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Syrup Producers Invite Public to Mountain State Maple Days 2019

Charleston W.Va. -- The West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association will be hosting two Mountain State Maple Days this year to celebrate the state's growing maple syrup industry. On Saturday, February 23rd and Saturday, March 16th more than a dozen syrup producers will open their doors to "sugar houses" around the state for the public to take a sneak peek into the magic of making maple syrup. In addition, numerous restaurants, shops and hotels will be offering special deals and maple-related attractions as part of "maple clusters."

"Although maple syrup has been made in West Virginia for centuries, there has never been an effort to industrialize it until recently. But the potential for the industry is huge as our state has more maple trees than Vermont," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. "If you want to taste real maple syrup while supporting a local farmer, these are the days for you."

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA-NASS) reported West Virginia had 61,000 taps that produced 9,000 gallons of syrup worth \$330,000 in 2018. Despite a successful season, the Mountain State has approximately 164 million sugar maples within its forested areas indicating an opportunity for growth. The primary entity trying to tap into this prospect is the West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Associations which has more than 50 members.

"Small producers are leading the charge in West Virginia. It all started when the Maple Syrup Producers Association formed in 2015, and they have been steadily growing in member size, as well as production since," Commissioner Leonhardt said. "Under my administration, we knew we had to focus more on providing tools to these producers, so West Virginia could tap into this niche market. I am proud of all that we have accomplished thus far."

Example of "clusters" include the Pocahontas Cluster, being spearheaded by the Convention

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and Visitors Bureau there, which is putting together a weekend experience that will include sugar camp tours, maple breakfasts, maple dinner options. The Pocahontas County Opera House is offering overnight B&B packages.

Other clusters include Route 220 in the Hardy / Mineral County region, Metro Valley in the Kanawha / Lincoln County region, Wheeling area and the Beckley area, which will feature attractions at Tamarack, one of the state's premier tourist stops.

For more details, visit <https://wvmspa.org/2019/01/05/mountain-state-maple-days-update>.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.

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