

Ohio Maple Syrup No Longer Part of USDA Reporting

Ever since the 2012 National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) Census reported, maple could be dropped from their data collection efforts, I have been promoting to get more Ohio producers to report. I am saddened to say that due to the lack of participation Ohio maple production is no longer being reported. At the Ohio Maple Days workshops you have heard either Ms. Cheryl Turner from Ohio USDA-NASS or myself talk about the importance of having good production tracking and reporting. Ohio and five other states (see below) have been dropped from maple syrup production reporting. I have been told this could be permanent or short term.

States Dropped From Reporting:

Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, **Ohio**, West Virginia

States Still Being Reported:

Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Wisconsin

Why Did This Happen?

Commodity production numbers are gathered annually and through a comprehensive census conducted every 5 years. The biggest difference under the census is that NASS reaches a larger number of producers. After every census, NASS reevaluates all commodities and eliminates the ones that are under reporting in an effort to spend their limited resources (money & people) on commodities with higher return rates.

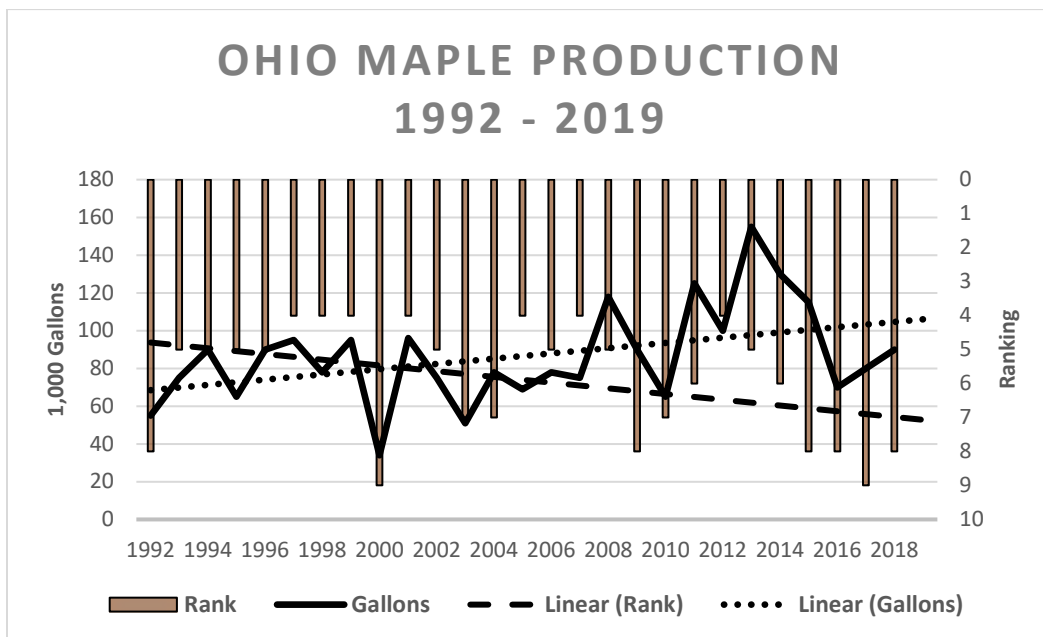
The 1840 census was the sixth population census in the United States and marked the very first agricultural census. This work was conducted by United States Department of Agriculture which NASS part of. The New England office of NASS in Concord, NH is the field office for maple syrup report development. Prior to 1992, their focus was on just the New England states (CT, ME, MA, NH, VT, NY). The 1992 report started to include five new states (**OH**, MI, MN, PA, WI). In 2016, Indiana and West Virginia were added to the New England report. Starting with the 2019 maple production report NASS kept the top seven reporting states, Ohio's reported production was 8th in the system. This is not the first time for maple production to be dropped.

Prior to Ohio being included in the New England report, maple production numbers were collected by NASS and were reported typically by the Ohio Department of Agriculture in their yearly agricultural production reports. However, in the years of 1982, 1983, and 1991 there was no maple production recorded for Ohio anywhere.

Ten years ago (2008) Ohio ranked 5th reporting 118,000 gallons produced from 395,000 taps. In 2018 Ohio reported 90,000 gallons from 400,000 taps and were ranked 8th. This definitely reveals that reported maple production has greatly increased in other states. The last 10-years I have witnessed a lot of growth within the Ohio maple industry and other states. Consulting with equipment dealers, they report selling a lot more equipment. Moreover, dealers are selling a lot of tubing. It is no secret that tubing and vacuum production over buckets can go from a quart per tap to ½ gallon per tap to more. This means if that much tubing is coming into Ohio the production numbers should be increasing accordingly. Production is increasing, but is that production being reported?

The information in Graph 1 should help explain what has been happening in Ohio from 1992 to 2018. The bars coming down from the top indicate Ohio’s ranking among the 13 states (key on right). The solid line indicates the thousands of gallons of syrup produced (key on left). This line shows the fluctuation in production from year to year. The light dotted linear line shows the increase in gallons produced. The heavier dashed line shows the linear digression of Ohio’s ranking from 1992 to 2018. You will notice that these two linear lines intersect in 2000. See Graph 1.

Graph1: Ohio Gallons Produced And Ranking 1992-2018



Why The Digression?

Lack of reporting is one explanation. Under reporting is another. My 2004 Doctorial research revealed more production for the two years requested (2003-2004) than what NASS reported for the same period. There are several plausible reasons for this. First, 10% of my surveys were from hobbyist or less than 250 taps and NASS does not count operations with less than 250 taps. Second, 25% of the survey population were Amish and the majority indicated they had greater than 1,000 taps. They also indicated that they did not participate in government programs like NASS. Amish operations are **NOT** to be blamed, as they are **NOT** the only operations reluctant to report, it is a wide spread issue. Lastly, and the largest problem is nobody knows who produces maple syrup as there is no required registration as in other states.

Maple production is a cash based endeavor, I understand and respect this very much. Producers do not want anyone to know the amount of cash in their business for fear the IRS will come "take" their share. This is by far the biggest false belief about reporting to NASS. This mindset is wrong, absolutely wrong. NASS and the IRS do not share data. As Ms. Turner explains, NASS does not share data with anyone as it's the only way to keep commodity producers trust by not releasing any personal information.

Why Does It Matter To Report?

Like it or not the NASS production numbers are what government agencies and private organizations utilized in determining what and where to give the most attention and funding towards. Even Universities use the production numbers to allocate dollars for personnel. Growth of an industry equates to more dollars for research and personnel.

Other states have seen bad production years just like Ohio. The main reason for there production increasing faster than Ohio's is that many other states Department of Agriculture have enacted a registration processes for food production to aid in requirements that came out of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Ohio Department of Agriculture is doing more in the vegetable production sector than before they just have not done the same thing in maple production yet.

Seeing the impacts of registration on maple production is extremely evident in Wisconsin (ranked 4th in 2019). Starting back in 2008 under the FSMA guidelines Wisconsin Department of Ag started the first stage of a registration process for multiple commodities including maple syrup. Between 2008 and 2009, there was a 130,000-tap increase and a 50,000-gallon production increase. In 2013 when the full implementation of the registration process was enacted there was a total of 740,000-taps reported and 265,000-gallons reported in Wisconsin. Just since 2007, there has been a 91% increase in taps and 135% increase in gallons produced in Wisconsin. This is not a true picture as most of the taps were always there they just were not being reported. The outcome, is that Wisconsin is now looking to hire a maple syrup specialist

to help the industry with its educational and research needs. One can only imagine the numbers Ohio would produce if we had a registration system. I know where 100,000 taps in production are located in a township in Ohio that are never counted. Multiply that across the entire state and Ohio would be back to its Fourth (4th) largest producer ranking easily. It would also have the power to hire research and educational personnel to help producers.

So What Did The 2017 Census Reveal?

The 2017 Census report was released on April 11 2019. **Note: I will post it and several of the key maple sections on my maple web page for your access. <http://holmes.osu.edu/maple> .** What the census showed is that from 2012 to 2017 Ohio added an additional 112 maple operations from the 708 reporting in 2012 Census. The 820 operations (larger than 250 taps) reporting in 2017 indicated an additional 26,367 taps were in production since the last census. This coincides with the data I have gathered with the Ohio Maple Days Workshop questionnaires. On average, producers indicated expansion in the last 5 years in the tune of 28,000 (2015) to 43,000 (2019). These are new taps in production not those already in production. Only about 50% of attendees return my questionnaire. Imagine if all 300 (average) people returned the questionnaire what this number of increased taps would be. The census showed 47 counties indicating an increase in operations and production and 22 indicating a decrease. Also six showed no change and 19 had no production report at all.

What Now?

Start by getting more educating on the issue. Former NASS New England office director Gary Keough had a very good article in the October 2016 issue of the Maple Digest on how NASS conducts their surveys. In May of 2018 I had an article in the Maple Digest titled "Reporting to USDA-NASS." Both cover the how and why it is important to report. If you missed either of these articles they are posted on my web page at <http://holmes.osu.edu/maple>

Is There Hope?

I am not a quitter and so I have to have hope that this is a one-year deletion and that maple production will be back soon. My advice, is talk to your area State and Federal representatives about how you are upset that maple was dropped from the records. Indicate to them the importance of getting this back into the system so research dollars are obtainable to help this growing industry. NASS is still sending out maple surveys so please fill it out completely and send it back. By sending it back just maybe, Ohio will have a maple report again. Fill it out completely knowing there is **NO CONNECTION** between reporting production to NASS and the IRS getting more money out of you.

Finally, there is no one person to blame, nor should NASS be blamed, for the cancelation of maple production reporting. NASS does a great job of managing the astronomical amount of commodity data they are responsible for each year. They can only report if producers do their part and report their data. They also do not know where all the maple producers are because we do not have a registration requirement in maple as other food-producing industries in Ohio have. I am extremely upset over this as I have worked hard for years to not have this happen, but it is out of my control. OMPA is going to write letters and are encouraging you let your legislators know how you feel. It is a sad day for Ohio maple and all maple producers across the United States.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Gary Graham, Ohio State University