



GROWING OUR FOOD.
GROWING TOGETHER.

L'Union des producteurs agricoles

MAPLE SYRUP COLLECTIVE MARKETING

BACKGROUND

Maple syrup, a love story. As the story goes, between 1536 and 1542, Jacques Cartier and his travelling companions came across a tree they believed to be a large walnut tree. When they cut the tree, they were surprised that a quantity of what they took to be water flowed forth. Sampling the nectar, they found it tasted of good wine. Cartier's wine-producing walnut was in fact a sugar maple. In the centuries since, the benefits of maple syrup and maple sugar have become an integral part of our food and customs. The best-known tradition is the sugar shack, with its typical meal so beloved of Quebecers. The potential of maple products is much broader, however, and maple producers are ambitious, and aware that theirs is a unique product, with potential just waiting to be fulfilled.

Challenges aplenty. The maple syrup product sector started booming in the 1980s. Maple producers began to invest, and to modernize their operations. Maple syrup flooded the market. But the end of the 1990s saw a dramatic drop in consumption, as maple products lost ground to other sweeteners. With no concerted research and promotion, the demand for our homegrown sugar dwindled. Worse, producers faced other challenges, including overproduction, weak and unstable prices, and limited market possibilities.

WORKING TOGETHER

In the early 1990s, maple producers pooled their resources to better face these many challenges. Using **legally available tools**, they sought to improve marketing conditions, make production more efficient, and develop markets. Producers democratically chose to implement a centralized marketing system for bulk maple syrup in order to control product quality and coordinate marketing with major buyers. The creation of this agency in no way prevented on-farm sales or short marketing circuits. A strategic reserve was stored to ensure a stable supply, and stable prices. Production quotas were also implemented in order to better balance supply and demand. As well, maple producers developed new, foreign markets, and invested in research and promotion to showcase the nutritional benefits of maple syrup and promote product diversification.

SECTORIAL DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, maple production has reached unprecedented heights. The marketing measures implemented over 20 years ago by producers have helped maintain as many maple operations as possible, and have ensured better market revenues while keeping government intervention to a minimum. Quebec maple producers today are far and away the largest producers of maple syrup in Canada and in the world, with products sold in 52 countries, and ongoing innovation, from organic certification to maple water marketing, to name only two.
