



# almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2023

United States Trade Representative  
Katherine Tai Visits *Blue Diamond*,  
Sacramento

*Blue Diamond Growers*  
and Multicultural  
Marketing Strategy

*LandFlex*: Redefining  
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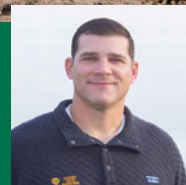
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ON THE COVER:  
*Harvest is in full swing for Blue Diamond’s members.*



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Blue Diamond, the world's largest processor and marketer of almonds, exports to over 100 countries.

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# PRESIDENT'S CORNER



**Kai Bockmann**  
President & CEO



As we officially enter fall, I think we can all agree that farmers and growers throughout California deserve all the comfort and compassion that the season traditionally affords.

It's no surprise that the key word used across the ag community to describe this crop year is "historic," and not in a positive way. For the almond industry in particular, the year started with weather hurdles during bloom and consistently delivered a number of subsequent challenges throughout the season. It's honestly astounding how many headwinds the agriculture industry, and especially our *Blue Diamond* grower-owners, have faced this year.

All eyes have certainly been on this year's harvest to see how the crop actually came through the proverbial storm of a growing season. Not surprisingly, inconsistency seems to be the only constant according to the experiences you have shared with our field team, and with me personally.

One thing that has significantly impressed me is how delicate a dance it is to successfully grow crops given the uncertainty of weather conditions this year.

Variety	Overall Average	Average of High Quality	Maximum Possible
Nonpareil & Sonora Inshell	\$1.82	\$1.84	\$1.87
Nonpareil /Supareil Meats	\$1.65	\$1.68	\$1.74
Sonora Meats	\$1.55	\$1.59	\$1.63
Independence Inshell	\$1.53	\$1.55	\$1.58
Independence Meats	\$1.38	\$1.42	\$1.44
Carmel & Winters	\$1.39	\$1.41	\$1.44
Monterey /Neplus	\$1.38	\$1.40	\$1.44
California /Price /Fritz /Wood Colony	\$1.39	\$1.42	\$1.44
Butte & Padre	\$1.40	\$1.41	\$1.44
Mission	\$1.35	\$1.36	\$1.39

*Note: The above rates do not include Volume Premiums, Sustainability Incentives, Domestic Production Activities Deduction (DPAD) or IC-DISC advantages.*

It wasn't just the low temperatures, rain and wind faced during bloom. Who could predict that Central California would be impacted by a hurricane? On top of everything else, the moisture from that historic hurricane in August caused cosmetic staining on almonds intended to be shipped overseas as in-shell products. Fortunately, those quality almonds will still be able to enter the market in other forms.

Many of you have also faced yet another challenge over the summer in dealing with our nemesis, the navel orange worm. And more recently, because of the weather-related delays in harvest timing, it's been a race against time and seasonally shorter days to capture the valuable daylight needed to dry the almonds shaken onto orchard floors. It has been a historic year, for sure.

That's where the strength of our 113 year-old *Blue Diamond Growers* cooperative can really help. Despite the trials, not just in your orchards, but in reduced consumer demand, significant industry carryout, and uncomfortably low almond prices, we were still able to provide a competitive return this year, as reflected in the table [left].

Please note that the rates displayed on the left do not include Volume Premiums, Sustainability Incentives, Domestic Production Activities Deduction (DPAD) or IC-DISC advantages. Your actual crop earnings, including those applicable additions, are shown in the box on the last page of your personal grower's statement.

As I mentioned in my letter that accompanied your 2022 Patronage Dividend, we have finalized a new strategic plan, created from the ground up, to buffer against the uncertainties faced across the industry and lay a strong foundation for our co-op's future.

I'm excited to share more details about our FY24-FY26 Strategic Plan with you on Nov. 15 at *Blue Diamond's* 113th Annual Meeting at the Modesto DoubleTree Hotel and Centre Plaza. Thank you to those who took the time to provide feedback through the online growers' survey link sent in August to help us assess and improve planning elements of the Annual Meeting.

Incorporating your input, the planning team has been working hard to ensure the event provides significant value to justify your travel time and attendance. You'll find the link to online registration for the Annual Meeting along with a list of the educational grower sessions planned on page 11.

I wish you good weather and success throughout the rest of your harvest activities. I look forward to seeing you all in November! ♦



*Kai Bockmann*  
President & CEO



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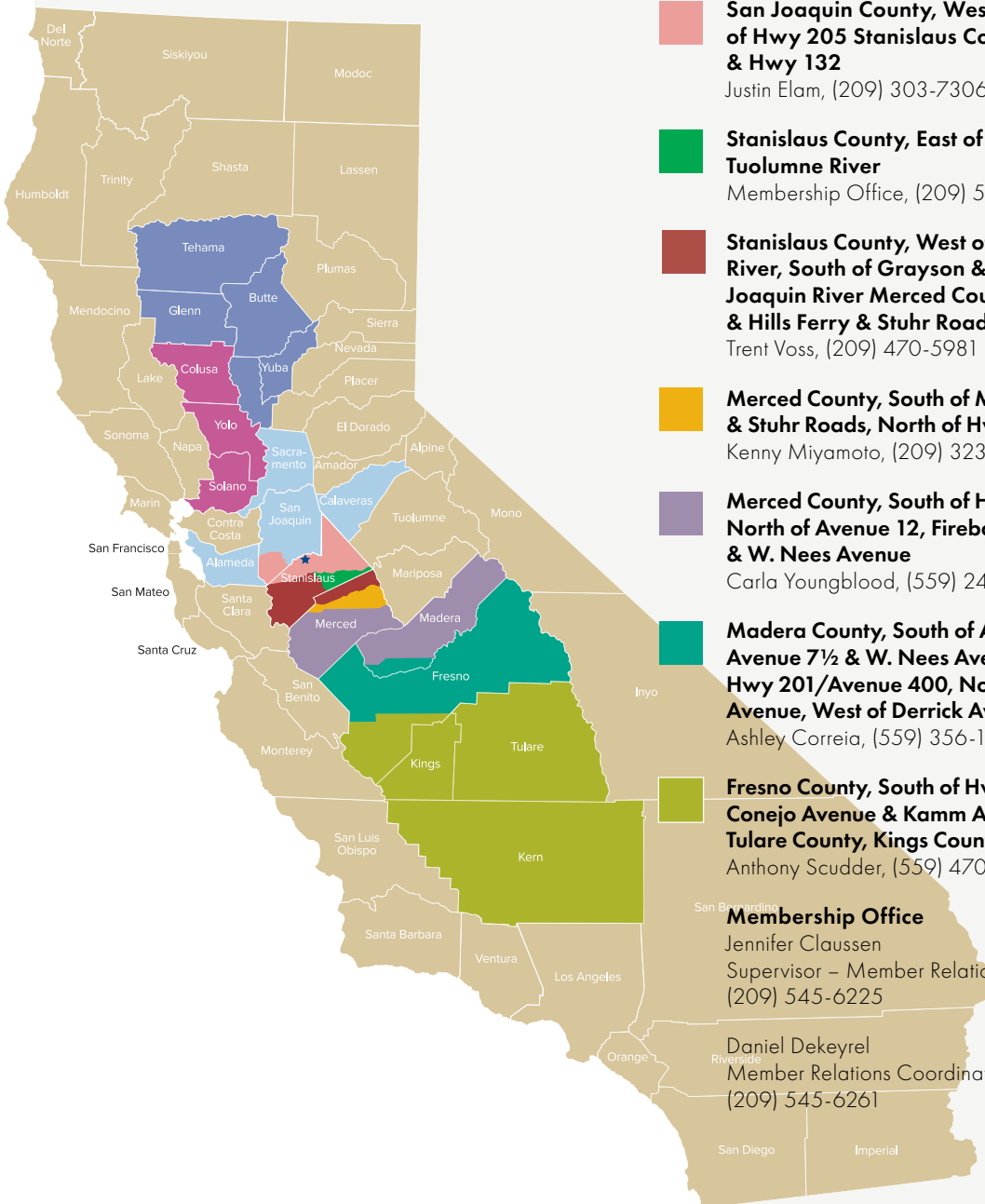
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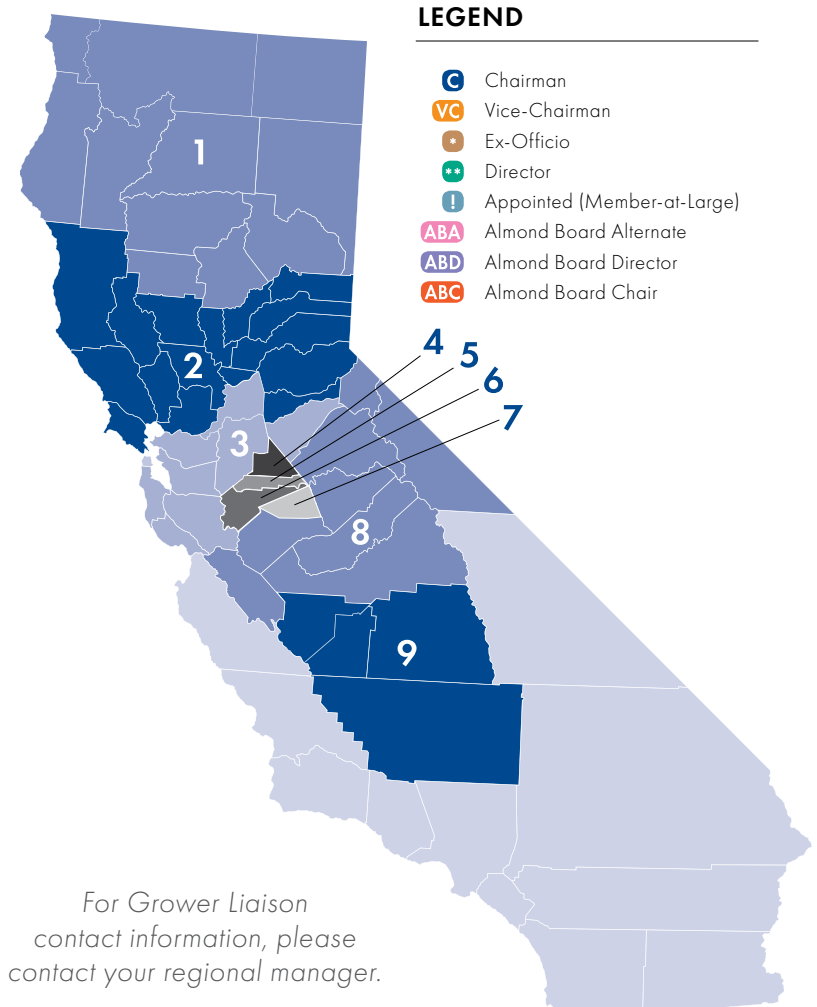
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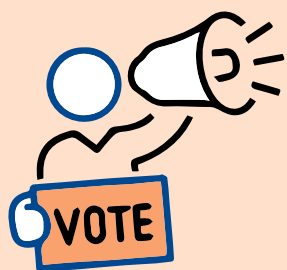
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- Clinton Shick **\***



## Blue Diamond Growers Annual Meeting Voting

### What is a Proxy & Why is a Quorum Needed at the Annual Meeting?

The *Blue Diamond* Annual Meeting is more than a luncheon or a social gathering; it is a required business meeting that is defined in the cooperative's bylaws. To be valid, a quorum of the membership must be present, either in person or by proxy. Since it is a business meeting, the quorum is required if a motion is made from the floor and a vote of the membership is called for.



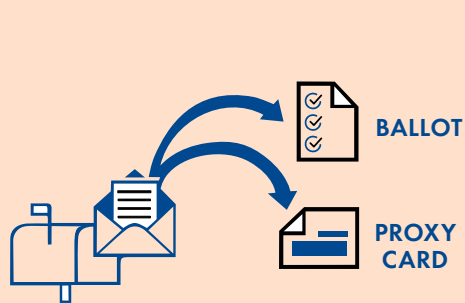
### Annual General Election

It is time once again for the annual *Blue Diamond* general elections. This is a great opportunity for you to exercise one of your fundamental rights as a voting member to shape the future of your *Blue Diamond Growers* cooperative: electing members of the Board of Directors and Grower Liaison Committees. This year, you have the opportunity to vote for District Directors in **districts 3, 5 and 7**. You also have the opportunity to vote for Grower Liaisons in each of the nine districts. Ballots will be mailed the week of October 9 to voting members with Crop Agency Agreements. Voting will close on

**November 3, 2023.** Only ballots received by this date will be counted. Your vote matters! Be sure to submit your ballot in plenty of time so your vote is received before this deadline.

### How to Vote

Like last year, there are three ways to vote: paper ballot, online or by phone. Your election packet will include the paper ballot, return envelope and instructions for online and phone voting. This year, if you vote online, you will have the opportunity to submit the Proxy Card online to ensure your attendance is counted at the annual meeting.



<p><b>1 PAPER</b></p>	<p><b>2 ONLINE</b></p>	<p><b>3 BY PHONE</b></p>
<p><b>1 PAPER</b></p>	<p><b>2 ONLINE</b></p>	

*Like last year, you will be able to vote by paper ballot, online or by phone.*

*This year, you will be able to return the proxy card by mail or assign a proxy online.*

### Make Sure You Are Represented — Return the Proxy Card!

Not sure if you can attend the annual meeting? No problem! You may assign your vote to a proxy, another voting member, to vote on your behalf and represent you at the annual meeting. Mail in your Proxy Card (separate from the ballot) and rest assured that you are being represented in the election and annual meeting, even if you can't directly participate. If you do decide to attend the meeting yourself, know that your presence always comes first. The Proxy Card is a backup plan for if you can't attend. ♦



113<sup>th</sup>

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# Annual Meeting



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| Deep Dive on Navel Orange Worm...What Went Wrong in 2023 and How Do We Fix It? |

## Ambassador Katherine Tai Visits *Blue Diamond*, Sacramento

*Blue Diamond Growers* was invited by Secretary Karen Ross, CDFA, to host a tour and industry roundtable discussion with Ambassador Katherine Tai, USTR, and Director Dee Dee Myers, GO-Biz.

On Friday, September 8, 2023, *Blue Diamond*, Sacramento received one of its highest-profile visitors to date: United States Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Katherine Tai toured *Blue Diamond's* manufacturing and innovation facilities before meeting with representatives from California's agricultural industry. Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and Dee Dee Myers, Director of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), accompanied Ambassador Tai during her visit to *Blue Diamond*, Sacramento.



(from left to right) Mel Machado, *Blue Diamond* Vice President, Member Relations, Raj Joshi, *Blue Diamond* Chief Growth Officer, Ambassador Katherine Tai, USTR, Alicia Rockwell, *Blue Diamond* Chief Government Affairs Officer, Secretary Karen Ross, CDFA, Director Dee Dee Myers, GO-Biz. Photo credit: USTR

The United States Trade Representative, which is an Executive Office of the President, is responsible for developing and coordinating U.S. trade at the international level. As an Ambassador of the USTR, Ambassador Tai oversees economic negotiations with other countries as well as representing the interests of both the U.S. economy and the larger international community. Ambassador Tai and the USTR work to expand market access to American goods and services, provide

leadership and expertise on international trade agreements, lead negotiations that affect U.S. trade policies, and more. The savviest of readers might remember that in the July/August issue of *Almond Facts* we covered one of Ambassador Tai's recent successes, specifically for the almond industry: through Ambassador Tai's efforts, extra tariffs and fees imposed by India on U.S. almonds were removed in June, helping to increase California's almond exports to India, one of the largest almond markets in the world.



Ambassador Tai tastes a wide array of *Blue Diamond* products. Photo credit: USTR



Ambassador Tai discusses current U.S. trade policy and strategy with representatives of the California agricultural industry. Photo credit: USTR

Ambassador Tai, Director Myers and Secretary Ross toured the historic, 60-acre *Blue Diamond*, Sacramento facility with *Blue Diamond* executives Alicia Rockwell, Chief Government Affairs Officer, Mel Machado, Vice President of Member Relations, and Raj Joshi, Chief Growth Officer. The group walked through almond receiving, storage, processing and shipping areas, seeing firsthand how almonds are prepared for export to the industry's largest markets – India, China and the Middle East – where Ambassador Tai has worked to lower tariffs and other barriers that hinder the export of American commodities, including California agriculture like almonds and walnuts, to those markets. These regional negotiations are a good example of the USTR's current international strategy:

rather than negotiate sweeping, large-scale free trade agreements with groups of countries (think of NAFTA, a free trade agreement between the United States, Mexico and Canada) that reduce tariffs and other direct barriers to free trade, the USTR is working to negotiate with individual countries to align policies like labor standards, climate provisions and other non-tariff barriers to trade.

While tasting the latest innovations in snack almonds and almondmilk at *Blue Diamond*, Sacramento's Almond Innovation Center, the visiting group learned more about the ongoing almond harvest, *Blue Diamond's* accelerated sustainability practices, and the challenging conditions surrounding the 2022 crop and high grower production costs.

Ambassador Tai concluded her visit with an industry roundtable discussion hosted by Secretary Ross. The Ambassador, Director Myers and Secretary Ross listened as representatives from California’s agricultural industry, ranging from the Agricultural Council of California to the California Milk Advisory Board to the Wine Institute, expressed the importance of protecting the premium on California agricultural products in international markets, especially given the advanced environmental, labor and regulatory practices expected of California growers, farmers and ranchers. Ambassador Tai recognized and appreciated the leadership of California agriculture and saw it as a strength when countering non-science-based political barriers to international market access.

“Almond growers throughout the state are facing compounding challenges in depressed market prices, stalled consumer consumption, and inflationary production costs,” said Rockwell. “We hope that more open discussions like this will accelerate favorable market access and sustain the future of small, family almond farms in California.” ♦




**Jake Sonke,**  
Corporate Communications Intern,  
Blue Diamond Growers

## BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

### Current Investment Rates available as of August 1, 2023

**Blue Diamond Growers offers members short-term and long-term investment programs.**

The objective of these programs is to serve as a competitive investment alternative for our members and provide *Blue Diamond Growers* with a steady source of funds. The interest rates effective August 1, 2023, for the program are listed here:

	Short-Term Investment Certificate (STIC)	Long-Term Investment Certificate (LTIC) (Maturity Date of 6/30/2026)
Initial Investment Required	\$1,000	\$50,000
Interest Rate	6.25%	4.25%
	(Variable, subject to change)	(Fixed rate)

**For more information, contact your local Regional Manager, or Member Services at (209) 545-6225.**

*This summary does not constitute an offer to sell or a solicitation to purchase investment certificates. We will provide a package of documents for the programs to those members who are California residents and who express an interest in participating in the program.*



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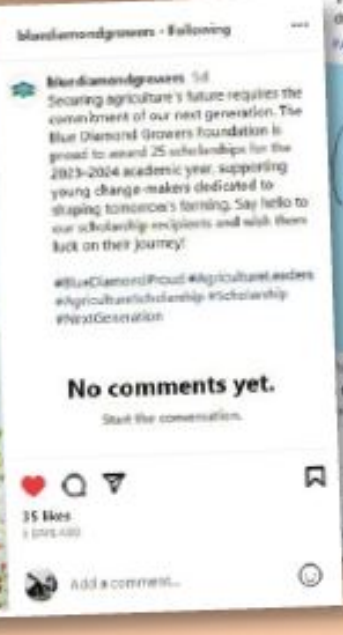
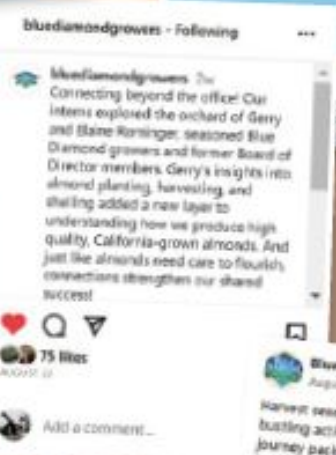
## #WeAreBlueDiamond2023 Social Media Activity



Blue Diamond Almond Breeze Extra Creamy debuted on the shelves of acclaimed Australian retailer Coles in September! The Blue Diamond Growers co-op unites almost 3,000 almond growers from the Central Valley of California, working to ensure that the legacy of almonds is carried on to future generations with pride. The Blue Diamond Growers Foundation was proud to award scholarships to 25 agricultural, change-making students for the 2023-2024 academic year. We debuted a "Welcome to the Orchard" series for the 2023 Almond Harvest season, showcasing the dedication of our co-op growers and giving an inside look at the processes that craft our premium almonds. Deion "Coach Prime" Sanders teamed up with the Almond Board of California for the "Own Your Prime" social media campaign. They also put together a great infographic on each step our almonds take from the tree to your table. Representatives from the California Manufacturers & Technology Association braved the heat wave this summer to visit some of the growers' orchards. Growers also hosted our summer interns so they could learn the almond planting, harvesting and shelling processes firsthand! ♦







## Almond Flour Arepas with Black Beans, Guacamole & Radishes

Time: 60 minutes    Difficulty: Easy    Servings: 4

### Ingredients

- 1 cup *Blue Diamond*® Almond Flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 egg white
- 1 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon lime juice
- ½ cup prepared guacamole
- ¾ cup canned black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 radishes, thinly sliced
- Crumbled queso fresco, optional

### Directions

1. Stir the first six ingredients in a bowl to form a dough. Divide into four equal portions. Working with one portion at a time, roll into a ball and place on a sheet of plastic wrap. Top with a second sheet. Roll or press into a five-inch circle.
2. Place tostada, still in plastic, in the refrigerator. Repeat with remaining dough. Chill tostadas, 30 minutes.
3. Heat a non-stick skillet lightly sprayed with cooking spray over medium heat. Working with one tostada at a time, peel off top layer of plastic.
4. Invert into pan, and peel away top sheet of plastic. Cook 45 seconds per side or until set and beginning to brown.
5. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Continue with remaining tostadas, lightly spraying the pan with cooking spray between each one.
6. Top each tostada with 2 tablespoons guacamole and 3 tablespoons black beans. Top evenly with sliced radish and top with queso fresco, if desired.



# Wasabi Soy Sauce Deviled Eggs

Time: 20 minutes    Difficulty: Easy    Servings: 12

## Ingredients

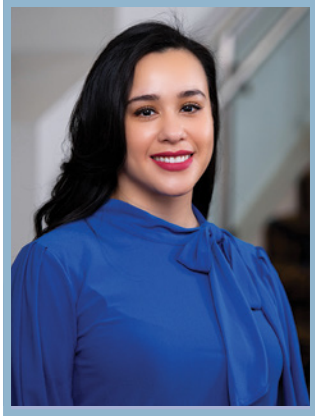
- 6 hardboiled eggs
- ¼ cup Wasabi & Soy Sauce Almonds, chopped
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons wasabi
- 2½ teaspoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoons green onions, chopped
- Salt and pepper, to taste

## Directions

1. Cut hardboiled eggs in half. Scoop out yolk into a bowl. Place egg white halves on a plate or platter.
2. Stir mayonnaise, almonds, wasabi, green onions and rice vinegar into the yolks until creamy. Taste and add salt and pepper to adjust.
3. Gently spoon or use a piping bag to fill egg white halves with yolk mixture, about ½ tablespoon in each half.
4. Garnish eggs with more chopped almonds, sesame seeds or chopped chives and serve.

**Note:** Eggs may be made ahead of time and refrigerated up to a day in advance.





### *Blue Diamond and Amazon: Learning More about Multicultural Marketing* (from an interview with Lorena Nuñez, edited for clarity and theme)

Blue Diamond's talented in-house marketing team is always looking for additional ways to reach consumers and expand demand for the brand's wide portfolio of tasty products. In March, Blue Diamond partnered with Amazon to reach U.S. Latino consumers with Spanish language advertising. We spoke with Blue Diamond's Lorena Nuñez, Senior Brand Manager, Multicultural & Inclusive Marketing. Lorena shared the study's results and the benefits that Blue Diamond can anticipate from multicultural marketing.

**Almond Facts:** Can you tell us a bit about your background and how it ties into your marketing strategies for *Blue Diamond Growers*?

**Lorena Nuñez:** I started with *Blue Diamond Growers* in November 2022. I work on developing our Multicultural Marketing strategies and diversifying our customer base. I am Latina, the daughter of immigrants, so it's important to me that the brands I work for see the value in reaching multicultural communities. The reality is, if you're not marketing to my community, what are you saying about me? I take that very personally and have a passion for that work. When I had the opportunity to come to *Blue Diamond* and do multicultural marketing, I said, "How great! This business sees the value and opportunity that comes from the Latino segment, and I'd love to be a part of that work."

**AF:** You recently did a U.S. Latino advertising campaign on Amazon. What can you tell us about that?

**LN:** When Amazon learned that we were developing multicultural marketing strategies here, they reached out and asked if we would consider adding Spanish language advertising in addition to our existing Amazon campaign, and we said, "Sure, why wouldn't we? Let's learn!" We quickly realized that this campaign had to be more than Spanish-language targeting, it also had to resonate with all bilingual Amazon customers. I looked at our existing *Blue Diamond* inventory on Amazon and matched it with top-selling flavors in US-based, Latino households. We ran the study from March 2023 to May 2023, and it went really, really well.

**AF:** After you set up the study, what did you find?



**LN:** One of the biggest findings was that not only did the snack nut flavors we promoted in Spanish do really well, but the Spanish language messaging also created a halo effect for multiple *Blue Diamond* products on Amazon. For instance, almond flour was a top seller in this cohort, even though we didn't advertise almond flour. It showed that people are interested in learning about the variety of our products, even beyond what we might be advertising to them. This study exceeded our expectations for return on investment and as a result, we'll be adding Spanish language targeting to our holistic plan, because our impact can be that much bigger when we're reaching a whole new audience that we've never spoken to before.

**AF:** What does Spanish consumer targeting look like in this study?

**LN:** We took elements from our existing "Gimme *Blue Diamond*" campaign and translated them into Spanish, but the visual branding and message was still in line with the campaign messaging and with what you normally see in English. When we think about consumers, they are still exposed to our brand in a variety of different elements, regardless of the language that they speak. Whether it's in Spanish or in English, the brand must be consistent. The look is the same, the font is the same, the colors are the same — but the target audience is different.

**AF:** Why focus on the Latino consumer segment?

**LN:** We chose to go with Spanish language targeting first because Latinos are the largest multicultural group in the

U.S. Since much of the U.S. population growth is coming from the Latino segment anyway, it made sense to target that cohort first. The plan is to run consumer tests now, and learn as much as we can, and then amplify our efforts later on.

**AF:** What does this new data mean for *BDG* growers and industry stakeholders?

**LN:** It means that we are finding new business opportunities and new audiences to continue to sell our products across categories. Amazon was a success with snack nuts, but *Almond Breeze*® was also a strong seller. If we're thinking about growth, we can look at it through the lens of several of our categories, not just snack nuts.

**AF:** Considering how favorable this data is, tell us what opportunities growers might be looking forward to?

**LN:** If we look at multicultural marketing approaches, even beyond Amazon, we can look forward to lots of new innovations. We're getting rich insights into this new consumer demographic, and I'm excited about the new marketing occasions we can reach consumers in. In the future, our multicultural insights may influence our flavor strategy and perhaps even new categories of products that we haven't previously explored. Ethnic flavors and seasonings are already part of mainstream America. There is a world of opportunities for new products and innovation down the road, and we have to view those opportunities through a multicultural lens to ensure they are perceived as genuine and authentic by all.

*“This business sees the value and opportunity that comes from the Latino segment, and I'd love to be a part of that work.”*

## Amazon Latino Campaign Results

**3.6MM**  
Unique  
Shoppers

**+85%**  
Return on  
Ad Spend

**11%**

Brand Preference

**21%**

Ad Recall

**AF:** Are there any trends that our growers should be following if they want to gain a better understanding of how important multicultural marketing strategies are today?

**LN:** As we look at where business growth is headed, regardless of where you are in business, we need to think about what's happening in the world around us. Mainstream America is very heavily influenced by a wide variety of ethnicities. Elote is a mainstream flavor now, even though it's a Mexican snack. Hip-hop culture stems from Black communities, but it's a part of mainstream American culture now. Spotify's biggest global artists are Latino, which is huge. If we're thinking about trends, let's look at those trendsetters and where they're coming from. Maybe the way we've been doing things is good, but we should always be learning more and finding new ways of doing what we do. ♦



**Jillian Luna,**  
Managing Editor,  
Corporate Communications  
*Blue Diamond Growers*



**Jake Sonke,**  
Corporate Communications Intern,  
*Blue Diamond Growers*

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## Reducing Farm Production Costs through the Grower Connect Marketplace

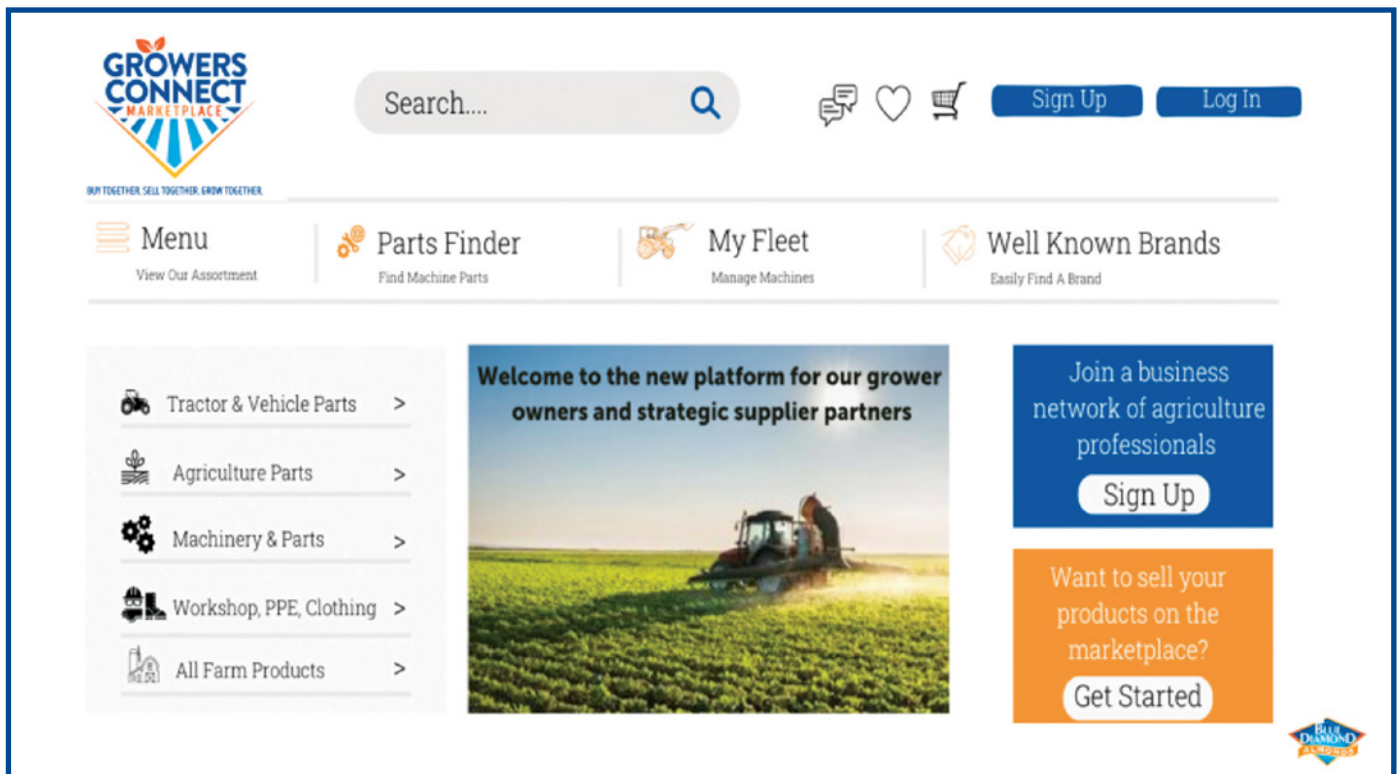
In the face of skyrocketing farm production costs, it has become imperative for *Blue Diamond Growers* to take proactive measures to help our growers remain profitable. The increasing pressure brought about by rising input costs threatens the financial stability of our growers. According to *Market Insider*, the cost of agricultural inputs, including seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and machinery, has been steadily increasing over the past decade. Since 2019 production costs have increased approximately 20%, a trend that is likely to continue.

To address this challenge, our corporate procurement team is poised to launch the innovative Grower Connect Marketplace (GCM). This groundbreaking marketplace aims to reduce farm production costs by leveraging the collective buying power of like-minded cooperatives and

utilizing group purchase organizations to negotiate the best terms.

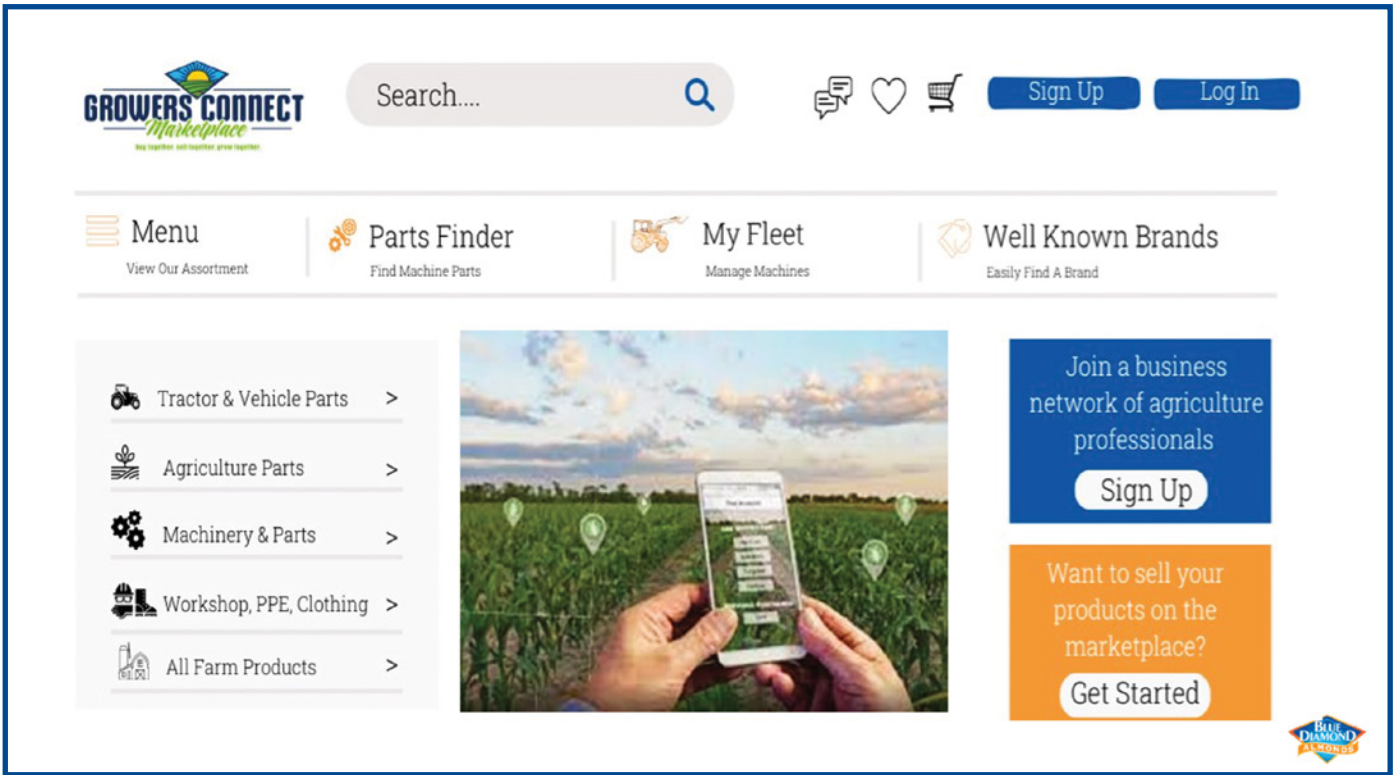
The primary objective of the GCM is to provide a platform where growers can access a wide range of products and supplies at competitive prices. By consolidating the purchasing power of multiple cooperatives, we will be able to negotiate better deals with suppliers, resulting in cost savings for our growers. Additionally, our website and mobile application have been designed to provide a user-friendly experience, ensuring convenience and ease of use for growers when procuring their required inputs.

We are excited to announce that a soft launch of the GCM is scheduled just in time for our annual meeting on November 15th, 2023. This soft launch will allow our team



This is a design draft of the GCM website, which will look similar to the above.





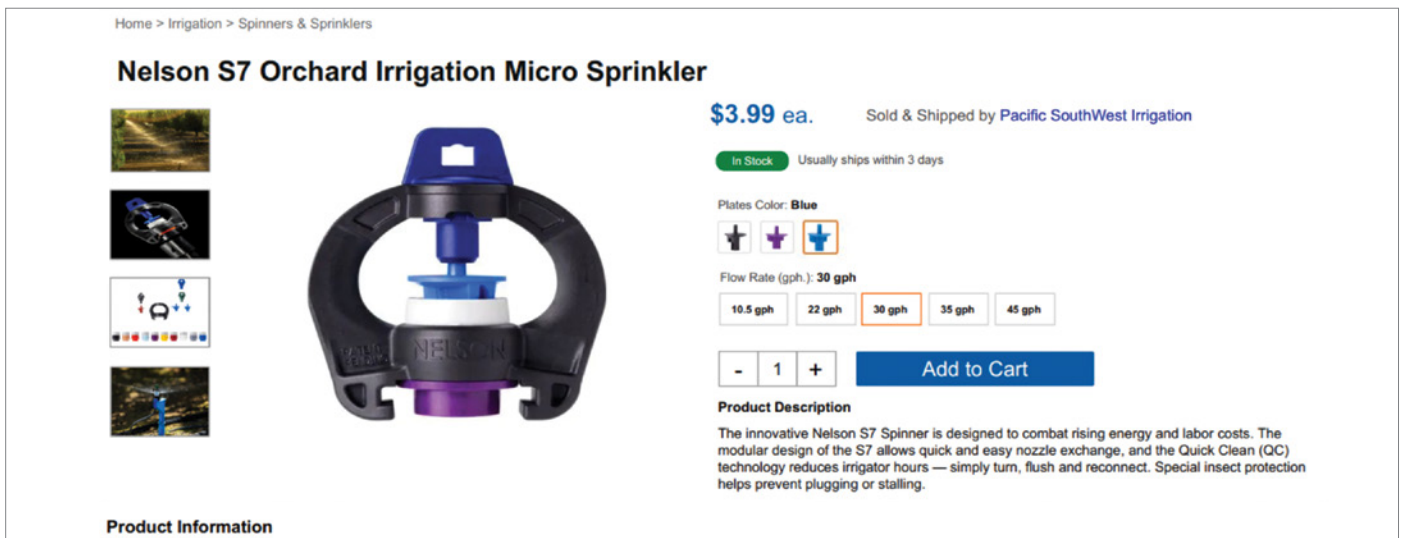
This is a design draft of the GCM website, which will look similar to the above.

to gather feedback and further refine the platform based on user experiences. We expect a fully executed project by late January 2024, aligning with our commitment to deliver a comprehensive and efficient solution to our growers.

Harnessing the collective buying power of cooperatives will play a crucial role in the success of the GCM. By uniting multiple cooperatives, we can pool our resources

and negotiate more favorable terms with suppliers. This strength in numbers will result in significant cost reductions for our growers, enhancing their financial viability and future sustainability.

Reducing farm production costs is not only vital for the financial well-being of our growers, but it also plays a pivotal role in ensuring the overall sustainability of the



This is a design draft of the GCM website, which will look similar to the above.

agricultural industry. As input costs continue to rise, it becomes increasingly challenging for growers to maintain profitability. By providing them with access to competitively priced inputs through the GCM, we aim to alleviate this burden and enable our growers to continue thriving in the face of challenging economic conditions.

As the agricultural industry grapples with the burden of increasing production costs, it is crucial for our company to take assertive action. The Grower Connect Marketplace is a pioneering solution that leverages the power of collaboration and collective buying to reduce farm production costs. By providing growers with access to a wide range of supplies at competitive prices, we are committed to supporting their profitability

and long-term sustainability. Our soft launch on November 15th, 2023, marks the beginning of a new era in cost reduction strategies for the agricultural industry. Together with our growers, we look forward to a prosperous and sustainable future. ◆



**Coe Hawkins,**  
**Director of Procurement**  
**and Global Sourcing,**  
**Blue Diamond Growers**

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For this year's Giving Tuesday, *Blue Diamond* will match donations up to \$25,000. We hope you join us in giving the Gift of Blue on November 28!

For more information or to donate, visit [www.calaged.com/givingtuesday](http://www.calaged.com/givingtuesday). ♦



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## Scholarship Requirements:

- Must currently live in Almond Growing Regions of California
- Must intend to pursue college major in Agriculture related field, with specific emphasis on plant and crop-related majors
- Must have 3.3 GPA or higher
- Enrollment verification to a college or university offering a four-year degree will be required for disbursement of award funds
- Application deadline: **March 31, 2024**

This is a one-time award. Applicants who have applied and not previously been awarded a Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship may re-apply. Scholarship is available to applicants entering any year of a four-year degree program.



[apply.mykaleidoscope.com/scholarships/BlueDiamondGrowersScholarship2024](https://apply.mykaleidoscope.com/scholarships/BlueDiamondGrowersScholarship2024)



### *Blue Diamond Growers Scholarship Foundation Highlight: Morgan Oliveira*

Born and raised in Hilmar, California, it was no surprise that Morgan Oliveira, who comes from a long line of dairy farmers, got involved in the agriculture industry. The Oliveira family has been

active in agriculture for decades, mostly as longtime dairy farmers but also recently breaking into the almond industry. Given her family's involvement in agriculture, pursuing a career in the agriculture industry seemed like the natural thing to do, even as early as high school. As Morgan put it, "In Hilmar, you're either into sports or you're into Ag," and Morgan isn't into sports.

In high school, Morgan became a member of the Future Farmers of America (FFA). At the encouragement of her teachers and advisors, she ran for a leadership position in FFA, going on to become the regional officer for the FFA's Central Region, an area that stretches from Sacramento and Yolo Counties in the north to Merced County in the south. Through her FFA position and responsibilities, Morgan began meeting and talking with people and groups from outside her small Hilmar farming community. As she interacted with these people, Morgan came to understand the misconceptions and miscommunications surrounding the agricultural industry, realizing the need for individuals who can represent the agricultural industry accurately, clearly and responsibly.

While in high school, Morgan applied for the *Blue Diamond Growers Scholarship*, which was created in 2008 to provide scholarships to support and foster advanced education for students in the almond growing regions of California. Morgan planned to attend Cal Poly, SLO to study Agricultural Communications. However, at

the end of her senior year of high school, Morgan had the opportunity to run for FFA state office, a rigorous process with eight rounds of interviews in front of panels of judges. After successfully passing through each round of interviews, Morgan was elected State Sentinel at the 2022 FFA State Conference, pushing her college start date back a year. As State Sentinel, Morgan's primary responsibilities were outreach and education, meeting with students at conferences and schools, finding ways to connect with high school students, and getting them involved in FFA. Morgan helped to develop leadership curriculum for high school students, visited schools, shared agricultural information, and even hosted student workshops.

Morgan's experience with FFA, combined with her family's background in Ag, helped shape her passion for agriculture. This past summer, Morgan interned at the Agricultural Council of California in Sacramento, an opportunity for Morgan to expand her perspective of the agricultural industry not only from the producer/grower's side, but also from the political side. Through the Ag Council, Morgan had the chance to learn about the ongoing political efforts aimed at helping the ag industry, from dairy farmers to almond farmers to cattle ranchers.



*“If I’m someone who is passionate about this industry and there are people out there who don’t feel the same way, there’s only one person who can change their mind, [and] that’s going to be me. ”*

Morgan started her first semester of college this fall. She’s excited to major in Agricultural Communications, taking classes in a variety of fields and disciplines to broaden her horizons. She’s especially excited for her Food, Nutrition, Culture and Customs course, an opportunity to dig into her Portuguese background and learn about other cultures’ food and agricultural backgrounds. Morgan plans to get involved in leadership positions in the College of Agriculture and in various clubs at Cal Poly, SLO.

“This is an incredible industry, and there are so many misconceptions in the ag industry and there aren’t many people who can correct them because they don’t know about it. If I’m someone who is passionate about this

industry and there are people out there who don’t feel the same way, there’s only one person who can change their mind, [and] that’s going to be me.” ♦



**Jake Sonke,**  
Corporate Communications Intern,  
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SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2023 31

## How LandFlex is Redefining California's Water Management

*Water is the lifeblood of California — a state characterized as much by its sun-kissed beaches and sprawling vineyards as by its drought and extremely wet cycles. In partnership with the California Department of Water Resources, the Almond Alliance and Western United Dairies recently introduced LandFlex — a solutions-based program to safeguard rural water systems, enhance groundwater sustainability, and bolster climate resilience.*

### What is LandFlex?

Developed in accordance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), LandFlex is more than simply a water conservation initiative. It is a multi-pronged approach to address the pressing challenges posed by a rapidly changing climate, with its core foundation built on voluntary collaborations between Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) and our agricultural community.

Backed by a \$25 million grant from the California Department of Water Resources, the program leverages the temporary fallowing of agricultural lands in times of extreme drought and extreme flood to deliver immediate benefits to vulnerable domestic wells, protect rural communities and critical infrastructure, and achieve long-term groundwater sustainability.

For each acre enrolled in the LandFlex program, farmers receive a series of financial incentives. These incentives serve three critical purposes:

- **Immediate Drought Relief:** By encouraging farmers to follow their lands for one year temporarily, LandFlex provides immediate relief to drought-impacted communities.



- **Overdraft/Sustainability Payment:** This measure ensures groundwater basins aren't over-drafted, safeguarding long-term water availability.
- **Transition Aid:** Financial incentives ensure that farming remains both sustainable and profitable.

### LandFlex's Impact: More Than Just Numbers

The initial results from the LandFlex program have been nothing short of commendable. Covering six GSAs across five Central California counties, the program's impact includes the following:

- LandFlex immediately saved **16,161** domestic wells in the Central Valley.
- **4,317** acres of land were enrolled in LandFlex, permanently reducing demand on California's aquifers so they could remain available for flood protection, active groundwater recharge, and sustainable local farming.
- LandFlex permanently saved water for **36,298** households annually in the Central Valley.
- LandFlex provided immediate protection to drinking water wells for **52,459** households in underserved communities.



Beyond its foundational goals, LandFlex has expanded its scope to address flood protection, food security, and even identifying prime zones for active groundwater recharge.

### A Future-Oriented Approach

The strength of the LandFlex program lies in its adaptability and holistic approach. It's not simply about conserving water; it's about creating a sustainable future for California. This means protecting California's agriculture and farming, safeguarding essential water sources, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices that don't compromise the state's food security.

The structure of LandFlex emphasizes voluntary collaboration and pragmatic ground strategies, showcasing the potential of a community-driven approach. Alongside our partners, the Almond Alliance leverages state support, farmer participation and community interests to craft solutions that protect our agricultural communities. ♦



**Aubrey Bettencourt,**  
President & CEO,  
Almond Alliance

A large advertisement for Dave Wilson Nursery. The top half features a close-up photograph of several almond husks, some of which are cracked open to reveal the nuts inside. The background is a soft-focus green. The bottom half of the ad is a solid green area with white and yellow text. The text reads: "WHEN YOUR HARVEST WRAPS UP, give us a call TO PLACE YOUR ORDERS (BIG OR SMALL) FOR REPLANTS." To the right of this text is the Dave Wilson Nursery logo, which consists of a green leaf shape with the text "Dave Wilson Nursery" inside. Below the logo is the website "DaveWilson.com". At the bottom left, it says "Potted and Bareroot Trees Available Now". At the bottom right, it says "1-844-DWN-TREE | @DaveWilsonNursery".

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## Blue Diamond Growers Launches USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Grant Program

*The new program equips the almond cooperative's growers with resources and incentives to implement climate-smart practices in their orchards.*

Blue Diamond Growers recently launched its USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Grant Program with its 3,000 grower-owners. The program is a major step in expanding the use of climate-smart practices in almond orchards.

The initial launch of the *Blue Diamond* USDA Climate-Smart Grant Program offers almond growers no-cost seed and a financial incentive for implementing cover crops and/or conservation cover on their land. These practices will not only work towards sequestering carbon but will also enhance the biodiversity of orchards, while improving soil health. As part of this program, growers will work with

technical partners, Pollinator Partnership and Project *Apis m.*, to implement these practices.

"This is an exciting and unique opportunity for growers outside of the traditional federal, state and local resources that are typically available to them," said Dan Sonke, Sr. Director of Sustainability, *Blue Diamond Growers*. "We know that cost and technical barriers are the largest hurdles to overcome when implementing climate-smart practices. This project provides resources to accelerate our grower-owners' advances in soil health, biodiversity and climate-smart agriculture."



The program will also work to identify almond-specific methods for quantifying the greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts of implementing climate-smart practices and will explore market-based mechanisms to reward growers for their stewardship work.

The USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Grant Program further extends *Blue Diamond's* current Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP). OSIP currently has more than 50% of *Blue Diamond* acreage enrolled, the largest amount of almond acreage in the world participating in a sustainability program, with over 15% of *Blue Diamond's* acreage being Bee Friendly Farming (B.F.F.) certified.

"Not only does this program benefit growers, but food companies and retailers as well," continued Sonke. "Customers can partner with *Blue Diamond* to support the use of climate-smart practices which benefit the climate, soil health and orchard biodiversity, and thereby procure almonds with a measured GHG reduction quantification that helps meet their own climate and sustainability targets."

With planning and grower communication underway now, *Blue Diamond Growers* will largely begin to implement the grant-related practices across California beginning in October, after this year's harvest.

For more information on *Blue Diamond Grower's* sustainability efforts, please visit [bluediamond.com/sustainability](https://bluediamond.com/sustainability). ♦

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## Maximizing Returns with the *Blue Diamond* USDA Climate-Smart Grant

*In today's market environment, we understand the importance of living up to our Blue Diamond Mission: "to maximize the returns of each grower who entrusts us with their almonds." We at Blue Diamond are acutely aware of the financial challenges of the industry and are working tirelessly to find more ways to bring additional value to the almonds our grower-owners produce.*

As Dr. Dan Sonke mentioned in his "Sustainability Speaking" column in the last issue of *Almond Facts*, stewardship is no exception to our mission. This month let's dive into the USDA Climate-Smart Grant (CSG), how it bolsters your Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP) efforts, and its potential to generate a premium for your almonds.

### **Synchronizing OSIP and CSG**

First, let's clarify the difference between OSIP and the CSG: OSIP is a foundational stewardship program created by *Blue Diamond*, while the CSG is a separate \$45 million grant awarded to *Blue Diamond* Growers by the USDA. Although distinct, OSIP and the CSG are designed to operate together, providing complementary benefits to growers.

Think of OSIP as the foundation of your stewardship efforts, a foundation that helps you document the current stewardship practices in your *Blue Diamond* orchards. OSIP allows us to quantify the positive work you are doing and communicate those efforts with customers and consumers. This also establishes a starting point for tracking changes and improvements to your orchard management.

Complementary to OSIP, the CSG aims to build upon the existing foundation provided by OSIP. The CSG acts as a sort of catalyst by driving implementation of climate-smart practices in your orchards, helping to improve your OSIP incentive tier, while additionally translating into quantifiable environmental benefits — a strong selling point for sustainability-focused customers.

## OSIP and BFF Certification

OSIP Tier	Requirements	Incentive
<b>Double Diamond</b>	1. Complete the California Almond Stewardship Platform (CASP)	\$750 payment AND \$0.005 per delivered pound on the 2023 crop
<b>Triple Diamond</b>	1. Complete CASP 2. Achieve Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) Certification through Pollinator Partnership 3. Perform a carbon footprint assessment	\$1,000 payment AND \$0.01 per delivered pound on the 2023 crop

This coming fall, we will be relaunching OSIP for the 2023 crop year. The program offers two incentive tiers: Double Diamond and Triple Diamond. Triple Diamond is the higher tier, and thus has the higher incentive payment. We understand that completing the additional steps for Triple Diamond requires a greater commitment of time, money, and effort. This is most significant for obtaining *Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) Certification* which can be a challenge for growers. Obtaining this certification requires a material investment. That's why we crafted the CSG program to intentionally assist our growers with this investment — specifically, by providing growers with the plant material and financial support needed to achieve the requirements of Triple Diamond status.

### How the CSG Facilitates the Transition to Triple Diamond

Over the next five years, the CSG will incentivize those farming on *Blue Diamond* orchards to adopt climate-smart practices, including bee-friendly practices like cover crops and conservation cover. Growers participating in the CSG receive free seeds via our grant partners, Project Apis m. Additionally, *Blue Diamond* growers can receive up to \$35 per acre for implementing cover crops and \$50 per acre for conservation cover. These payments can reduce the financial burden of attaining BFF Certification, which has a list of requirements detailed in the OSIP Program Guide. Three of the requirements can be achieved using conservation cover and cover crops directly provided by the CSG:

- Providing bee-friendly forage on at least 3% of land, including cover crops.
- Ensuring year-round bloom of diverse flowering plants.

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- Establishing permanent nesting habitat through features like hedgerows.

We are incredibly excited that the CSG helps growers achieve these BFF requirements for little to no cost. It is a significant step towards helping make the financial benefits of our stewardship program more accessible for our growers. **Note: To achieve BFF certification for the 2023 crop year, you will need to meet these requirements by Fall 2023.**

## Market Premiums for Climate-Smart Practices

The CSG involves more than implementing climate-smart practices on-farm. While on-farm implementation is a vital component, it is only one part of the bigger program. The CSG program has four key areas designed to generate premiums for almonds grown with climate-smart farming practices:

1. **Grower implementation** — Engaging *Blue Diamond* growers to adopt climate-smart farming practices.
2. **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) and Ecosystem Services Measurement** — Establishing methods to measure and verify the environmental benefits of these practices.
3. **Traceability** — Creating a system to link and trace these benefits from almond orchards to the end products in our supply chain, enhancing transparency and credibility.
4. **Sales and Marketing of Benefits** — Developing market-based mechanisms to capture a premium for these environmental benefits.

Although we are still in the initial stages of researching how to both quantify the benefits and to capture premiums from this program in the marketplace, the goal is to make the CSG stewardship profitable for you as a grower and help fund stewardship practices in the long term.

## Looking Forward for the CSG

While the application period for the 2023 CSG ended in August, growers can still look forward to its reopening in Spring 2024. Our team is diligently working to extend the program's offerings to include hedgerows and whole orchard recycling in the next grant cycle. As we gather more data and insights around the USDA requirements surrounding certain practices, we will keep our grower-owner community informed.

Even without the inclusion of hedgerows and whole orchard recycling in its inaugural year, the CSG has already accomplished notable wins. The CSG has made significant strides in lowering the financial barrier for the adoption of cover crops and conservation cover, making BFF Certification, and the OSIP Triple Diamond status, more accessible. It has also laid the groundwork for developing additional programs associated with climate-smart practice implementation, programs that will score market premiums for almonds. Moving forward, we remain committed to driving innovation and sustainability, leveraging the CSG to maximize returns for our growers. We thank you for your continued support and stewardship efforts.

You can learn more about our USDA Climate-Smart Grant by going to our webpage:

[bluediamondgrowers.com/usda-clim](https://bluediamondgrowers.com/usda-clim) ◆



**Erik Stanek,**  
Sustainability Specialist,  
Blue Diamond Growers



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### THE BEE BOX

## Cover Crops in a Dry Climate: Are They Worth the Water?

In California's dry climate, farmers are often left with a difficult question to answer: are cover crops worth the water? Despite atmospheric rivers, early spring rains and tropical storms dropping large amounts of water across the state this year, water conservation remains a top priority for California's farmers, especially those in more drought-prone parts of the state. With the last two years being some of the driest on record, there is good reason to be water-wise and to plant with care.

#### The Short Answer: Yes!

It is absolutely possible, and even worthwhile, to add cover crops to your orchard system even in a dry climate. Project Apis m.'s (PAm.) Seeds for Bees™ program provides free seeds and technical assistance to farmers across California who wish to establish cover crops in their field and orchards. Seeds for Bees™ has partnered with *Blue Diamond* on the USDA Climate Smart Grant to support *Blue Diamond* growers to plant cover crops in their orchards. Whether your region gets 5 inches or 35 inches of annual rainfall, we want to help you get the most out of your cover crop planting.

A recent study from University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources (UC ANR) researchers suggest that growers who adopt winter cover crops in the Central Valley "can benefit from soil health advantages associated with winter cover cropping with minimal water use...and without having to change their spring-summer irrigation plans and water management decisions."<sup>1</sup> Cover crops can provide enhanced ecosystem benefits, reduce inputs, and contribute to increased soil quality and conditions. The associated benefits and services from cover crops are certainly worth considering. Researchers also state that "winter cover crops in the Central Valley may break even in terms of actual consumptive water use."<sup>1</sup> If water availability is a concern for your operation, this article provides some general

information on water use and helpful guidelines for growing a successful cover crop stand, even in a dry environment.

#### Why Use Water for Cover Crops?

Establishing and managing cover crops in California almonds has been proven to add a host of benefits to your orchard system. An effective cover crop system can sustain viable yields while supporting water quality and soil health, reducing inputs, and promoting biodiversity. Compared to bare soils, cover cropping in orchard alleys can reduce runoff and erosion, enhance infiltration, and even contribute to water conservation goals.<sup>2</sup> Flowering blooms in almond orchards also provide much needed forage and habitat for pollinators and other beneficial species. Having forage already established and available for bees when they arrive in your orchard helps to sustain and grow healthy bee colonies. More bees mean improved pollination services!



*Blooming cover crops benefit both beekeepers and growers by providing better nutrition for bees, increasing the soil's water-holding capacity by adding organic matter, increasing water infiltration, reducing erosion, and providing natural weed control. Photo credit: Project Apis m*



## Selecting the Right Seed Mix

Seeds for Bees™ offers seed mixes that are designed to be most efficient for growing successfully in drought conditions. PAm.'s Pollinator Brassica mix is a drought-hardy mix of mustards that can generally grow successfully throughout the Central Valley. This mix is designed to grow in harsh conditions, such as in non-irrigated orchard middles, and has been proven to perform well with annual rainfall — no irrigation needed! If you have higher rainfall or water availability, there are other seed options that do well with extra moisture. For instance, PAm.'s Annual Clover Mix and the BioBuild Mix have higher moisture requirements and are well suited for fixing nitrogen and adding biomass back into the soil.

## Fall Planting — Timing is Everything!

Another key consideration for planning cover crops in a dry climate is the timing of planting. PAm. highly encourages growers to sow cover crops within the month of October. Last year, PAm. worked closely with our seed supplier for quick and early deliveries and adjusted the Seeds for Bees™ application window to maximize the number of growers that could plant during this optimal October window. In the 2022-2023 Seeds for Bees™ annual participant survey, 75% of growers who responded reported planting in October. Planting within the general time frame of Sept 10 to November 10 is a suitable time to plant cover crops anywhere in California. Planting in time to utilize the seasonal rains can establish a robust, well-growing cover crop that can stand without the use of irrigation. This time frame ensures suitable soil temperatures, larger plants, better ground coverage and greater likelihood of timing flowering cover crops with the arrival of hungry honey bees.

While not necessary for an adequate stand, strategic planting times and irrigation can be used to ensure a more robust cover crop with a greater impact. For example, in orchards with micro-sprinklers and flood irrigation, it is best to sow your cover crop prior to tree irrigation. For drip irrigation, plant your seed prior to the first rain event. While cover crop seed does require water to germinate and establish, studies have shown that even though irrigated cover crop plots produced about 2x more biomass than non-irrigated fields, non-irrigated cover crops were still productive, meaning growers could still reap the soil health benefits.<sup>2</sup> For growers who might also be concerned about



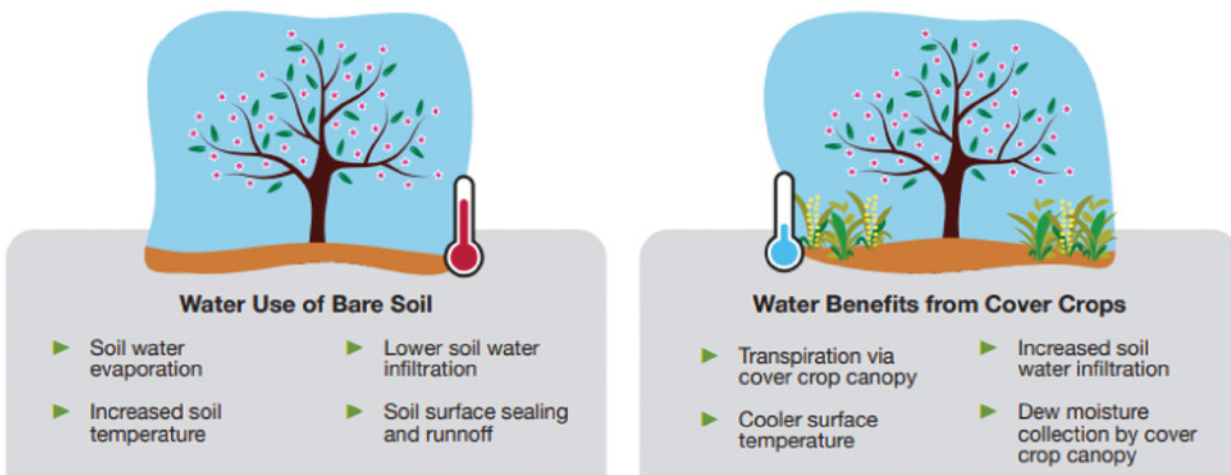
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Planting cover crops can help increase water infiltration and avoid evaporation and other water losses associated with bare soils. Credit: Almond Board of California's Cover Crop Guide pg. 12

lack of irrigation or about cover crops competing for water, the Almond Board's Cover Crop Best Management Practices Guidebook states: "Cover crops often do not require irrigation after establishment, though they consume water from winter precipitation. Overall, their impact on soil moisture can be negligible because bare soil also consumes water through evaporation and runoff."<sup>3</sup> PAm. is also funding additional research at UC Davis measuring and comparing water use in orchards with and without cover crops to further understand these dynamics.

Rainfall, irrigation methods and water access will vary across region; for some farmers, relying on early fall rains is not always possible. Seeds are dependent on moisture in the top few inches of soil to germinate and irrigation may be needed to achieve a successful stand. Low moisture results in low germination, reducing fall growth and ultimately reducing the benefits from the cover crop. For orchards in more arid climates, there are several other options. If you have irrigation, you might consider applying irrigation water to dry soil (until plant emergence) to protect the time and effort you have already invested into your cover crop.<sup>4</sup> Another management alternative is to postpone planting, "seeding when there is available water is most important, and later seeding in late winter or early spring as day length increases may still produce a cover crop that can meet your goals."<sup>3</sup> Water use and

management decisions, such as when and what to plant, will vary from farm to farm.

Of course, there is no one-size-fits-all practice for farming. Factors such as your region's annual rainfall, soil conditions, orchard management practices, etc. will determine what works best for your orchard. Non-irrigated winter cover crops provide a long list of positive benefits while using minimal water to produce a worthwhile return on investment. PAm.'s Seeds for Bees™ team offers technical advice specific to your farm and can help you decide what mixes and best management practices are most appropriate for your operation and water use goals. ♦

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3. Almond Board of California. "Cover Crop Best Management Practices." [www.almonds.com](http://www.almonds.com), [www.almonds.com/sites/default/files/2021-07/Cover%20Crops%20Best%20Management%20Practices%20BMPs\\_0.pdf](http://www.almonds.com/sites/default/files/2021-07/Cover%20Crops%20Best%20Management%20Practices%20BMPs_0.pdf).

4. Lyndon, Kelly. "Irrigate cover crops for better emergence." MSU Extension, 04 Sept. 2018, <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/irrigate-cover-crops-for-better-emergence#:~:text=Cover%20crops%20that%20are%20drilled%20or%20disked%20in,the%20top%204-6%20inches%20of%20the%20soil%20profile>.



**Brett LeDuc,**  
Climate  
Smart Habitat  
Manager,  
Project Apis m.

**Project Apis m.**  
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For more information contact: [brett@projectapism.org](mailto:brett@projectapism.org)

### THE ALMOND BOARD

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## Turner Begins Transition Process for Almond Board of California President and CEO

*September marked the beginning of the transition process for Clarice Turner into her new role as President and CEO of The Almond Board of California*

*(ABC). ABC Board of Directors selected Turner, an experienced global leader in consumer goods, food service and wine and spirits, as the next president and CEO in July of this year.*

Clarice Turner is joining the ABC after most recently serving as president of iconic Napa Valley winery, Joseph Phelps Vineyards. She has also held CEO and senior executive positions at Boudin Bakery, Starbucks Coffee Company, YUM! Brands, Papa Murphy's International and PepsiCo.

"The ABC Board is excited to welcome Clarice to the California almond industry," said board chair Alexi Rodriguez. "A tremendous amount of thought and effort went into the search process, and we couldn't be more pleased with the result. Clarice brings extensive knowledge and experience that we believe will be a great benefit to the organization and the industry."

Turner is a ninth generation Californian and has a long history of serving on corporate and non-profit boards including the Culinary Institute of America, Delicato Family Wines, the National Restaurant Association, Washington State University School of Business and San Francisco State University Lam School of Business.

Along with her former global executive positions, Turner was also an international business major at Fudan University in China and understands the role different nationalities play in trade, business and culture.

"I am honored to lead the Almond Board of California," Turner said. "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity to combine my California heritage, roots in generational farming and executive experience to build on the strong foundation established in 1950. I look forward to working collaboratively with the staff, board, growers, handlers and industry stakeholders in the coming years."

Turner's first official day was September 5, and she began working closely with the board, current President and CEO Richard Waycott and the ABC executive team to ensure a smooth transition over the coming months. The onboarding period for the next 45 days will culminate in industry visits to all almond growing regions up and down the state the week of October 23. An invitation for the industry visits will be forthcoming shortly.

"We are thankful for Richard, not just for his commitment to the industry over the last 21 years, but also for his support during this transition period to make certain Clarice and the organization are set up for success moving forward," Rodriguez said.

Waycott informed the board of directors in November 2022 that he planned to step away from his ABC responsibilities at the end of 2023 to pursue other interests.

*Article contributed by the Almond Board. ◆*



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### TIME TO CONSIDER

*It is hard to think about post-harvest activities when harvest started so late this year. Many growers will still be in the thick of it all when this article is published, but we should always be looking toward the future. The start of a successful year begins when the last almond leaves the field. Let's discuss a few topics and tasks that should be looked at as we move into the post season.*

**Planning** is vital to having a successful year. Now is the time to sit down and plan out your 2024 calendar. A good idea is to set up a meeting with your Pest Control Adviser (PCA) and Certified Crop Control Adviser (CCA) where you can debrief on the past year and go over tissue, soil and hull samples to see where you may have some deficiencies. Discuss what worked and what didn't, where you could improve, and what your goals are for the new year. In this meeting you can also work on a fertilizer and pesticide budget.

A **budget** will help plan out spray and fertilizer applications, what products you might use, and the cost of those applications. Having this road map will lead to less confusion and a more focused approach to farming for 2024.

**Water** is the most important task post-harvest. After harvesting it is vital to return to watering at the full rate of Evapotranspiration (ET). ET is the amount of water being used by the crop in a given time period. Reduced water in the post-harvest may result in reduced bloom and crop the following year. The latter half of summer and fall is when the trees are going through bud differentiation, which means the trees are deciding how many buds will become fruiting or will stay vegetative. If the tree does not have enough energy stored or is not strong enough to support fruiting buds, the result will be more vegetative growth, which leads to lower crop the following year. As we all know, water availability is different for each grower — but if you have it, use it!



*Sulfate of Potash (SOP) Misapplication. Photo by Ben Goudie*

What about nutrient demand? The times when growers used to apply 75-100 units of **Nitrogen (N)** post-harvest are gone. According to the CDFA Fertilization Guidelines, only 20% of your yearly nitrogen should be applied in the post-harvest timing. In some cases, the post-harvest application may be reduced, or even eliminated. If July tissue samples show nitrogen concentration of higher than 2.5% or 2.8%, the extra nitrogen may not be needed. If your crop came in heavier or your nitrogen levels were low in the July samples, a nitrogen application would be a good idea to provide energy for next year's bloom.

**Potassium (K)** is also vital for next season's bloom. Checking the K levels in the soil and tissue can help decide the best materials to be used. In some soils K levels may be high, but that parent material may not be available to the tree. This would be a situation where a soil-applied granular would come into play. Remember, K does not have much leaching potential, except in sandy soils, so you want to place the material in a concentrated strip about 3-4 feet from the tree. In micro irrigation situations, you can use a diverted broadcast method to spread the material through the irrigation wetting zone for more contact with feeder roots. Drip irrigation makes things a little difficult when trying to soil apply K material in the irrigation wetting zone, so fertigation during the season will be needed to

supplement any deficiency. As you can see in *Figure 1*, this drip irrigation orchard has a sulfate of potash (SOP) application nowhere near the wetting zone, which will lead to, at best, an inefficient uptake. This is an example of how not to apply SOP. If tissue samples are low, a liquid injection of K is recommended to get a quick response within the plant. I have always thought of K in the soil as a savings account and K levels in tissue as a checking account. You can remove and add money to a checking account easily. However, if you deplete your savings account, it can take years to replenish it.

The last sample that should be taken this time of year is a hull sample. Hull samples give a better representation of **Boron** levels, since boron accumulates in the hull. According to the CDFA Fertilization Guidelines, a sample with less than 80ppm is considered deficient. Growers can apply Boron to the orchard soil in the dormant season, which can raise levels in deficient orchards. Samples that are between 80ppm-120ppm would benefit from a post-harvest foliar application of boron. Always discuss boron applications with your PCA/CCA, since over-application can lead to toxicity. As I mentioned above, post-harvest foliar nutrient sprays can be beneficial. Applying them soon after harvest is finished allows the plant to utilize that energy and put it to use for next year's crop. Tasks may pile up after harvest, so be diligent in making this application. If it is applied too late in the season and leaves are falling, the benefit of the application will be lost.

Many of the available nutrient sprays include material such as boron, phosphite and zinc. When these nutrients are applied, they enter through the leaf. The tree then goes through the senescence period, where the tree will pull all the available nutrients from the leaves to store for the dormant period. Applications of zinc sulfate used to be popular to "put the trees to sleep". Nowadays, it is used to reduce inoculum of diseases like scab and rust by removing the leaves from the infected trees. In an orchard that does not have these issues, you would not want to prematurely remove the leaves for a couple of reasons:

1. Trees continue to go through the photosynthesis process after harvest and are producing carbohydrates, which will be stored for next year's bloom.
2. If an application of zinc sulfate is made before the plant has entered the leaf senescence period and is still trying to perform photosynthesis, the tree may produce new leaves. These new leaves will remove the stored energy from the plant and most likely lead to a reduced bloom the following year.



*Gypsum Pile Ready for Application. Photo by Trent Voss*

**Soil amendments** are another topic that needs to be discussed for the post-harvest timing. In reviewing soil samples with your PCA/CCA, you can decide which product you may or may not need. **Ag Lime** is used to raise soil pH in acidic situations, and if your soil is low in magnesium, **dolomite** may be a better fit. For soils that already have a high pH, you will need to look at applying **sulfur** to lower the pH. **Gypsum** is pH neutral and can be used to help reduce soil crusting. The reduced soil crusting will increase water infiltration.

Winter **weeds** will start showing up soon after harvest. The UC Davis IPM website Introduction to weed photo gallery — UC Statewide IPM Program ([ucanr.edu](http://ucanr.edu)) has an excellent photo gallery to help you identify what weeds you have. This, along with talks with your PCA, will give



Cover Crop. Photo by Ben Goudie

you an understanding of what product will work best for your situation. It is also smart to talk about a pre-emergent application, and how to set it up to be as successful as possible. **Cover crops** can also be planted in this post-harvest timing. Broadcast or drill the seed into the soil before your final irrigation or a fall rain – ideally by the end of October. This will lead to a good germination and growth with winter rains. This will also help you take the next step to qualify for the Triple Diamond Level of *Blue Diamond's Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program*. If you would like more information on the program, please contact your Regional Manager.

Lastly, some cultural practices are performed in the post-harvest timing. Many fields will need to be floated to smooth out the orchard floor after harvest. Others with high amounts of plant material or clippings may need to be

rototilled. Planning for winter shaking and pre-emergent applications should also be discussed. As you all know, the post-harvest/dormant season goes by much quicker than expected, so having a plan and following it will lead to a successful start to your season. ◆



**Trent Voss,**  
**Regional Manager,**  
**Blue Diamond Member Relations**





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- Includes platform, Infeed dump hopper, Anex C-style bucket elevator with 50/50 split buckets
- Stainless steel hopper over chutes has been modified to prevent plugging and bridging of product
- Machine is currently set for 2 passes (4 channels each) and can be run as a single pass (8 channels)
- Walnut Setting (can be converted to Almonds)

Please contact Nina at:  
(209) 609-6689



**BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS**

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