more than 50 producers. Members range from small entry level or hobby producers to large industrial producers. It is estimated that membership could double in size if the Association could establish relevance to a wider audience. This larger presence in the industry could extend the efforts of the small number of volunteers who shoulder the load of managing MPANS programs and will create a stronger voice with industry partners.

Activities:

- Increase MPANS membership by detailing the benefits obtained from being a member.
- Develop partnerships with local packers to increase awareness of benefits of MPANS membership.
- Increase the email distribution list to reach more people interested in maple or doing it as a hobby.

- Increase MPANS social media presence.
- Host events or conferences for members.
- Prepare promotional materials to distribute at events that provide membership benefits.
- Update website and social media with programs, information on events, and links to reputable production sites.
- Access funding programs to develop MPANS through website updates, funding for more educational sessions with professional trainers.
- Use technologies to improve membership services, mailing lists, newsletters, and alternative board and committee meeting formats.
- Explore administrative staffing opportunities for MPANS, such as outsourcing to assist the volunteer board on focusing on projects to improve the sector.

CONCLUSION

MPANS is committed to addressing the priorities outlined above with the expectation that partnerships can be formed to help carry out the action items necessary to move the association and the maple industry in Nova Scotia to a new level of performance and accomplishment.

The activities in this strategic plan are essential building blocks toward realizing our goals and objectives and fulfillment of our vision for a quality product and a sustainable industry.

This is a living document. It is a plan that responds to the state of the industry and the Association at this time in its development. It will evolve over time in response to changing circumstances and the capacity of the Association.