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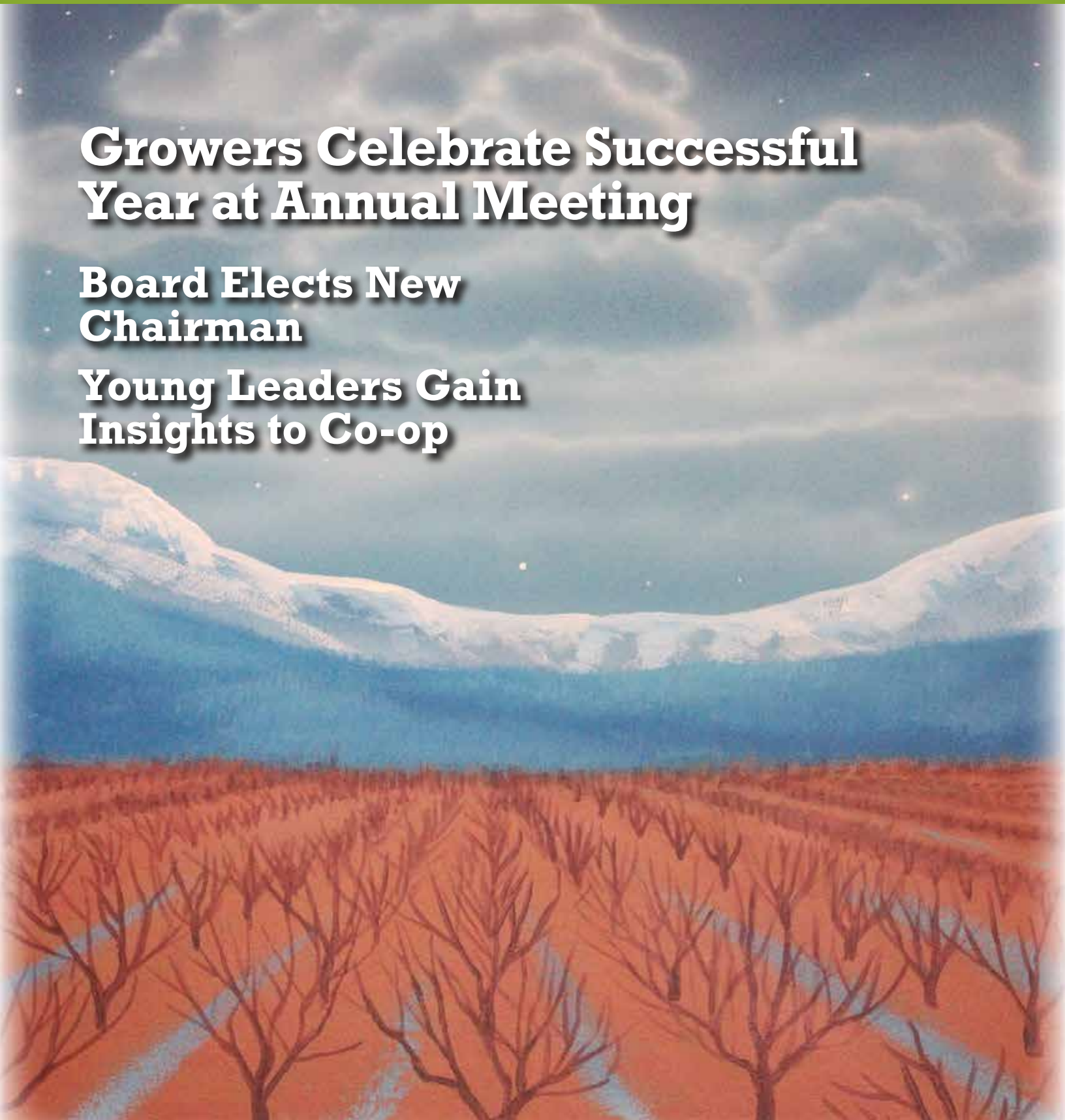
NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2014

News, Views & Industry Insights

Growers Celebrate Successful Year at Annual Meeting

Board Elects New Chairman

Young Leaders Gain Insights to Co-op





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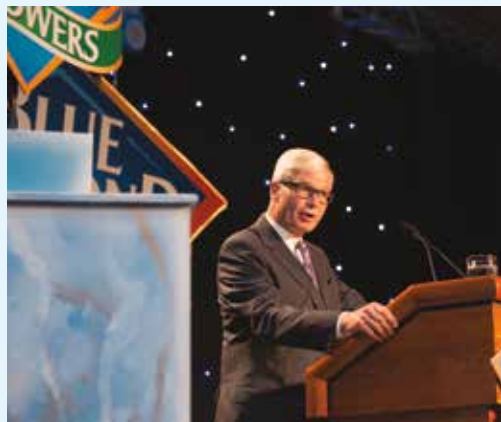


EXHIBITORS:





104TH ANNUAL MEETING



Striking a Profitable Balance while Building Opportunities

“*Blue Diamond* has done it again! We had another amazing, record-setting crop year in 2013 — producing a harvest that surprised on the upside and brought prices that pushed higher throughout 2014,” exclaimed Clinton Shick, Chairman of the Board at *Blue Diamond’s* 104th Annual Members’ Meeting in Sacramento, November 19.

Speaking to a full house of more than 1,100 growers and guests, Shick reported that *Blue Diamond’s* performance also excelled. “The group of handlers we benchmark against returned an average of 15 cents per pound less than what we as *Blue Diamond*

growers received!” President and CEO Mark Jansen expanded on the theme, Building Tomorrow’s Opportunities. “Our strategies are working. The *Blue Diamond* vision is delivering the benefits of almonds to the world,” he said.

CoBank Partner

Introduced by Shick as CEO of “a valued partner that is ranked among the Top 50 banks in the world and number one in the U.S. for safety,” Bob Engel characterized the bank’s relationship with *Blue Diamond* as “a long-standing partnership that grows stronger every year.” In fact, he noted, *Blue Diamond’s*



excellence and leadership as an exporter led the bank to feature the co-op in a recent video highlighting the importance of agricultural exports to American farmers and the U.S. economy. *Blue Diamond*, he said, “is a prime example of how the co-op business model continues to thrive” as it builds economic growth, security and prosperity for American farmers. Engle noted, “You’ve set a gold standard for the entire industry and we are excited to share the future with you as your financial partner.”

Seminars, Tours, Exhibits Enlighten

Grower seminars examined current cultural and business issues facing farmers. Understanding regulatory requirements when applying volatile organic compounds and fumigants, and effective pest management operations while protecting bees drew considerable interest. Understanding the value of *Blue Diamond’s* new tax -saving program for growers called IC-DISC

and an update on California’s water situation proved popular with growers. See articles on those subjects in subsequent issues of *Almond Facts*.

Tours to *Blue Diamond’s* Sacramento plant focused on the Almond Innovation Center and self-guided tours of the plant. Always a popular attraction, the tours drew interested members and guests to view the latest technology and for processing almonds and food scientists creating new products made from *Blue Diamond* almonds.

Exhibits hosted by nearly 30 vendors representing products and services valued by growers, from crop insurance and loans to planting stock, soil amendments, farm chemicals, irrigation technology and harvesting equipment drew over 1,000 growers for a visit with vendor representatives. The ever-popular *Blue Diamond* exhibits offered samples of the latest innovations.



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Let it Snow! Season's Greetings from *Blue Diamond Growers!*
Painting by Francine West.



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Dale Van Groningen

Vice Chairman | Ripon

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Blue Diamond, the world's largest processor and marketer of almonds, exports to 90 countries. The cooperative marketing corporation also markets hazelnuts.

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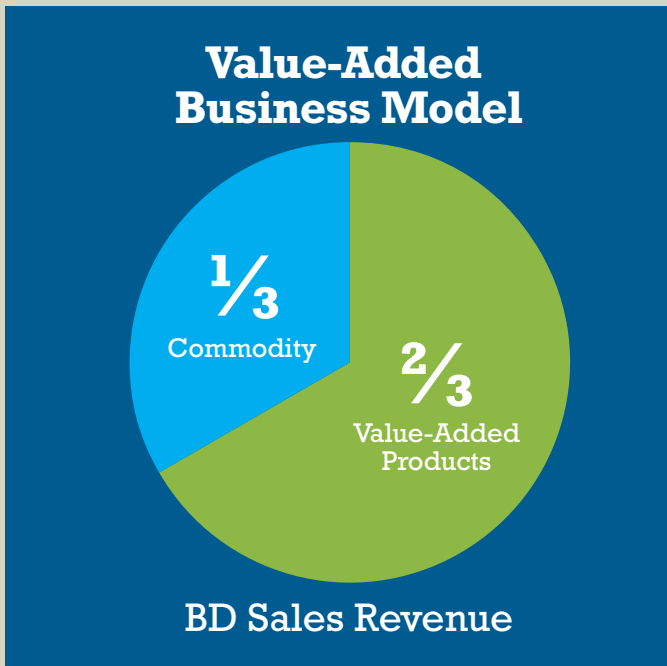


President's Corner

Mark Jansen
President and CEO

Are You Better Off Than Four Years Ago?

For five years we have gathered to celebrate accomplishments and to envision the future of *Blue Diamond* at *Blue Diamond's Annual Growers Meeting*.



As Ronald Reagan liked to say, “Are you better off than four years ago?”

Have *Blue Diamond's* returns exceeded the competition? Has *Blue Diamond's* leadership increased demand for almonds? Are we building *Blue Diamond* for future success? Yes, Yes, and Yes! Your co-op has never been stronger and our strategies are working. We are transforming our business model into value-added products, becoming the world's best manufacturer of almonds, creating new almond-related product categories, growing the visibility and value of our brand, increasing efficiency and improving margins, taking our brand to more of the world, and extending tax advantages to our growers. Taken together, we are living our vision: “delivering the benefits of almonds to the world.”

FoodEngineering Plant of the Year!

There are three types of people in the world: those who live in the past, those who live in the present and those who live in the future. There are benefits and challenges with each state of mind, but I think those who live in the present are often the happiest. I confess that I am someone who is usually thinking about the future. As a CEO, this often serves me well. The downside is that I need to be reminded to slow down, appreciate the moment and say thank you.

In a year of water scarcity, growers experienced new difficulties in delivering this year's almonds. They have given the co-op their entire year's work and investment in the form of their almond crop. As employees, this trust is an honor we have been given. Thank you, growers, for entrusting us with your almonds.

It is important that our growers know that throughout last year, the employees of *Blue Diamond* never worked

harder. You may see the results from returns, without knowing that they worked equally hard on building the infrastructure in manufacturing, information technology and other systems to ensure long term success for the co-op. Thank you, employees, for tirelessly working to maximize the short and long-term returns of our growers.

Finally, I want to thank our *Blue Diamond* Board of Directors. Not only have they entrusted the co-op with their crop, they too have significantly stepped up their game. And they have never worked harder for *Blue Diamond*.

“The greatest danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.”

— Michelangelo



At *Blue Diamond* our goals are important. And as Michelangelo said, “The greatest danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.” After such a successful year it is important that we ask ourselves, “Are we setting the right goals?” “Are they really challenging enough?” In the past you heard me say “we have three major goals: to beat the competition by \$.10 a pound, to grow sales to \$2 billion, and to be the best place to work.”

It is important to remember the intention behind competitive return is consistency. Our challenge, in fact

our expectation, is that every year we beat our competition by at least \$.10 a pound. Our trend line is good and we need to repeat this success, year after year, to achieve the intended standard.

Our second goal was to grow sales to \$2 billion! When we were a \$700 million co-op, that target seemed aggressive. With sales at \$1.5 billion, you will agree, the goal seems reasonable. At the current annual growth rate of 20 percent, in two years we will achieve sales of \$2 billion. There will be challenges on this journey, most notably the impact of the drought.

Even if we get normal rains this winter, for the next couple of years, the industry crop will be light. We forecast slight growth in bearing acres. The net result of significant new plantings and more aggressive pulling of water-stressed orchards. Stress on trees and resulting slow growth of fruit wood indicate a decline in yields. UC Davis research on water deprivation indicates it could be three years before we see almond orchards recover.

With *Blue Diamond* growers working to maintain production, it will be our responsibility to increase the co-op’s share of available almond acreage by acquiring new members. We have a great story to share. With *Blue Diamond’s* performance, IC DISC/DPAD tax advantages and the best people in the industry, the time is ripe for member expansion. We are so confident in this growth, that after 40 years, we are finally building a new warehouse in Salida. This state-of-the-art facility will house our growing almond handle and ensure your high-quality nonpareil almonds will have the industry’s most gentle handling and highest value in the marketplace.

Our third goal remains to make *Blue Diamond* the best place to work. This goal is as important to growers as it is to employees. What is good for the employees is good for the growers, just as what is good for the growers is good for employees. It is all the people of *Blue Diamond* who make our success possible. In a competitive marketplace our people have never been more important. Many stay well past the expected age and when they choose, they deserve their retirement.

[continued on next page »](#)

This year we are honoring three soon-to- retire employees who represent nearly 120 years of leadership at *Blue Diamond*.

Bruce Lish is retiring as General Manager of Manufacturing Operations. Like many growers and employees, *Blue Diamond* has been a family affair for Bruce. In the late 1950's, Bruce recalls sitting in the backseat of his dad's 1956 Bel Air, waiting to pick up his mother from her job as personnel manager. When he was 16 years old Bruce joined his mother at *Blue Diamond*. While attending school and playing minor league baseball he began working part time in the gift pack warehouse. In a career that spanned more than 45 years, Bruce has held most jobs in the Sacramento plant. And since 2008, he has diligently led all of our manufacturing operations.

Bruce is leaving on a high note. He says "I am most proud of the last six years. We stuck to our core value almond business. We gained the trust of the board. And we built Turlock and other manufacturing just in time to keep up with demand." We all owe Bruce thanks for a job well done.

Bruce was very involved in the selection of his successor. He spent a full day taking candidates to each of our plants, understanding their competency and ensuring that the next General Manager of Manufacturing would lead with *Blue Diamond* values. *Blue Diamond* is fortunate to find a successor with 30 years of manufacturing

leadership experience in the U.S., Europe and China, including experience at great companies like Diageo and Pillsbury. Welcome *Blue Diamond's* new General Manager of Manufacturing, Brian Barczak.

In 1974, Dave Baker joined *Blue Diamond* as a field supervisor for San Joaquin and Contra Costa counties. In those days our field supervisors drove Crown Victorias and wore coats and ties to visit growers. And as Dave would do often in his career at *Blue Diamond*, on his first grower visit, he bucked tradition and wore jeans and boots. The grower named Johnny Galiazzi said, "Dave, you look better than that Philadelphia lawyer type who visited me last time."

After signing up Johnny, never again was Dave questioned on the choice of his attire. In fact the whole department followed his lead. By 1984, Dave was leading the membership department. For 30 years, Dave is most proud that in this leadership role he contributed to the strategic direction of *Blue Diamond* by championing the farmer's point of view. My first impression of Dave, other than the belt buckle, was that he had the best understanding of all the functions of *Blue Diamond*. Dave told me, "Mark, I have to understand the entire business because I want to share it with our growers." Dave's optimism for the future is reflective of his broad business interest. Dave says "I am optimistic because of *Almond Breeze* profitability, and that we built Turlock and have



^ Bruce Lish



^ Dave Baker



^ Susan Brauner

plans to expand one step at a time, and the opportunities around the globe to get there first with our *Blue Diamond* brands.” Thank you, Dave, for a job very well done.

There is one more reason Dave is optimistic about the future. He says, “Mel Machado is a highly intelligent man. He cares deeply about *Blue Diamond*. And for 10 years, I have been getting him ready for this job.” Our Membership department is in good hands with the promotion of Mel Machado to Director of Membership Relations.

The third honoree is our Director of Government Relations and Communications, Susan Brauner. After a teaching and school administration career, she joined *Blue Diamond*, then dedicated more than 35 years of service to our growers. Susan shies from the spotlight, but all of you are familiar with her work. Over the last couple of decades Susan has led planning for the annual meetings/luncheons, managed the Young Leader program, published *Almond Facts*, the almond industry’s most read magazine, lobbied to retain federal export marketing support, and gained respect and influence for *Blue Diamond* among agencies and politicians in Sacramento and Washington D.C.

Susan is so well respected in these circles that we have received many commendations from politicians who felt compelled to honor her on her retirement. This quote best captures their sentiment: “Not only does *Blue Diamond* owe Susan a debt of gratitude, so does all of California agriculture.”

Susan says, “I am optimistic that there are so many middle class consumers in the world who are searching for healthy foods for their families. It is not easy taking the *Blue Diamond* brand into new markets, but we are getting there!” Thank you, Susan, for all you have done for *Blue Diamond*.

You can appreciate that Susan can never be replaced. However, we are carefully searching for the next leader who will also need to bring communication expertise, an understanding of government affairs and a passion for our growers.

As a 104 year old business, we have more retirements than most. The need for people is further compounded by our tremendous business growth and the increasing complexity of a value-added business. In an ever-improving economy, there is no such thing as unemployment for the best people.

The fact is we need to hire, retain and develop more of the best people in the food industry. We have been making *Blue Diamond* a very good place to work by building incentives that more tightly align employee rewards to co-op success, improving the work spaces in factories and offices, and getting employees the right tools such as information systems and state-of-the-art processing equipment to help them do their jobs better. We have made *Blue Diamond* a very good place to work, and there is still more to be done to make it the best place to work.

Remembering that Michelangelo said “The danger is in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark,” I wonder what he would think about *Blue Diamond* Leadership Team’s predictions for the future?

Within Three Years:

1) *Blue Diamond* will rise from 32nd place in 2012 to be among the 10 largest co-ops in the U.S.

2) *Blue Diamond* products will become prominent in national restaurant chains and coffee shops on three continents. Already, in Australia, our *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* was awarded food service new product of the year.

3) *Blue Diamond* product innovation will see our branded almonds in several new grocery categories, including the dairy, frozen and baking sections of retail stores.



Within Five Years:

1) In the U.S., sales in the almond milk category will surpass those of skim milk.

2) Our industry-leading gluten free crackers, *Nut*Thins*, will achieve sales greater than the entire consumer business of 2007.

3) Because of demand and superior margins, we will more than triple the capacity of our Turlock plant.

4) *Blue Diamond* will be recognized as a “100 best places to work.”

Within Eight Years:

In the U.K., Australia and Japan, almond milk sales will surpass sales of skim milk.

One last projection: from this point forward, with a superior economic model and the best growers, *Blue Diamond* will continuously increase its share of the California almond crop.

Throughout *Blue Diamond*, it is clear, the best is yet to come!



Chairman's Message

Clinton Shick

Chairman of the Board



Striking a Profitable Balance

Well, we did it again! It is a pleasure to be able to say that we have had another amazing record-setting crop year! Despite the worst drought in over 100 years during 2014, the 2013 crop year can be characterized by a harvest that surprised on the upside and brought prices that still pushed higher throughout 2014.

And for *Blue Diamond* growers, in comparison with others in the industry, the returns produced by our employee-partners in Sacramento, Salida and Turlock were stellar. It's difficult to compare our performance to others because of the differences of our business models, but the group of handlers we benchmark against returned an average of 15 cents per pound less than what we as *Blue Diamond* growers received! Some may wonder, "How did we do that?" And more importantly, "Can we do it again?"

In *Blue Diamond's* case, it seems we did everything right at each critical juncture in 2013-14. In fact, I would say it was the most **"perfectly positive storm"** we have experienced in our history of grower returns. And I attribute most of the results to five critical reasons:

1. It all started with our loyal *Blue Diamond* growers, who produced and delivered an excellent quality, record breaking 2013 supply to our cooperative. Record volume, of exceptional quality almonds, makes our processing facilities really hum at an optimum level, which produces maximum efficiencies at minimal cost to us.
2. Our Turlock Plant came online in time to contribute a full year of capacity, delivering additional volumes of high quality, value-added products. In addition to increased capacity, innovation opened the door to **new products** for our global ingredient customers around the world. And while there is still more to learn about how to maximize Turlock's potential, the increased production of value added products, using mostly pollinator varieties, added significantly to our exceptional return.
3. From a marketing perspective, our sales team struck big wins throughout our global marketplace and again added more record-breaking statistics to our history books!

Our *Blue Diamond* North American Retail business, while struggling to pay the high cost for raw product (just like our customers), was still able to produce a positive contribution to your bottom line. In fact, they innovated 17 new products

last year and introduced them to the world in another Olympic advertising campaign that further expanded our distribution in the United States!

Building on our successful North American business, is our much smaller but rapidly growing International Retail programs in the United Kingdom, France, Australia and Japan. In the coming year, we hope to expand into Korea and perhaps one additional country where global consumers are hungry for nutritious products like ours.

Among our consumer branded products, *Almond Breeze* continues to be the star of the show in both North America and overseas. Here in the United States, the almondmilk category, including *Almond Breeze*, accounts for two-thirds of all non-dairy milk products. In comparison, soy, rice, coconut, hemp, cashew and blends of all these are very minor players. Just imagine what the world would be like without *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze*. It's the leading, and first almondmilk in a beverage category that didn't even exist just a few years ago.

4. A fourth reason for this year's outstanding return lies in the cumulative results of our continuing efforts to improve margins. Mark has challenged our leadership team, and especially our production people who, year after year, uncover millions of dollars in cost savings and margin enhancements that have compounded over the last four years. These benefits are repeatable and when combined together, they impact our bottom line and add a bonus to our competitive return.

5. And finally, let's not forget how prices escalated during the last 12 months. Whenever there are dramatic price swings, either up or down, uncertainty is introduced into the market. When there is volatility like we've seen, there are more likely to be winners and losers, all depending on when sellers chose to be active in the market. So hats off to our sales experts who navigated perfectly to sell our crop during some of the best of times.



So, again you ask, “How did we do it?” While it may not sound complicated, I can assure you it was not blind luck! It required calculated planning, followed by a lot of teamwork throughout the organization. It took a willing team of everyone pulling together to recognize the challenges, making the adjustments as conditions changed, and implementing innovative ways to win in the end. That’s how we do it in our orchards and that’s how your marketing and production teams do it, too! We all pull together in a partnership that pays off for all of us.

And the wonderful results that we feel in our returns are coming from a position of strength that continues to escalate. We are actually stronger as a company than we were 5 years ago. Net proceeds have more than doubled over the last five years. Our total assets are up 75 percent in the same period and our retained earnings have increased 38 percent since our centennial. The percent of total revenue that is returned to you, our grower-owners, has improved — all because our revenue is rising faster than our expenses!

Building financial viability and strength, while remaining competitive in the marketplace, and investing in future growth is not easy to navigate, and does not just happen. The challenge of *Striking the Right Profitable Balance* is always the number one priority your board and management team strives to achieve. We can all be proud of taking a strategic direction

that continues to build strength in the *Blue Diamond* enterprise for ourselves, and the next generation.

Proper Planning is Key to Realizing Results

It’s gratifying whenever good results emerge. And it’s doubly gratifying when stellar results are recognized as emerging out of a successful planning process. This is a year when we got it right. And we’ve enjoyed a number of years of getting it more right than wrong.

Good planning starts with a rigorous process of preparing our annual operating plan (AOP). Imbedded within the AOP are a lot of assumptions — many are short-term looking out only a year or two. But there are also those that reach out over a number of years. Assumptions in the near-term are easier to predict than those farther out. Making long-term plans like building a plant in Turlock required assumptions that stretched out 10 years or more.

For example, droughts are not new to California, but this past year’s experience with our drought, the worst anyone alive today has ever seen, has stretched far beyond how we think about water, in ways we couldn’t have imagined before. Water costing \$500 or \$1,000 per acre-foot, if you could get it, is a reality few had ever faced before 2014.

[continued on next page »](#)

So, as board and management, who must plan ahead, what assumptions can we make about next year's water supply? How will a lingering drought affect future crops? What factors do we need to consider as we forecast future crops? We learned from visiting with Australian growers recently that extended droughts can require extended recovery periods depending on severity. And the recently-passed groundwater legislation has introduced even more uncertainty into the planning process for almond growers and, indeed, for all of agriculture.

Because of these uncertainties, your board has asked for additional sensitivity studies when considering any future capital outlay. This helps to uncover hidden risks associated with thinking about "out of the box" scenarios. And I'm happy to say that our Leadership Team is doing an excellent job of supplementing our customary analysis with additional information that helps us to make some very important decisions.

A Big Deal

I want to turn now to an exciting new tool for *Blue Diamond Growers* that will dramatically impact the bottom line of any grower who is paying income taxes – and that's just about all of us. This is "Big Deal" and if you haven't heard the term "IC-DISC" before, I can assure you that you will be hearing a lot about it in the future.

IC-DISC stands for Interest Charge Domestic International Sales Corp. The IC-DISC is a set of tax laws designed to incentivize U.S. companies and producers to export goods and services. Could there be any government program better suited to benefit the California Almond Industry?

Our *Blue Diamond* finance experts have organized a co-op-wide IC-DISC that all growers can take advantage of, without any of the cost or administrative headaches. That's right — we don't have to do a thing because they have done it all for us.

And as a *Blue Diamond* member you will receive the benefit in this year's tax return. Our IC-DISC was set up last January to ensure you receive the full year benefit. And in case you're wondering, this does not affect, and is in addition to the existing DPAD benefit that we have been receiving for a number of years.

Finally, I want to thank you for supporting your Political Action Committee (PAC). You are making record contributions to our PAC, which helps us to provide a stronger voice in our legislature and in Congress. With far fewer farmers producing food in the United States, we must continue to have a voice. On behalf of our board, who make up the PAC Committee, I want to thank the Agricultural Council of California, including President Emily Rooney and Tricia Geringer, for working everyday at the state capitol on our behalf. And I want to thank Julian Heron, who represents us in Washington, DC, along with

Susan Brauner, our Director of Public Affairs. Without you, we cannot weigh in on issues like water and bee health, trade and food policies. Your being there every day insures our voice is being heard.

Prior to the annual meeting, *Blue Diamond* was mentioned in two separate articles in the *Sacramento Bee*, highlighting our record revenue and mentioning our 104th annual meeting being held today. I want to quote a portion of one of the articles.

"The company's recent growth has been driven by a proliferation of new, almond-based products and an aggressive expansion of those products into international markets. In dollar terms, almonds are the state's No. 1 agricultural export."

Then it goes on to say "Agricultural industry analysts give much of the credit to *Blue Diamond* President and CEO, Mark Jansen, who vowed to transform the cooperative into a 'global branded food company' when he came aboard in October 2010."

The very next day, Mark sent a communication to the *Blue Diamond* Team.

"The *Sacramento Bee* published an article highlighting *Blue Diamond's* financial successes. I appreciate the recognition for the co-op, but they wrongly credited me for your excellent performance and the challenges overcome by our growers.

"Throughout last year, the employees of *Blue Diamond* never worked harder. The revenue growth and returns are evident. What is less understood is that you worked equally hard on building the infrastructure in manufacturing, information technology and other systems to ensure long term success for the co-op.

"In a year of water scarcity, growers experienced new difficulties in delivering this year's almonds. They have given the co-op their entire year's work and investment in the form of their almond crop. As employees, this trust is an honor we have been given.

It is all the people of *Blue Diamond* who made this incredible year possible. Once again it is my honor to say "Thank You."

I think the *Sacramento Bee* got it right, and so did Mark. We at *Blue Diamond* are blessed with an incredibly strong team. But strong team players, as any football fan can tell you, without a strong quarterback will win some games, but may not go to the championship.

Conversely, the world's most dynamic and visionary leader, who works hard to inspire an only average team, is going to struggle to reach the pinnacle of performance excellence.

This year *Blue Diamond* not only made it to the championship ... we won the Super Bowl!

AN ICON JUST GOT LARGER



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District 1 Director Dan Cummings Elected Chairman of the Board

At the Organizational Meeting of the Board of Directors following *Blue Diamond's* 104th Annual Meeting in Sacramento, Dan Cummings was elected as Chairman of the Board. He will succeed outgoing Chairman Clinton Shick, who will remain the Director for District 9. District 3 Director Dale Van Groningen was elected as Vice Chairman.

Shick Era One of Rapid Expansion



Shick was elected Chairman of the Board by his fellow directors in 2006 upon the retirement of Howard Isom. Previously,

he had served as Vice Chairman for 16 years. Shick joined the Board of Directors in 1983 as the first director for the realigned District 9.

A life-long farmer, Shick grew up in the McFarland area as the son and grandson of farmers. After graduating from California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo with a degree in farm management, he began work on a master's degree at U.C. Davis, but his first love, farming, called. His farm management work led to the development of his farming enterprise. Shick planted his first almonds in 1973, joined *Blue Diamond Growers*, and decided to run for the Board of Directors in 1983.

As Chairman, he presided over the Board's selection of Mark Jansen as President and CEO in 2010 and the addition of *Blue Diamond's* first-ever outside director, which helped to strengthen the Board's skill set. Shick oversaw the development and rapid expansion of the North American Consumer Business, the launch of the International Retail Business, and the

double-digit value-added growth in the Global Ingredients Business. As a result of *Blue Diamond's* rapid growth, Shick was also involved in the initiation of the new Turlock Plant and the expansion of the Almond Innovation Center.

"After several years of searching for the right affordable solution to capacity constraints, Board and management arrived at a long-term solution in Turlock, allowing for growth with negligible impacts to grower returns," Shick said, reflecting on the launch of phase one of the three-phased new Turlock Plant.

During his time on the Board, the industry's crop has grown from 239 million pounds harvested in 1983 to the 2.0 billion potential crops harvested today. His tenure saw *Blue Diamond* handling more almonds than ever before, record pricing for those almonds and *Blue Diamond* members experiencing record-setting returns, beating the competition by as much as 15 cents per pound for the 2013 crop.

Cummings Brings Broad Industry Knowledge



Dan Cummings from Chico will serve as Chairman effective November 19, 2014. "It is an exciting time to be a *Blue Diamond*

almond grower," he said. "I am humbled and honored to serve as Chairman of our cooperative."

Cummings participated in *Blue Diamond's* inaugural Young Leader Program class, and then was elected as a member of the District 1 Grower Liaison Committee for three years and of the Grower Advisory Committee. He continued as an ex officio member while representing *Blue Diamond* on the Almond Board of California (ABC) and on various committees. His ABC service includes three years as Vice Chairman; Chairman of the International, PR and Advertising, and Reserve Committees; member of the Administration and Finance Committee; and Chairman of the Bee Task Force.

He joined the *Blue Diamond* Board of Directors in 2006, replacing Howard Isom as the District 1 Director upon his retirement. Cummings currently serves as the chair of *Blue Diamond's* Executive Compensation Committee, and as a member of its Governance and Audit Committees.

As CEO of Capay Farms, Cummings manages several thousand acres of almonds and walnuts in Butte, Glenn, Tehama and Colusa counties. In addition, Cummings is Chairman Emeritus of Project Apis m., the organization behind the "Bee Box" column that appears regularly in *Almond Facts*. He is also a partner and CFO of Olivarez Honey Bees in Orland. Cummings holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Stanford University and an M.B.A. from Harvard University.



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Mel Machado



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San Joaquin County
East of Jack Tone Rd
209.531.6352 Cell
209.545.6222 Salida

Bob Ketcher



Field Receiving Manager, Westside
Stanislaus and Merced Counties
209.761.2289 Cell
209.545.6218 Salida
209.742.2089 Home

Dennis Meinberg



Tehama, Butte and
Eastern Glenn
530.864.0619 Cell
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Ryan Christy



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Stanislaus County South of Tuolumne River,
West of Hwy 99 and East of San Joaquin
River; Merced County, North of Merced
River, West of Highway 99
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Brian Noeller



Stanislaus County, South of the
Tuolumne River, East of Highway 99
and Merced County, North of the
Merced River, East of Highway 99
209.417.2010 Cell

Ernie Reichmuth



Northern Madera and
Southern Merced Counties
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559.645.4708 Home

Mike Griffin



Northern Fresno and
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Steve Rothenberg



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P. Samantha Lewis	(530) 891-1660	
Doug Bentz	(530) 891-0878	
Darren Rice	(530) 891-5252	C
Greg Watts	(530) 934-7660	!
Kevin Borrer	(530) 385-1250	
Fred Montgomery	(530) 520-2062	
Matt Vernoga	(53) 624-4153	
Larry Bradley	(530) 893-5347	!
Dan Cummings	(530) 894-5494	** ABA
W. Howard Isom	(530) 891-0375	*

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Gerald Rominger	(530) 476-2103	*
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Lloyd Van Dyken	(209) 239-6031	
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Allen Sipma	(209) 499-5366	
Bruce Oosterkamp	(209) 505-6234	
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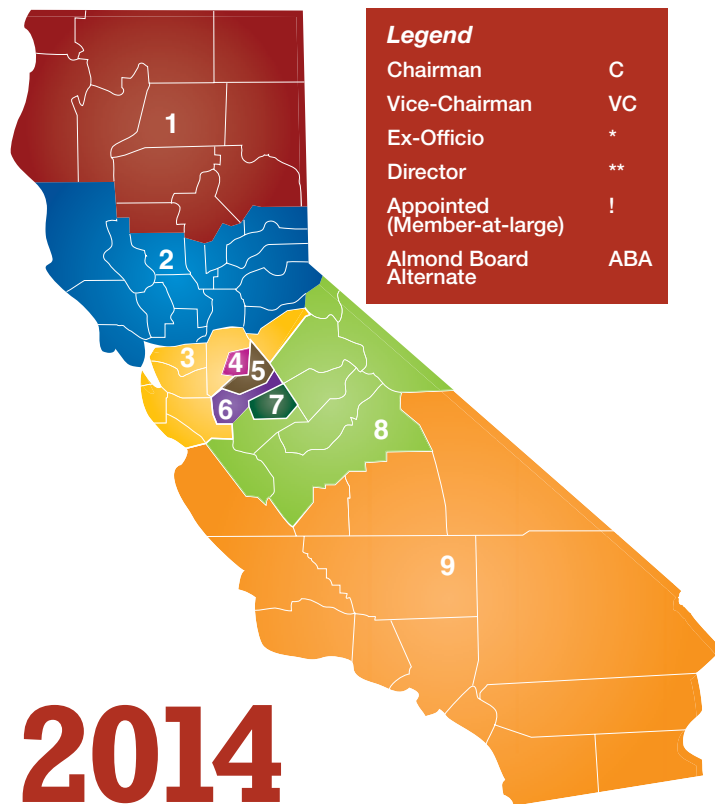
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Brum DeVisser	(209) 541-4737	C
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Joe Martins	(209) 595-1900	!
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Jake Verberg	(209) 595-3038	
Jerad Heinrich	(209) 599-3124	!
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Neil Van Duyn	(209) 545-1055	*

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Gerry Costa	(209) 484-4506	!
Greg Nunes	(209) 531-8873	VC
Gary Crowell	(209) 606-3094	
Jeff Cederlind	(209) 606-8586	
Jeff Abraham	(209) 883-0233	!
Jeff Lee	(209) 541-7763	
Aaron Piazza	(209) 678-0787	
Darrell Cordova	(209) 874-4042	
Rod Vilas	(209) 602-8537	!
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2014

Legend

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Vice-Chairman	VC
Ex-Officio	*
Director	**
Appointed (Member-at-large)	!
Almond Board Alternate	ABA

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Pete Bandoni	(209) 722-0123	!
Andrew Littlejohn	(209) 634-7157	
Douglas Hoyt	(209) 358-8882	
Greg Vierra	(209) 632-3670	VC
Scott Abraham	(209) 605-2671	!
Dan Clendenin	(209) 777-3292	
Don Harcksen	(209) 620-1955	
Michael Ohki	(209) 485-1844	
Dr. S.S. "Toki" Takhar	(209) 321-2290	!
Robert J. Weimer	(209) 394-2005	**
David L. Zollinger	(209) 632-4013	*

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David Tolmosoff	(559) 250-7005	
Riley Chaney	(559) 269-6001	
John Chandler	(559) 289-1152	C
Ken Basila	(559) 908-7632	!
G. Peter Fry	(559) 665-1980	
R.J. Maan	(559) 871-6048	
Kyle Rodrigues	(559) 970-4906	
Richard Markarian	(559) 269-9829	!
George Goshgarian	(559) 246-4918	**
Aldo Sansoni	(209) 826-4665	*

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Sean Shick	(805) 234-4608	!
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Jason Dhillon	(559) 783-3317	
Robert Larson	(949) 291-5868	
Vince Balakian	(559) 284-9192	!
Dominic Fino	(559) 591-3711	
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*Returns vary by handler. Check with your specific buyer for detail on pricing.



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Looking Toward the Future: Sales Manager's Son Sees Himself Working at *Blue Diamond*

Seven-year-old Lucas Firl, son of Global Ingredients Regional Sales Manager Ken Firl, was asked to draw himself old enough to work in an office and write a story about his job.

This is what he drew and the accompanying story:

"This is me when I am older in my office. I will be a *Blue Diamond* worker. I wanted to be a *Blue Diamond* worker because my dad works there and I liked his almonds.

I have an idea for a new almond called vanilla dream. My dad's boss might taste it and he might like it and sell it. This I trust he will like it. If he does not like it I will be sad.

Once I get in to *Blue Diamond* I will think of another kind of almond. I hope you will like my almond. It will be mixed with sweet strawberry and vanilla."

Looking Toward the Future is a special news feature highlighting future *Blue Diamond* members and employees enjoying the cooperative's products and/or exploring the almond growing lifestyle. If you have a photo of a future *Blue Diamond* community member that you would like to submit to Almond Facts, email it to cmontgomery@bdgrowers.com almond with a short caption.



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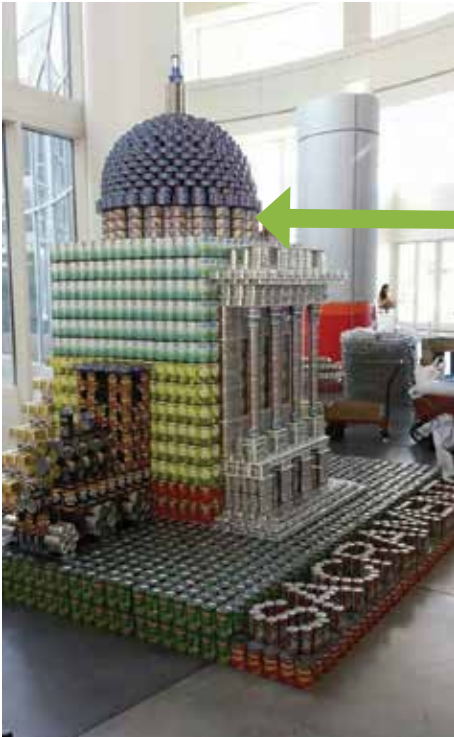
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Architectural Firm Constructs Winning Model Using *Blue Diamond* Cans

Information Services Help Center Analyst Mike Mendenhall saw an opportunity for *Blue Diamond* to participate in a unique canned food drive. His wife Caren's architecture firm, Stafford King Wise Architects (SKW), was preparing to enter a contest through the AUA Central Valley Chapter's "Canstruction" competition in an effort to fight hunger throughout the Sacramento region.

The challenge to participating architecture firms was to come up with a design that represents Sacramento architecture and build the entire structure using nothing but food cans. SKW's design, the Capitol Dome featuring *Blue Diamond* Roasted Salted Almonds, won the award for best construction design and was voted best display by the people's choice. After the competition, all the cans were donated to the Sacramento Food Bank for distribution to needy families.



▽ Caren with daughter Gracie



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Sales Representative Hired at Dave Wilson Nursery

Dave Wilson Nursery has added Tim Roos to its Hickman sales office as a Sales Representative. Roos previously work with Bonilla Nursery and has eight years of experience in the nursery industry. In his new role, he will be representing Dave Wilson's entire commercial product line to the eastern half of Stanislaus, Merced and northern Madera Counties.

The Roos family have been Blue Diamond members for years. Tim farms almonds with his father in Ripon and is a graduate of *Blue Diamond's* Young Leader program.

Who Knew Breeze Could Be Such a Great Costume?



A Canadian *Almond Breeze* fan showed her brand loyalty by making the product her Halloween costume and sharing a picture with the cooperative's Instagram account. User kimpeppers3 is a personal trainer and says she uses Almond Breeze Unsweetened daily and recommends it to all of her clients!

Dave Baker Receives 2014 Almond Achievement Award

The Almond Board of California honored retiring Member Services Director Dave Baker with its 2014 Almond Achievement Award at their annual Almond Industry Conference Gala. The Board noted several reasons for selecting Baker for the award, including Baker's more than 33 years serving on various Almond Board committees, his work guiding growers through vast issues facing the industry and representing the California almond industry so positively with the media.

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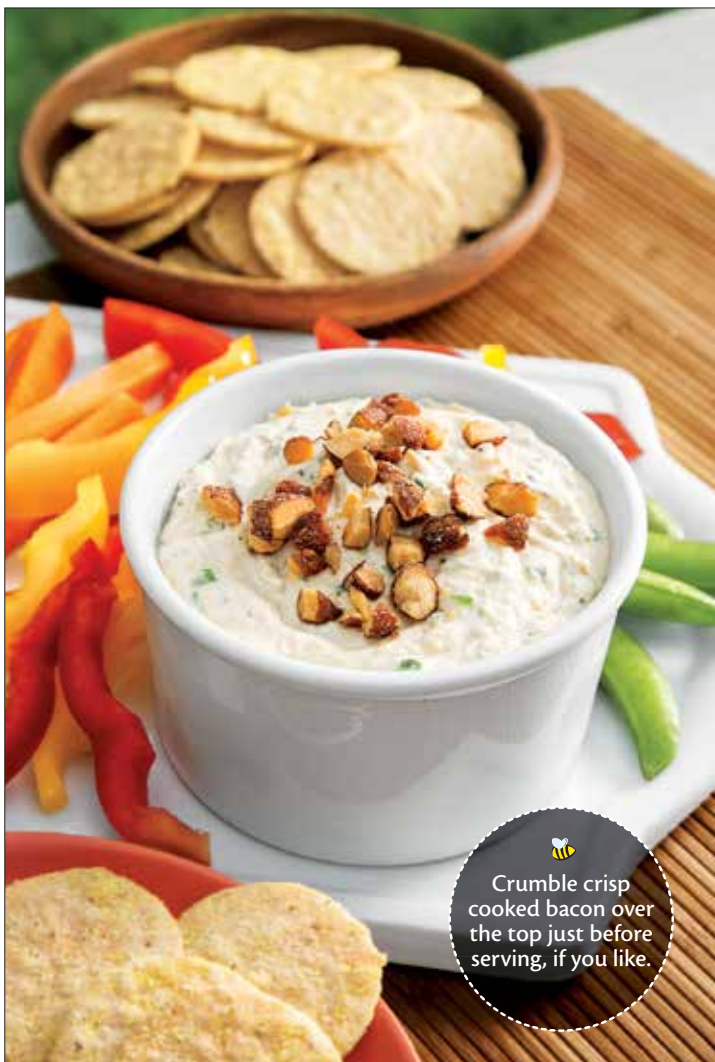
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Co-op Salutes Its Veterans

Blue Diamond honored the many Armed Service veterans employed at the cooperative with its sixth annual Veterans Day breakfast. Over 50 employees, with experience in all branches of service, enjoyed a hot breakfast and shared their experiences. In Sacramento, the day opened with reveille and the raising of the flag, followed by reflections from Naomi Wemhoff, former Army staff sergeant and buyer in *Blue Diamond's* purchasing department, on her time serving in the Army. Salida and Turlock veterans also enjoyed reflecting with one another.



Recipe of the Month:



 Crumble crisp cooked bacon over the top just before serving, if you like.

STEAKHOUSE CHEESE AND ALMOND SPREAD

Prep time: 10 minutes

- 1 (8 oz.) block 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup **Blue Diamond® Hint of Honey Almond Breeze®**
- 1 teaspoon steak seasoning blend
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 1/4 cup chopped **Blue Diamond Honey Roasted Chipotle Almonds**
- Blue Diamond Honey Mustard Nut Thins®**
- Fresh-cut vegetables

Puree cream cheese, Cheddar cheese, Almond Breeze, seasoning and garlic in a food processor.

Add green onions and pulse on and off until finely chopped.

Transfer to a small bowl and sprinkle with nuts.

Serve with Nut Thins and vegetables.

Spread may be prepared one day ahead and stored tightly covered in the refrigerator.



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- **Profitable** – The JackRunner reduces expensive labor and equipment time by travelling both directions to the harvester, from the harvester, and to the elevator.



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Almond Breeze Added to Dunkin' Donuts Menu

Blue Diamond's Almond Breeze has joined the Dunkin' Donuts' menu as a non-dairy alternative for "America's favorite coffee." Through the new partnership, about 75 percent of Dunkin' Donuts restaurants nationwide now offer sweetened vanilla-flavored Almond Breeze as an option in hot or iced coffee and lattes.

"Dunkin' Donuts is a leader in the coffee category and recognized for offering a variety of coffee choices to keep busy, on-the-go people running any time of day," said John O'Shaughnessy, General Manager of North American Retail at *Blue Diamond Growers*. "We are thrilled they have turned to *Blue Diamond* to bring the delicious taste of *Almond Breeze Almondmilk* to millions of people who make Dunkin' Donuts coffee part of their day."

Almond milk has become the country's most popular non-dairy alternative. *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze Almondmilk* offers varieties that are calcium rich and a good source of vitamin D, E and A for customers. Whether they are looking for an alternate to dairy or simply prefer the rich and creamy texture and delicious taste that *Almond Breeze* offers, now Dunkin' Donuts guests can enjoy more options when it comes to their beverages.

"Over the past couple of years, based on an increasing number of customer requests, we began to explore options for expanding our menu with a non-dairy alternative to milk and cream," said John Costello, president, global marketing and innovation for Dunkin' Brands. "We believe adding *Almond Breeze* almond milk now gives our guests a unique and delicious new way to enjoy our famous coffee or lattes."

The coffee retailer announced the addition of *Almond Breeze* on its website and throughout social media outlets. Positive support poured in from fans of both companies.

"Your morning coffee is about to get that much better – especially for all you lactose intolerant drinkers who prefer almond milk over soy milk," wrote *Self Magazine*. *Glamour Magazine* echoed that sentiment, writing "If you're a dairy-free coffee kind of person, you know it's not always easy to find milk-less lattes. But guess what? Your caffeine horizon has just expanded, because Dunkin' Donuts coffee has just introduced *Vanilla Almond Breeze Almondmilk* to its menu."

The two companies celebrated the partnership with an "AlmonDD Milk Adventures" Twitter Sweepstakes, presenting followers of @DunkinDonuts and @AlmondBreeze with almond-milk-themed challenges such as word scrambles. Participants who responded with the hashtag #AlmonDDmilk were entered for a chance to win one \$100 Dunkin' Donuts mobile gift card and a \$500 grand prize.





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“Dig Deeper!”

GID Team Member Trains for Triathlons with Paralympic Cyclist

When Angie Raimondi moved to California, she had a different career path in mind. The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania native graduated from Penn State with a degree in agricultural and biological engineering and a focus in food process engineering. After graduation she was recruited for a leadership development program at the Campbell’s Soup Company and found herself bound for Sacramento. After six short months, Campbell’s announced their intention to close their Sacramento Plant, leaving Raimondi with a choice. She could continue her leadership program at the company’s Seattle location or find a new job in Sacramento. It was then that she found *Blue Diamond*.

“I had already started loving the Sacramento area,” she said. “I saw in the paper that *Blue Diamond* was hiring for a brand new facility in Turlock so I applied for a team leader position. Upon interviewing, I learned that the Sacramento plant was also hiring for the same role and I was fortunate enough to have been offered a job here. Deciding to work for *Blue Diamond* has been one of the greatest decisions thus far in my life.”

She began her *Blue Diamond* career as a swing shift supervisor for MPL and then transitioned to retail packaging manager, responsible for both day and swing shift. “I really learned the foundation of *Blue Diamond*’s operations – examining grower’s almonds, sizing and grading them in order to further create premium retail and industrial products,” she said. Through involvement in *Blue Diamond*’s New Products Committee, she learned of a new role opening in the Global Ingredients Division – Product Marketing Manager. She assumed the role four months ago and has enjoyed the transition.

In her free time, however, Raimondi has taken up a unique hobby – triathlons. “I was a swimmer my entire life and ran pretty regularly, but really knew nothing about triathlons. In my first few weeks at *Blue Diamond*, I learned that we have a strong partnership with Sacramento Fleet Feet and through the partnership, had the ability to participate in their group training programs. I decided to go for it,” she explained.

On the first day of training, she remembers seeing a “tiny woman with a funny walk talking to the group.

At that point, I didn’t know that the woman was our coach, let alone was the most winning female XTERRA triathlete in history, a cancer survivor, and would become an ESPY winner, multiple World Champion and World Record holder in para-cycling, and a member of the 2016 Olympic para-cycling team,” Raimondi recalled.



⤴ Coach Jamie Whitmore, member of the 2016 USA para-cycling team.

Her coach was Jamie Whitmore, whose story is as incredible as it is inspirational. After racing for eight years as a professional triathlete and mountain biker, Whitmore faced her toughest battle yet – cancer. Surgeries to remove the tumor growing out of her sciatic nerve left her without

her left glute muscle, hamstring and without feeling below her left knee. Doctors told her she would never compete as a professional athlete again. Coaching others is what kept her going and looking toward the future.

“When the athletes I was coaching found out I was never going to run again, that served as a motivator for them. I don’t let any one have excuses so that helped them to dig deeper and push a little harder,” she said.

Whitmore was determined to not let the cancer keep her from the activities she loved. Even with a cane in hand, she could be found at the gym on the elliptical trainer or a rowing machine, doing what she could to regain her strength and retrain her body to adjust to its new reality.

Shortly before her third surgery, she became pregnant with twin boys. The next two years, she recalled, were a whirlwind of changing, feeding and bathing her sons. Around the boys’ first birthday, she was introduced to a unique new leg brace that would allow her to be active again. “The brace worked and it allowed me to get back on a bike for the first time in three years. That first ride, my husband and I set out for just a short ride around the neighborhood, and I ended up riding for an hour. It was ultimate freedom!” said Whitmore.

It was around this same time that Jamie began coaching with Fleet Feet. She recalls the unique experience of learning to ride her bike again as she was coaching the athletes in the program to do their first triathlon. In fact, she did complete that first triathlon



⤴ Whitmore with her twin sons.



⤴ Raimondi prepares to transition to the bike portion of her race.



⤴ Raimondi nears the finish line.



with the group, walking the run portion of the race. “One of the things I teach all my athletes is to never say you can’t and don’t come with excuses, and I always try to lead by example,” Whitmore said.

According to Raimondi, learning Whitmore’s story has been the ultimate source of motivation. “She has been through so much and is still incredibly positive in everything she does. There is literally no quit in her,” she said. “Because of all that she has been through and what she has accomplished despite it, we literally have no excuses to give less than 100 percent at every practice. She pushes us to be the best athletes and people we can be.”

Since completing her first Fleet Feet triathlon training program, Raimondi has gone on to complete 10 triathlons in the last two years – one Sprint distance (.47 mile swim, 12-mile bike and 3.1 mile run), one XTERRA (.31 mile swim, 9.3 mile mountain bike and 3.1 mile trail run), six Olympic distance (.93 mile swim, 25 mile bike and 6.2 mile run), one relay and one Half Ironman 70.3 (1.2 mile swim, 56 mile bike and 13.1 mile run). She also just completed her first Century (100 mile) bike ride in October. Her next race is another 70.3 distance at the Napa Triathlon in April. She hopes to complete a full Ironman in 2016.

“There have been times in races that I doubted whether or not I could make it through the finish line - whether it be aches and pains, flat tires, bike crashes or just low mental toughness. When those feelings of doubt creep into my mind, I almost always hear Jamie’s voice – ‘Dig deeper!’ It turns my whole race around,” Raimondi said. “Jamie has never quit, so I never will either. It has not just been a lesson in the sport of triathlon, but in life.”

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New Barista Blend Almond Breeze Hits Australia

The growing demand for a great tasting alternative to dairy has crossed over into lattes and cappuccinos. *Almond Breeze* Australia is leaping headfirst into coffee shops with its new *Barista Blend* formula, created with the support of leading baristas to blend easily with the world's finest coffees.

Blue Diamond Almond Breeze is the market leader in Australia and around the world. Backed by a retail almond milk category that is growing at over 90 percent, this foodservice extension into coffee shops made good business sense, said Roger Ringwood, country director for *Blue Diamond Growers*.

The new product has made such a splash that it was awarded "Best New Food Service Product" at the leading industry trade show Fine Foods Australia, held



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POOR FERTILISATION

POOR FRUIT SET

LOW YIELD

HIGH AUXIN LEVEL

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BETTER FRUIT SET

BETTER FERTILISATION

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MORE AUXINS

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Boron deficiency in almond floral parts will cause the breakdown of the Auxins present. Correcting this deficiency by applying Boron will inhibit Auxin depleting IAA oxidase, thereby improving fruit set and ultimately almond crop yield.

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in Melbourne, Australia in September. The awards from the tradeshow recognize new and innovative products from around Australia and 45 countries internationally. The “Best New Food Service Product” award attracted more

than 70 entries and acknowledged the outstanding development and relevance *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* brings to the food service sector.

“Winning this accolade is a huge achievement,” Ringwood said. “It’s testament to the tremendous team effort between *Blue Diamond* and our exclusive Australian licensee partner, Freedom Foods, and is a reflection of time we spent perfecting *Almond Breeze Barista Blend*.”

“More and more consumers are switching to almond milk as their preferred choice for lattes and cappuccinos for its great taste and health properties. Therefore *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* provides additional revenue opportunities for the food service sector.”

As Australia’s first almond milk specifically formulated for baristas with the support of Australian baristas, the product performs just like milk, complements fine coffee and provides consistency when frothing—key to visual appeal. *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* serves a large market and is a great tasting, low-fat alternative. With no added cane sugar and only 60 calories per serving, a coffee made with *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* contains 30 percent fewer calories than a skim milk or regular soy coffee – ideal for the increasing number of consumers looking to lead a healthier lifestyle.

To spread the word about the cooperative’s exciting new product line, the Australian team launched an integrated public relations and marketing campaign. They targeted café owners and baristas through the support of industry events, including the “Latte Art Smackdown,” a professional competition where Australia’s best professional latte artists race against the clock to reproduce

selected latte art patterns and present their most visually appealing coffee for judgment.

So far, the product has received much press attention throughout Australia and is seeing positive feedback from consumers on social media. “Absolutely loving this,” said one Australian *Almond Breeze* Facebook fan. “My local cafe uses *Barista Blend* and it’s seriously amazing,” said an Instagram follower, “I can’t wait to be pushing this at all my cafes.”

“We feel it is vital to be able to provide customers with options,” Ringwood said. “We look forward to seeing *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* on café menus throughout the country in the future.”

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"Thank you for the Insights"



Young Leader class gains new perspectives on *Blue Diamond*

The 17th class of *Blue Diamond's* leadership program had high praise for the opportunity to see the inner workings of their cooperative and meet the leadership of the almond industry's leading processor and marketer.

Gathering in Sacramento the evening before *Blue Diamond's* annual member meeting, some two-dozen young farmers and three bankers who participated in the program spoke of being impressed by the technology, innovation and care given their farm product in the process from farm to market. Several noted that they appreciate *Blue Diamond's* advocacy for almond growers in the halls of Congress, in the industry and before regulatory agencies.

Their comments came in response to board member and co-chair of the Leadership Program Stephen Van Duyn's invitation to tell the gathering what they valued most from the experience.

After their remarks, Van Duyn said, "I am very impressed by your comments tonight, your perspective, insights and understanding of what it takes to do what *Blue Diamond* does for its members. Everyone in this room is a participant on this team, and this team is headed to the Super Bowl!"

Board Chairman Clinton Shick told the Young Leaders, "By participating in this program, you have taken the first step in demonstrating an interest in exploring the idea of becoming a future leader in your cooperative. I hope you will stay engaged."

Success in Japan

Mark Jansen, president and CEO, introduced *Blue Diamond's* marketing director for Japan, Takao Watanabe, who described the introduction of *Almond Breeze* to the Japanese market. He was joined at the podium by the president of Marusan-Ai, Akinori Ito. Marusan is a leading soy products corporation in Japan that accepted the challenge of creating a new product category there, a very challenging but successful effort, as Ito explained. Over one thousand new products or brands enter the market every week in Japan, Watanabe said, but very few survive. *Almond Breeze*, however, not only survived but also excelled, selling over 11 million single-serve cartons the first year in a

nation of only 120 million people.

New flavors have been added for a total of five to date, and a one-liter carton in three flavors will soon be introduced to tap into the home market. *Almond Breeze*, Watanabe said, benefits from California's favorable image in Japan for growing and marketing healthy foods. A new advertising campaign builds on that image, titled "Healthy Breakfast from California." It promotes the single-serve carton as a key element in the morning menu.

President Ito pledged aggressive marketing, new product introductions and creative advertising to build on the first year's success in close partnership with *Blue Diamond*. Watanabe introduced Marusan sales division director Ryoji Kuraahashi and *Almond Breeze* division director Akio Fuji, who led the gathering in a team cheer for success.

The Class of 2015 convenes in Sacramento in January for the first session of the three-part program.

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CONTRIBUTING TO FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND AIDS FUTURE OF ALMOND INDUSTRY

Several years ago the *Blue Diamond* Board of Directors established the *Blue Diamond Growers Foundation* Scholarship. During the course of that time the foundation has annually awarded scholarships to many qualified students that have demonstrated both academic excellence and community involvement. The students are selected from within the almond growing region of California and have indicated that they are preparing for careers that will be associated with areas such as production agriculture, food processing and research. The scholarship is open to *Blue Diamond* grower-members and employees' families, as well as the general public.

"It is a pleasure to participate annually in the selection of the scholarship recipients but also difficult because we get many more qualified applicants than we can award scholarships," said Bob Weimer, Director from District 7.

Blue Diamond is a front-runner in support of all aspects of the California almond industry. The sponsoring of

things such as its Young Leader Program and scholarships are ways of demonstrating commitment to the future of the almond industry.

"Scholarships are a long-term investment," Weimer said. "We commit to put money out with anticipation that some day we will reap rewards no different than when we plant a new orchard. We cannot directly evaluate the success of scholarships as we can with pounds of almonds per acre, but we do know that many of these students return with new knowledge and become productive citizens."

Scholarships take money and although the Foundation is connected to *Blue Diamond*, it is responsible for its own funding.

"As I reflect on the last few years of almond returns and I look at my impending obligation to the IRS for 2014, I am putting a check in the mail to the *Blue Diamond* Growers Foundation and letting the government help pay for this tax deductible donation," said Weimer.

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Applications Welcome

The *Blue Diamond* Growers Foundation, a scholarship fund established in 2010, is now accepting applications for the 2015 - 2016 school year.



The scholarship is open to students living in the almond producing regions of California who plan to pursue a four-year degree in plant sciences, agricultural engineering, agricultural economics or subjects with relevance to almond production.

Completed applications must be received by March 31 in order to be eligible for consideration.

Applications can be downloaded from *Blue Diamond's* Grower website at: www.bluediamondgrowers.com



**POLLINATOR
PARTNERSHIP**



U.S. BEE BUFFER PROJECT: A Honey Bee Habitat Enhancement Opportunity!

The Pollinator Partnership (P2) is looking to partner with California and North Carolina farmers, ranchers, foresters, and land managers and owners to participate in a honey bee forage habitat enhancement effort called the U.S. Bee Buffer Project. The U.S. Bee Buffer Project has a goal of influencing 6,000 acres positively for honey bee habitat. A honey bee seed mix will be provided at no cost to plant Bee Buffers. The U.S. Bee Buffer Project will create foraging habitat of pollen and nectar sources, essential to honey bee health.

PURPOSE:

Beekeepers struggle to find foraging areas to feed their bees when they are not in a pollination contract. Lack of foraging habitat puts stress on the bees and cropping systems honey bees pollinate. The U.S. Bee Buffer Project will develop a network of honey bee forage habitats in agricultural areas to support honey bee health and our own food systems. We are looking for cooperators with land they are willing to set aside as Bee Buffers.

- Honey bees provide pollination services for 90 crops nationwide.
- Honey bees contribute approximately \$15 billion to the US economy annually.
- A leading cause for over winter mortality of honey bee colonies given by beekeepers surveyed is starvation. The nationwide winter loss for 2012/2013 was 31.3%.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Active farm, ranch, forest, easement, set-aside, landscape
- Ability to plant 0.25 to 3 acres with the U.S. Bee Buffer seed mix
- Commitment to keep the Bee Buffer in place
- Allow beekeepers and researchers on-site

BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS:

- Free seeds and planting information
- Supplemental pollination of flowering plants
- Leadership participation in the beginnings of a nation-wide effort to support honey bees
- Potential for enriched soil, reduction in invasive plant species, enhanced wildlife habitat

If you are interested in participating in this nation-wide effort and hosting a Bee Buffer, please visit <http://www.pollinator.org/beebufferapplication.htm>. Contact Mary Byrne at the Pollinator Partnership at 415-362-1137 or mb@pollinator.org with any questions about the U.S. Bee Buffer Project.



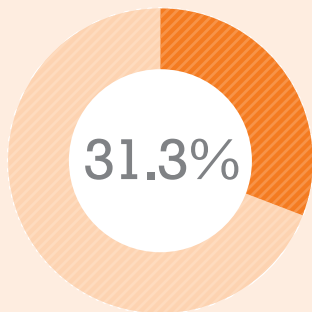
P2 is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization – the largest organization in the world dedicated exclusively to the protection and promotion of pollinators and their ecosystems. Birds, bats, bees, butterflies, beetles, and other small mammals that pollinate plants are responsible for bringing us one out of every three bites of food. Unfortunately they are in trouble. Some species have seen a 90% decline in their populations over the last decade. P2 specializes in research and landscape evaluation, pollinator habitat support and development, conservation plans, and outreach to stakeholders. P2 uses collaborative approaches and partnerships to develop lasting solutions for pollinator conservation across the world.

Readership Survey Yields Valuable Input from Membership

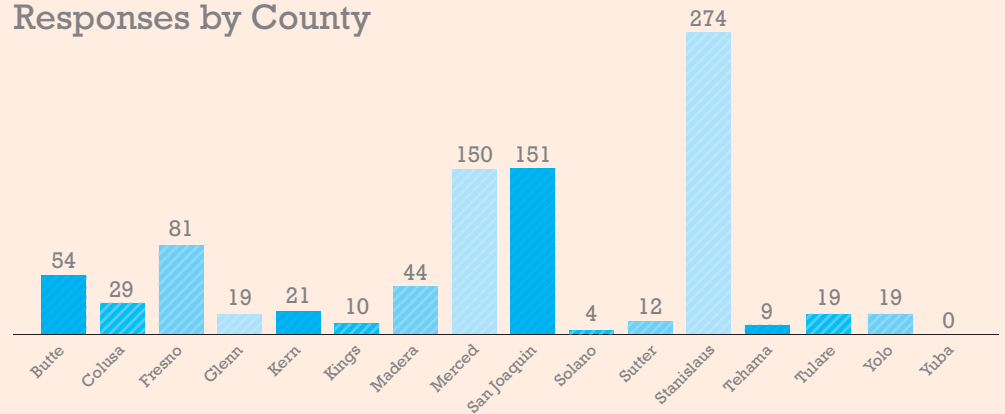
This year, a random sample of *Almond Facts* readers received a survey in the mail asking for their input on various aspects of *Blue Diamond's* communications efforts. The goal of this survey was to make sure that the content we publish is as relevant to our readers as possible. *Blue Diamond* greatly values your input. Thank you to all who participated.

We will be taking your comments and requests into consideration as we plan for the coming year. As always, you are welcome to email our editor, Cassandra Montgomery, at cmontgomery@bdgrowers.com with your feedback.

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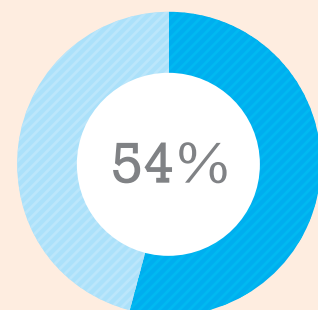
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Agricultural Council of California

EMILY ROONEY, President

Looking forward to 2015 Expectations in the Upcoming Legislation Session

With the November election behind us, it is important that we remain closely engaged with our elected officials in the months before the California State Legislature reconvenes to help frame the issues being prepared for the legislative docket in 2015.

Governor Jerry Brown has outlined his policy priorities for his remaining term in office. When asked about it, he reportedly said to a group recently, "...Fasten your seat-belt. It will be a very exciting ride."

Of interest to agriculture, Governor Brown continues to say that maintaining a balanced state budget will consume much of his attention, and he is mostly cautious about new spending (with the exception of high speed rail and the delta tunnels). Management of the drought has been — and will continue to be — a priority. He also touts California's climate change regulation.

The governor is patient when it comes to policy issues and typically does not enter into a debate until he believes the timing is right for him — often times after much progress has been made in discussions. This strategy often frustrates legislators and others who want him to become involved in policy issues sooner. We saw this philosophy play out during the water bond and discussions surrounding groundwater. Without an election in front of him, it will be interesting to see how he sets his agenda and carries it out between now and 2018 when his term expires.

In the Legislature, newly elected legislators are currently in orientation meetings and are officially sworn-into office in December. Many legislators will submit bills for consideration in early December, although the formal hearing process to consider those measures takes place early next year.

With over a thousand bills introduced in any legislative session, it can be difficult to prioritize issues impacting agriculture. Legislative issues we are engaged in, or watching, at this time include fumigants, use of antibiotics in farm animals, and groundwater. Certainly, these issue areas will change and evolve throughout the year.

Crop Protection Tools

Crop protection tools are on Ag Council's radar as a policy issue given that the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) recently released a story on fumigants. CIR is very critical of the use of fumigants, as expected. Though CIR focuses on strawberries in its story, certainly fumigants are a vital crop protection tool for many of Ag Council's members and those in the greater agricultural community.

Given that the CIR story harshly criticizes the use of fumigants, we anticipate the report may prompt efforts to further regulate, or possibly ban, fumigants and pesticides in California. Ag Council is working to convey a strong message to legislators regarding the strict regulations already in place, why crop protection tools are critical to agriculture and how farmers work to safely use fumigants.

Antibiotics in Farm Animals

Efforts are underway in the California State Legislature to determine how the state will further regulate the use of antibiotics in farm animals. Governor Jerry Brown recently vetoed a bill on this issue, which he believes did not go far enough, stating, "More needs to be done to understand and reduce our reliance on antibiotics."

This movement is taking place out of concern over the belief--by some — that the use of antibiotics in farm animals contributes to antibiotic resistance in humans. At least one formal bill will be submitted to the legislature in December to address this issue. Ag Council is concerned about this matter and is engaged in conversations in the Capitol on behalf of our dairy and other members.

Groundwater

Work is also underway at the state level to possibly address some of the concerns resulting from the recent passage of the groundwater regulation. Areas being reviewed include: the streamlining of adjudications, protecting the privacy of those required to report to a government agency and ensuring groundwater recharge is designated as a beneficial use of water, among other policy areas. Ag Council will provide further information to our members as these discussions move forward.

On the regulatory front, action continues on many levels at CalEPA. Specifically, at the State Water Resources Control Board work is underway regarding fees and implementing recommendations from an expert panel in an effort to reduce Nitrates in groundwater. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) is also working on reform to Prop. 65, a voter-passed initiative to warn for chemicals that can cause cancer or reproductive harm. This reform effort will continue through 2015. Additionally, the California Air Resources Board will be including transportation fuels in the cap and trade program starting January 1, which is expected to increase fuel costs on all consumers.

As the issues impacting our industry get more complicated, Ag Council has to think creatively to reduce the regulatory burden on our membership. As part of this effort, we are constantly trying to build bridges to officials influencing those decisions in an effort to find common ground. This is not easy in a fast-paced, highly controversial business. But with more moderates getting elected to the Legislature – with longer term limits – we can build more meaningful relationships to better educate those making the decisions.

To keep up-to-date on Ag Council's activities, please visit our website at www.agcouncil.org

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The Bee Box

CHRISTI HEINTZ
& MEG RIBOTTO



In the last issue of *Almond Facts*, we discussed how Project Apis m. (PAm) funds honey bee research proposals. This issue, we are going to discuss what bee research proposals both *Blue Diamond* and PAm have agreed to fund with *Blue Diamond's* “BeeCause We Care” honey product line bee research commitment. *Blue Diamond Growers* and PAm have approved three research proposals that will provide practical solutions for almond growers and for managed honey bee colonies.

The goal of these studies is to harvest results that can be efficiently transferred into field practice. PAm is proud to support and collaborate with *Blue Diamond Growers*. To date, PAm has infused nearly \$3M into research that enhances the health of the honey bee while improving crop production. PAm plans to deliver technology that gives almond growers another tool in the tool box to ensure that you have a healthy and sustainable supply of honey bees for almond pollination.

Working on Tomorrow's Technology Today

How will these research studies help you? While we think nothing should replace the beekeeper and grower walking the orchard together as part of best management practices, Infra-Red (IR) technology has the potential to grade and calculate colony strength, saving you both time and money. And it's not only the number of frames needed for pollination; you need healthy and vigorous bees on those frames. Two studies involve evaluating viruses as these have a big impact on overall honey bee health. Viruses that can easily and quickly be detected could possibly be mitigated or isolated by your beekeeper to maintain the integrity of the colony. Taking results from the research lab to your almond orchard is the goal. The following researchers and proposals have been awarded *Blue Diamond* - PAm funding.

Infra-Red (IR) Technology to Assess Honey Bee Colony Strength

Robert Seccomb and Dr. Jerry Bromenshenk, Bee Alert Technology, Inc. will determine the efficacy of using Infra-Red (IR) technology to assess honey bee colony strength. The scientists cited visual grading of colony strength as a major contribution to the cost of bringing honey bee colonies in for almond pollination. IR imaging offers the possibility of reducing the labor needed to grade a considerable number of colonies since a single person can rapidly assess a large number of hives. Imaging with IR can be used to detect colonies that are weak or borderline, and those colonies can be isolated and visually inspected. The number of visual inspections could be reduced while the number of total colonies given a strength assessment could increase. The research results may lead to an affordable and easy-to-use means to reduce the time and cost of grading honey bee colonies rented for almond pollination.

Diagnostic Tools to Understand the Role of Viruses on Honey Bee Health

Dr. Michelle Flenniken, Montana State University, Bozeman, will develop diagnostic tools for the Lake Sinai

THE BEE BOX



« Dave Wick, BVS, Inc.'s Virus Detection System will be compared against molecular approaches to virus detection.



« Dr. Michelle Flenniken, Montana State University, Bozeman, is developing field tests for honey bee pathogens.



« IR technology could reduce the labor required for hive inspections.

viruses. Beekeepers and almond growers are concerned about the role of pathogens in declining bee health, and these pathogens do include the recently discovered and very abundant family of Lake Sinai viruses. The goal of the research will be to develop both molecular (virus genome detecting) and antibody-based protein-level (virus capsid detecting) diagnostic tests. Molecular tests are required for quantitative analysis of specific virus strains, generally in a laboratory setting. Antibody-based tests are better suited for quick field-based virus testing and detection. The development of antibody-based tests for honey-bee-infecting pathogens will reduce the amount of time required for diagnoses. This research will assist in the development of new diagnostic tools that are required to better understand the role of this recently discovered group of viruses on honey bee health.

Mechanical Devices vs. Molecular Approach for Virus Detection in Honey Bees

Dr. Brian Johnson, University of California, Davis, will compare diagnostic instrument-based vs. molecular-based methods of virus detection. Diagnostic instruments have been designed to detect and identify viruses in the field. The strength of this method is the speed of diagnoses; however, the weakness

is that it may not be as accurate in identifying particular viral species as traditional molecular techniques. There are beneficial processing time and financial reasons for beekeepers and bee researchers to utilize the mechanical approach, if it can be determined that the diagnostic instruments are accurate. To date, there have been no studies to determine how accurate mechanical devices are, given that many different viruses are similar in size and other attributes measured by the device. This research study will correlate the mechanical device, the Integrated Virus Detections System (IVDS), to the molecular approach and will determine in what context it is appropriate to use one approach or the other.

There were numerous proposals submitted to Project Apis m., and evaluating and narrowing down the final projects by the PAm team of scientific advisors was challenging but focused on practical and relevant solutions for almond growers. PAm and the scientific community are committed to decreasing colony losses. Further research needs to be done. PAm is presently seeking additional funding to augment the *Blue Diamond* donation – all to ensure that almond growers have a sustainable supply of honey bees for almond pollination.

To learn more about honey bee research and Project Apis m., visit our 'Research tab' at www.ProjectApism.org



Time To Consider

DAVID DOLL

Winter is here: Doesn't the year go fast? The days are shorter, the nights are cooler, and the trees are shutting down. This probably means that there is less to do around the orchard, right? Nope! There are plenty of tasks that must be planned and completed now in order to maximize the return on our orchard operations next year. Below are a few considerations for your operation.

Winter Sanitation for Navel Orangeworm (NOW) Control

The most effective way to reduce over-wintering NOW populations is sanitation. By removing the 'mummy' nuts from the tree and destroying them before mid-March (when moths begin to emerge), NOW damage at harvest can be reduced. These nuts serve as the overwintering point for the pupae and developing larvae, and are the in-season food source for adults and second flight larvae.

The recommended industry practice is to reduce the average mummy nut count to less than two per tree. This recommendation was developed by performing research and reviewing the data collected from plots throughout the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valley. The research showed that for every mummy nut left in the tree, 1 percent damage from NOW should be expected. In other words, five mummies per tree equals 5 percent NOW damage. Therefore, in order to meet the industry standard of 2 percent NOW damage levels, there should be two or fewer mummies per tree.

Recent research, however, conducted by Brad Higbee (Paramount Farms) and Joel Siegel (USDA-ARS) has shown that a greater reduction of mummy nuts is needed in areas with higher NOW pressure. In Kern County, they have found that the standard for sanitation has to be less than 0.7 mummy nuts per tree in order to keep NOW damage below the industry standard of 2 percent.

They also found that the quantity of mummies on the ground influences NOW damage: having more than 8.9 ground mummies per tree increased NOW damage above the 2 percent industry standard. These results were drawn from research conducted over a 5-year period reviewing data from plots established on 50 orchards.

By reviewing this data, does that mean everyone across the state needs to sanitize to less than 0.7 mummy nuts per tree? The short answer is "it depends." Insect pressure will vary by location due to more degree-days and lower rainfall that is generally characteristic of the southern San Joaquin Valley and some microclimates in the Sacramento Valley.

Regardless of location, all of the research indicates that the fewer mummies within the orchard (both tree and ground), the less NOW damage to expect at harvest. Therefore, higher

standards of tree and ground sanitation are recommended for orchards in high pressure, higher heat unit/degree day areas. Growers in cooler, low pressure areas should still reduce average mummy nut counts to two or fewer per tree and destroy any mummies that are on the ground.

Pruning: Should I throw away the shears?

Pruning of mature and young trees often occurs during the winter months. Research has shown that reduced pruning on younger trees can lead to larger, earlier yields. This is mostly due to increase canopy that is able to produce crop. Nevertheless, some structuring of first and second leaf trees may be needed to address tight branch angles and close proximity of scaffolds, which leads to included wood and weak branches. These branches will split when the crop load begins to increase, typically around year four or five.

Prune only when rain is not in the forecast to avoid wound infections by pathogenic fungi that disperse spores during rain events. Wounds can be susceptible up to two weeks after pruning, with larger wounds taking the longest to heal. Even with this healing time, pruning paints are not recommended as they can slow the healing process. Pruning as late as leaf out will have no impact on tree growth.

Mature tree pruning may also be needed. Many are aware of the multiple research trials that have shown no yield benefit from pruning mature trees. There are, however, other reasons to prune mature trees, including: easier access, worker safety, increasing the amount of light to the orchard floor to assist with drying, and to remove broken, dead and diseased limbs. Another reason that is often not discussed is to reduce pest and disease pressure. UCCE research out of the Sacramento Valley has shown a 6 percent decrease in NOW infestation in the upper canopy in pruned trees due to better insecticide spray distribution in the upper canopy.

Soil Sampling for Salinity Monitoring

Since we are in our third year of drought, soil sampling is recommended to determine the levels of toxic salts that may have accumulated over the past few years. When sampling soil for salinity management, varying depths of soil must be collected to determine where the salts have accumulated.



We recommend sampling in 12-18 inch increments down to five feet. If you're dealing with soil infiltration issues, also sample the top six inches to determine if there is a soil imbalance in the ratio of calcium, magnesium and sodium.

Almond trees are relatively sensitive to sodium, chloride and boron. Yields are impacted when average root system salinity increases above 1.5 dS/m, with research indicating a 19 percent decrease in potential yield with every 1.0 dS/m increase. This yield reduction is due to the osmotic effects of the salts, which basically makes the tree "work harder" for water, reducing growth and vigor. If excess salts continue to accumulate within the rooting zone, trees will ultimately take up the salts and cause tissue toxicity. The salts of primary concern are sodium, chloride and boron. A leaching program should be implemented when sodium, chloride and boron exceed an exchange saturation percentage of 5 percent, 5 meq/l, and 0.5 mg/l, respectively.

Leaching is typically done with either an application of a leaching fraction in-season or applications of water during dormancy, when evapotranspiration rates are low. If planning to leach during the dormant period, it is important to begin this process early in the dormant period prior to root expansion (mid-January).

Enough water must be applied to fill the soil profile. Once the profile is full, smaller quantities of water applied either through rain or more frequent irrigation is the best way to move salts below the root-zone. Ideally, it is best to refill the profile early with irrigation water, as subsequent rainfall will aid the leaching process. Be careful not to saturate the soil for prolonged periods because this may increase the risk of root diseases.

Continued on next page »

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Calcium amendments are also a benefit when trying to leach sodium and boron. Calcium competes for the exchange sites within the soil. This keeps sodium and boron in the soil water, allowing it to be leached. Calcium is sourced through a variety of products, but the cheapest and most effective for leaching programs are either lime or gypsum. Lime should only be used when pH is below 7, while gypsum can be used at any pH. If the soil is alkaline (high pH) and has high amounts of calcium, acidifying the soil will free up calcium. A soil analysis is necessary to determine the appropriate amount of calcium or acid to apply. Contact your local UCCE farm advisor or agronomist for a recommended amendment rate and application procedure for your soil type.

The final thought

The water shortages encountered around the state this past year may continue into next year, regardless of the amount of rain received. Taking a few extra steps now to reduce salinity within soils will help maintain higher production if another season of well water will have to be used.

I wish you and your families a very happy holiday season.



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