



# almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023



*Blue Diamond Growers' 113<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Growers Meeting*

*An Example of Partnership:  
California Manufacturers  
& Technology Association*

*Ag Council of  
California: At  
Home & Abroad*

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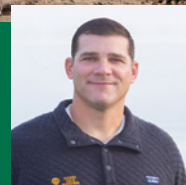
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Happy Holidays! Sharing *Blue Diamond Growers* goodness around the world.



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Dan Cummings | Chico

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

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Kai Bockmann  
President & CEO

## “GROWING TOGETHER” ANNUAL MEETING 2023

### CEO's Speech

Well, what a year it's been. I want to offer an enormous thank you to Dan Cummings and the Board for my warm welcome to *Blue Diamond* and all the support you've given me in my first year.

Dan has been on the board since Nov. 2006 and has a 30-year history in our industry. We are lucky to have him!

Since joining you in January, I've spent much of my time visiting your orchards, attending district meetings and getting the opportunity to meet so many of our growers and their families. I'm incredibly grateful for the warm hospitality, the frank conversations and the opportunity to connect on a deeper level with you, our grower-owners.

When the Annual Meeting planning team asked me what the theme this year should be, I knew it had to be about **Growing Together**. When I think of growing together, a major part of what we're talking about is our strategic plans to really grow our business and provide you with greater returns.

I think everyone in this room agrees, it's been a rough year. We can't change that. I wish I could. But what we can do is grow this business! What we can do is bring the very best team together to execute a high growth strategy and bring *Blue Diamond* to more families all over the world.

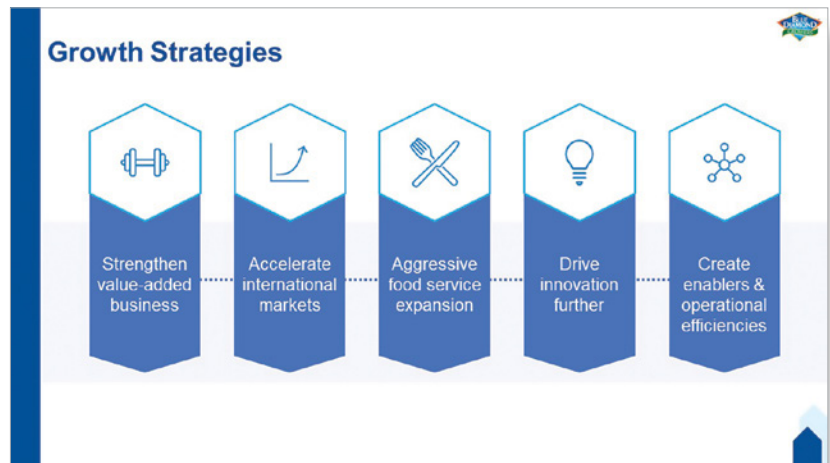






To drive this growth, we have a new Executive Leadership team in place with some familiar faces but also some new leaders. Because what worked in the past is not what will work in the future. To create a bigger, better, stronger *Blue Diamond*, we needed some new talent with specific skill sets.

Our two newest leaders are Carmen Bourgaize and Tony Laurenzana and I'm thrilled to have them both on board. Carmen brings 20 years of food service experience getting products anywhere and everywhere that consumers eat and shop. And Tony's expertise in identifying prospective partners, and global markets that are ripe for growth, so we can expand our international footprint will be key to our growth strategy.



At the Annual Meeting, I sat down with three other leaders, our Chief Growth Officer, Raj Joshi; COO/CFO Dean LaVallee and your VP of Member Relations, Mel Machado to discuss some details behind our strategic growth plan.

We discussed our five core initiatives along with goals and progress in each:

**Strengthening our Value-Added Business** — Almond Breeze is the #1 almondmilk brand in the U.S. and is growing dominance around the world, especially in South Korea and Brazil. *Blue Diamond* is also the #1 snack almond brand in the U.S. and we remain fiercely competitive. But right now, we are only in less than 20% of households throughout the country, so we have a lot of runway left.

Our goal is to bring in more consumers and increase household share by making our brands top of mind through great advertising and innovative retail placement.



## Accelerating our International Footprint

— Canada has about 10% of the population of the U.S. therefore we should expect our volume in Canada to be about 10% the size of the U.S. volume.

Canadians have a strong appreciation for almonds and innovative flavors. And no one does flavors better than *Blue Diamond*. In fact, our *Spicy Dill Pickle* snack almonds have been extremely popular and have a bit of a cult following at *Costco Canada*. We have retail distribution on many of our sizes and

flavors, but we don't have our full assortment available yet. So there's room for us to increase distribution of some of our most popular U.S. flavors and formats, and potentially create custom regional Canadian flavors too.

**Aggressive Food Service Expansion** — Almonds, almond flour and almondmilk play a huge part as key ingredients in many popular foodservice applications.

From the almond milk in your coffee, to the almond flour in the baked goods, to the slivered almonds on the salad, there are so many possibilities. Right now, our products find their way into food service through third party distributors.

We want to build direct relationships with major accounts. By staying close to the chefs, baristas and buyers who order our products, we'll be able to leverage *Blue Diamond's* strengths as a competitive advantage.

**Drive Innovation** — We're constantly innovating new ways to get more almonds into more households around the world. By diversifying our reach and targeting various demographics, we are increasing our household share. *Thin Dipped Almonds* launched earlier this year across the U.S. and has captured the hearts and taste buds of our customers. Our new *Chilé 'N Lime* won *Best Nuts by People Food Awards*. And we've doubled down on non-dairy expansion efforts to meet evolving consumer preferences.



Our newest innovation, *Almond Breeze*®: *Almond & Oat* will debut in January 2024. This unique blend brings together the deliciousness of almond milk with the creaminess of oat, using the same amount of almonds as we do in *Almond Breeze*® products now.





**Operational Efficiencies** — A lot goes into running our business of getting almonds to customers around the world. This year more than ever, we’re looking at ways to cut costs in operations. We’re looking at opportunities to save money, through distribution, systems, and administrative duties we do each day. The goal is to do things smarter, and to accomplish more with less. By reducing our costs we can provide a better return for growers as we move forward.

In addition to reducing our costs, we’re looking at innovative ways to reduce our growers’ costs of doing business as well. I’m excited to introduce our Growers Connect Marketplace, an innovative group purchasing platform that truly epitomizes the concept of “stronger together” to help our growers reduce input costs. More information will come as that exciting program gets ready for launch.

Lastly, I want to thank you, our growers, for entrusting us with your livelihoods and your wonderful almonds. I won’t let you and your families down. I am beyond grateful to be *Blue Diamond*’s CEO and I’m so excited to take us to the next level.

I wish you and your families a Happy Holidays! ◆

*Kai*

Kai Bockmann  
President & CEO



**BUY TOGETHER. SELL TOGETHER. GROW TOGETHER.**



Dan Cummings  
Chairman of the Board



## “GROWING TOGETHER” ANNUAL MEETING 2023

### Chairman's Speech

The theme of our annual meeting and annual report this year was **Growing Together**. The belief that we are stronger together is the ideal our co-op was founded upon in 1910.

My family has been part of this co-op for nearly 100 years. And I have to say, I don't think I've ever seen a more challenging year for us as almond growers.

We've experienced a combination of weather anomalies that led to significant quality challenges, and economic conditions that created problems for consumers, customers, and growers alike. This has produced weak market conditions and increased our operational costs, as growers, to unprecedented — some would say devastating — levels.

As one of our member families, the Navarras, shared in the wonderful video shown during the Annual Meeting luncheon, through good years and bad, the strength of our co-op helps sustain our farms, our livelihood. That's why, despite the crop year we've experienced, I've never been more optimistic about the future of *Blue Diamond*.



Veterans Day was observed around the country the weekend before Annual Meeting. I want to

acknowledge and thank all the growers and team members throughout *Blue Diamond* who have served in the military. We are grateful for your service and honored to have you as part of our *Blue Diamond Growers* family.

Each year in recognition of Veterans Day, our *Blue Diamond* facilities host flag raising ceremonies and special breakfasts for our team members and retirees who are veterans.

This year, our Sacramento site also sponsored and hosted a care package assembly event where 30 volunteers packed 50 boxes filled with *Blue Diamond* products and necessities donated by our employees for troops around the world.

Also this past September, *Blue Diamond* employees participated in Move America Forward's Annual Pack-a-thon to help assemble an incredible 2001 care packages for troops in remembrance of 9/11.



Blue Diamond's commitment to supporting our troops is especially meaningful to me. My own stepson, Ignacio serves in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division of the United States Army and is currently stationed in Ft. Bragg. His mother and I are extremely proud of his service to our country.

As most of you know I'm a third generation *Blue Diamond* grower. I've had the honor of serving as your District 1 Director since 2006, and Board Chairman since 2014. It has been my extreme pleasure to help lead the co-op in this capacity.

However, after 17 years on the Board, I have decided this will be my final term. Following the Annual Meeting, I turned my Chairman's gavel over to your District 5 Director, Steve Van Duyn who was elected as your new Chair. I plan to spend the remainder of my term assisting Steve through this transition.

If we've ever shared a conversation, you know that my family is everything to me. As I step away from the Board, I look forward to spending more time with my beautiful wife Yolanda, son Daniel, and the rest of our family in the home we are remodeling in Sevilla, Spain.

Like any healthy organization, the strength of *Blue Diamond* relies on dedicated leadership in every aspect of our co-op — from our Board of Directors to our Co-Op Leadership Team to our Grower Liaison Committee. I want to congratulate our new Grower Liaisons and returning Board of Directors members who were announced at the Annual Meeting. Thank you all for your commitment to helping lead our cooperative.

This time last year, I was leading the search to find a new president and CEO for *Blue Diamond Growers*. An international executive search firm identified a number of excellent candidates, both inside the co-op and from other companies. Ultimately we chose a leader with exceptional expertise. Someone I consider to be wicked smart and not afraid to make hard decisions.

From the moment Kai Bockmann started in January, he hit the ground running with an initial focus of meeting with every board member in every district throughout the state. He was determined to talk with as many of our growers as he could about what you need from your cooperative.

Over the last several months, Kai and his Leadership Team have worked tirelessly to identify opportunities to strengthen *Blue Diamond's* product portfolio and substantially grow markets for our almonds around the world. They have developed an aggressive strategic plan and growth trajectory for *Blue Diamond* over the next three years that we've reviewed extensively as a Board. I want to assure you that each member of your co-op's leadership team is personally committed to executing this strategic plan and driving *Blue Diamond's* success.



## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

A key element of Growing Together is our co-op's ability to develop and leverage strong partnerships. Over the years, we've built relationships with local, state and federal leaders that have helped shape, advance and in some cases protect our industry.

One example of the impact made through those relationships is the recent bipartisan effort to secure critical funding for Nickels Soil Lab, the largest almond research facility in the U.S., and a member of our co-op. I want to acknowledge and thank Senator Brian Dahle and Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry for successfully earmarking \$503,000 for the support of lab operations.

One individual in particular, *Blue Diamond's* federal advocate Julian Heron, has forged those crucial relationships and advocated on behalf of *Blue Diamond Growers* and our industry for more than five decades. I have considered this gentleman a close personal friend for the past 30 years and it was my extreme honor to recognize the extraordinary contributions of Julian Heron during the Annual Meeting. During our special tribute to Julian's legacy, I was able

to share personal notes from a number of *Blue Diamond* leaders, including Roger Baccigaluppi, Steve Easter, Susan Brauner, and Clinton Schick.

There are few words to describe the immense impact Julian has had on the almond industry, on *Blue Diamond* and on our growers. We will be forever grateful for his continued dedication and fortitude over the last 50 years.

Another essential way we are Growing Together as a co-op is through our commitment to nurturing the next generation of farmers and industry leaders. *Blue Diamond* fosters leadership in current and future *Blue Diamond* members and through the industry through several different programs.

Since its inception with my inaugural class of 1994, our *Blue Diamond* Leadership Program has graduated more than 550 members. The night before the Annual Meeting, we honored our 2023 Leadership Program class with a special graduation dinner. Congratulations to all graduates. I'd also like to acknowledge and thank Nick Blom for serving as program Chair this year.





Another way we nurture the next generation of ag leaders is by providing college scholarships to local high school students through the *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation. Since 2011, the Foundation has awarded nearly 200 scholarships to help students in local communities achieve their dreams of a college education. I'd like to recognize John Monroe's dedication and passion as president of our Foundation. When planning your end of year philanthropic donations, please consider supporting our Foundation.

*Blue Diamond Growers* has a long-standing partnership with Future Farmers of America, or FFA, to help promote education and excellence in agriculture. I'm proud that once again this year we were able to match donations to FFA on Giving Tuesday up to \$25,000. With our support, this year the FFA was able to raise \$57,630, providing 678 California FFA members with their own iconic blue jackets.

Each year I have the privilege of recognizing one *Blue Diamond* grower for exceptional industry leadership and for going above and beyond to positively represent our *Blue Diamond Growers* cooperative.

This year's recipient of the Chairman's Ambassador of the Year award is Kelli Evans. A third generation California farmer, Kelli has dedicated herself to advocating for

California agriculture and giving a powerful voice to almond growers throughout the industry and in government circles. In June, Kelli was selected to serve on the Almond Board of California. She also was recently named the Almond Alliance of California's Member of the Year and chairs the newly formed Almond Alliance Grower Committee.

Kelli also uses her leadership and influence to uniquely tell *Blue Diamond's* story and provide a personal connection with our growers, as one of our most active *Blue Diamond* Social Media Ambassadors. Congratulations, Kelli, and thank you for your contributions to *Blue Diamond*.

In closing, I want to personally thank those of you who I have partnered with over my last 17 years on the Board. It has truly been an honor. ♦



Dan Cummings  
*Chairman of the Board*



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**Director, Member Relations**

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**Tehama, Butte, Glenn, Sutter, & Yuba**  
 Christine Ivory, (530) 518-9109

**Colusa, Yolo & Solano**  
 Nicole Jansen, (530) 338-6440

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 KC Clendenin, (209) 596-5375

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**Stanislaus County, East of Hwy 99, South of Tuolumne River**  
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**Merced County, South of Merced River & Hills Ferry & Stuhr Roads, North of Hwy 140**  
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 Carla Youngblood, (559) 240-0906

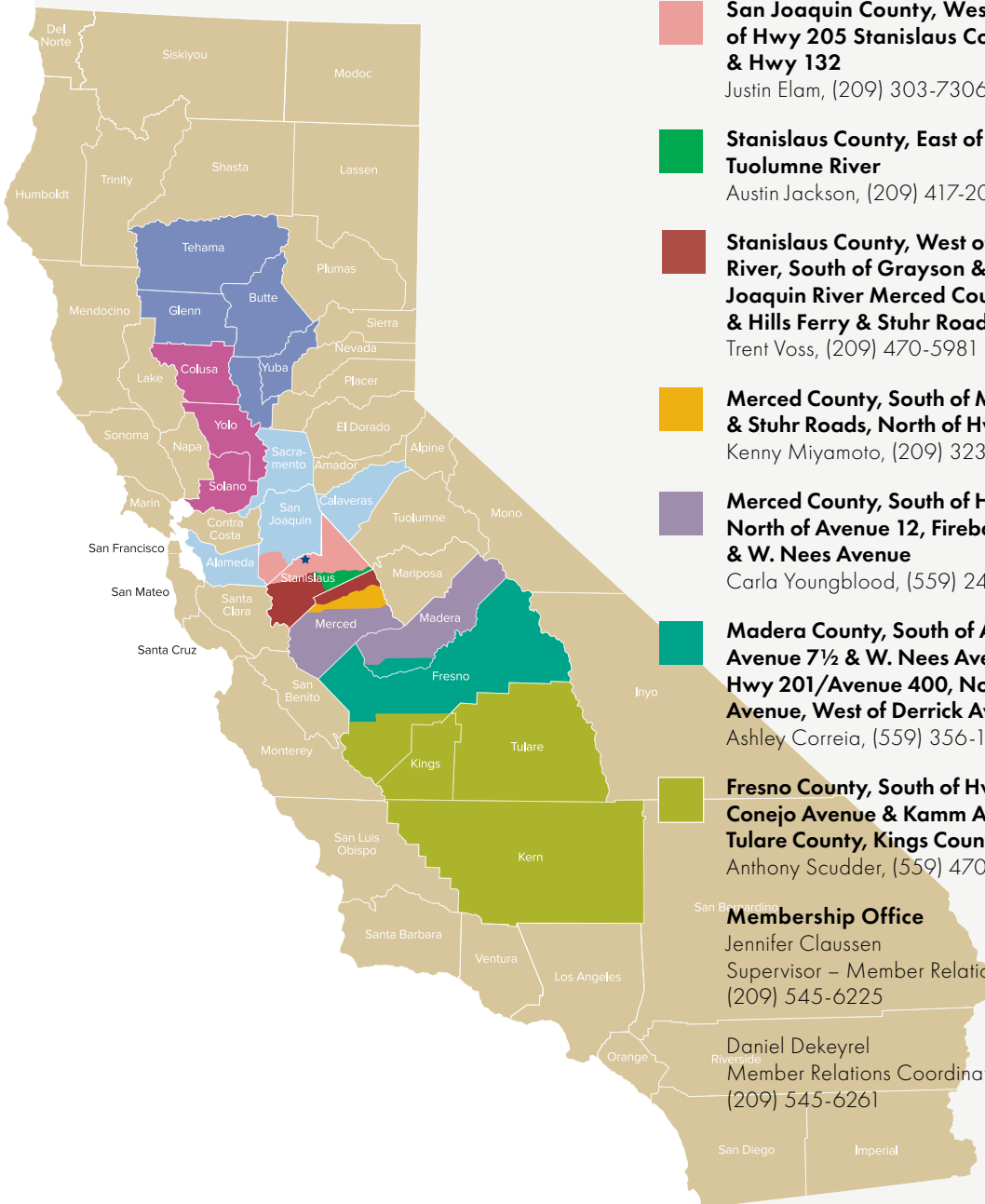
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 Ashley Correia, (559) 356-1584

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- Brian Erickson
- Stacy Gore
- Jerry Montz
- Steve Carlos
- Fred Montgomery
- Daniel Varner **VC**
- Greg Overton
- Darcy Jones
- Kevin Davies
- Timothy Perraie
- John Nock **C**
- Meredith Christopher **!**
- Dan Cummings **\*\***

## DISTRICT 2

- Maryann Warmerdam
- Don Bransford
- Ryan Finnen **VC**
- Brian Cahill
- Jake Driver
- Ron Tadlock
- Jake Spooner
- Amy Abele
- Kelli Evans
- Carole M. Cain
- Catherine Cain **C**
- Josh Pippit **!**
- John Monroe **\*\***
- Elaine Rominger **\***
- Gerald Rominger **\***

## DISTRICT 3

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- Rick Phillips
- Louie Tallerico
- Mike Bogetti
- Allen Sipma
- Bert Van Ryn
- Rudy Mussi
- Zack Reinstein **VC**
- Bruce Oosterkamp **C**
- Donald Drake
- Noah Andersen
- Dirk Van Laar **!**
- Dale Van Groningen **\*\***
- John Thoming **\*** **ABA**

## DISTRICT 4

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- Rick Morris
- Paul Adrian
- Wayne Bruns
- Tim Roos
- Mike Ballatore
- Dawn Price
- Ian Koetsier **C**
- Lance Ioppini
- Wesley Eisenga **VC**
- Matt Visser
- Rick Van Vliet **!**
- George te Velde **\*\***
- Kevin Fondse **\***
- Kenneth Roos **\***

## DISTRICT 5

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- Manuel Furtado
- Lucas Van Duyn **C**
- Grant Ardis **VC**
- Brandon Riddle
- Mark Giannini
- Dennis Bowers
- Arthur Bowman
- Matt Fredriks
- Harry (Sonny) Johns
- Danielle Higby LeBeouf
- Tim Baker **!**
- Stephen Van Duyn **\*\***
- Neil Van Duyn **\***

## DISTRICT 6

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- Michael Mora **VC**
- Paul Danbom **C**
- Eric Genzoli
- Rod Vilas
- Rick Alvernaz
- Gary Marchy
- Dirk Van Konyenburg
- Justin Romero
- Derek Coelho
- Robert Mailloux **!**
- Nick Blom **\*\***
- Charles Crivelli III **\***
- Steve Vilas **\***
- Bill Brush **\*** **ABA**

## DISTRICT 7

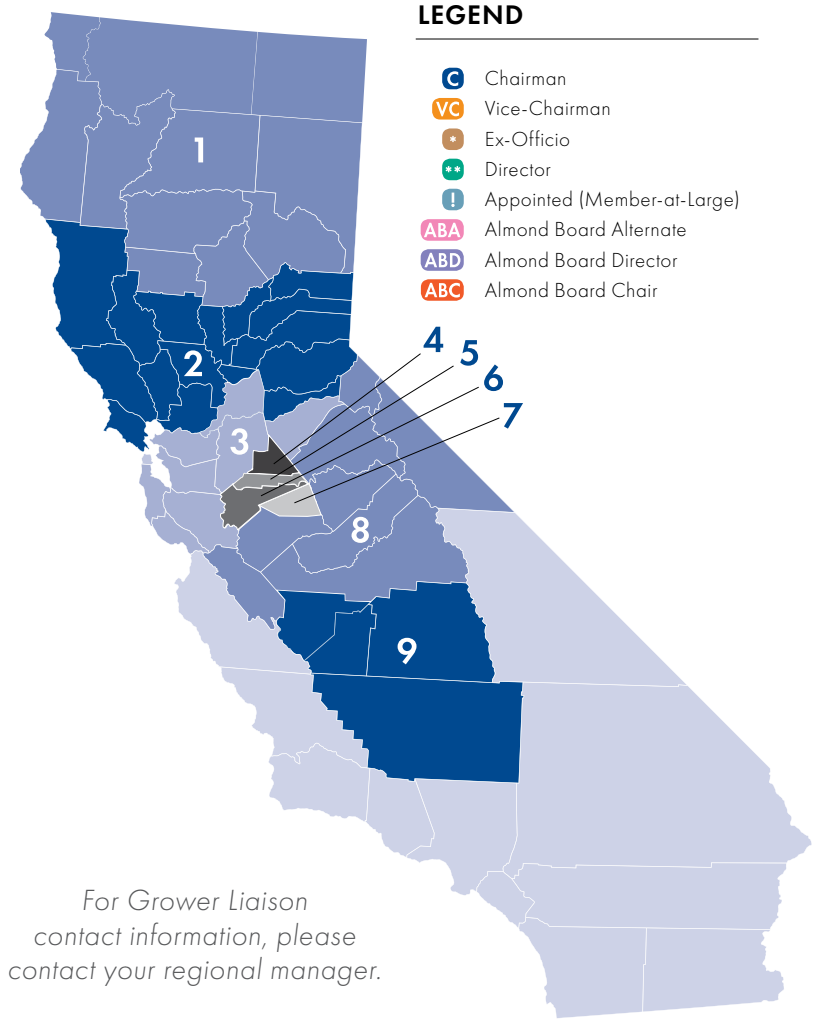
- Galen Miyamoto
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- Louis Bandoni
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- James Ohki
- Jason Chandler **C**
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- Dan Mendenhall **\*\***
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- Steve Bains
- Mike Yager
- Neil Amaral
- Mason McKinney
- Blake Little
- Colin Unruh
- Daniel Babshoff **VC**
- Melvin Lubisich **C**
- Nayiri Saghdejian **!**
- Matt Efid **\*\***
- George Goshgarian **\***
- Aldo Sansoni **\***

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- Kyle Balakian
- Keith Gilbert
- Karamjit Jhandi
- Mark Tos
- Benjamin Wilson
- Paramjit Dosanjh **C**
- Lisa Marroquin
- Shaminder S. Brar
- Gerard A. Loaza **VC**
- Chris Couture
- Pete Romanini **!**
- Kent Stenderup **\*\*** **ABA**
- Clinton Shick **\***



## Blue Diamond Celebrates 113<sup>th</sup> Annual Growers Meeting

On November 15, 2023, *Blue Diamond Growers* celebrated its 113<sup>th</sup> Annual Growers Meeting in Modesto, CA. While discussing the meeting's theme, "Growing Together," *Blue Diamond* President and CEO, Kai Bockmann, reflected on his first ten months in the leadership role and acknowledged the significant challenges faced by growers and the world's largest almond cooperative.



Both Kai Bockmann and Dan Cummings pointed to the remarkable headwinds for the almond industry in 2023. Photo credit: Mari Patterson



"We have a rich history, an exceptional brand, and the right people and culture to deliver against our ambitious growth plan," said Bockmann. Photo credit: Herta Wright

In Bockmann's remarks and those of *Blue Diamond Growers'* Board Chairman, Dan Cummings, both pointed to the remarkable headwinds for the almond industry, including higher input costs and inflationary pressures, depressed market prices, shifts in consumer purchasing patterns, unfavorable weather conditions and reduced crop sizes. To help counter these challenges, *Blue Diamond Growers* is advancing an aggressive strategic growth plan to navigate the marketplace conditions and drive substantial growth.

"Volatility is our new normal, but our destination is set — and it is one of growth," said Bockmann. "While this past year brought many challenges for our growers, no challenge is insurmountable. We have a rich history, an exceptional brand, and the right people and culture to deliver against our ambitious growth plan."

In laying out the plan, Bockmann shared with the audience that the strategies and methods that have helped bring the cooperative to where it is today will not achieve the growth and market expansion vital to *Blue Diamond* grower-owners' financial success. The new growth plan prioritizes expansion into the massive foodservice market and other strategically selected international markets, while also strengthening the value-added business, doubling down on product innovation, and driving operational efficiencies.

"Foodservice is a trillion dollar industry that represents a significant growth opportunity for *Blue Diamond*, and we will directly target that sector as a strategic priority," said Bockmann. "Additionally, we will diversify and innovate our product portfolio beyond our flagship *Blue Diamond* snack nuts and *Almond Breeze*®. We will build on the tremendous success of these products — which are both the #1 brands in America for nuts and almondmilk."

Bockmann shared that flavor-focused product innovation remains a top priority, commenting that "no one does flavor like *Blue Diamond*," as proved by the widely popular Chilé 'N Lime flavored snack nuts. The flavor, which was launched in Walmart this past year as a limited time offer, won the "Best Nuts" award in PEOPLE Magazine's 2023 Food Awards.





Chilé 'N Lime won the "Best Nuts" award in PEOPLE Magazine's 2023 Food Awards



(from left to right) Mel Machado, Kai Bockmann, Dean LaVallee and Raj Joshi discuss Blue Diamond Growers' new Strategic Plan. Photo credit: Herta Wright

The *Blue Diamond* Innovation team will continue to work with new flavors while advancing new and existing categories, including plant-based yogurt, chocolate, baking, beverages and plant-based cheese. On the foodservice front, the strategic growth plan focus is already delivering results. The *Blue Diamond* International Consumer and Innovation teams worked closely with a strategic partner in South Korea in the past year to develop *Almond Breeze*® Barista Blend, which was introduced in 6,500 Starbucks across China earlier this year.

"I'm confident that *Blue Diamond Growers* is poised to thrive in the years to come because we are stronger together," said Bockmann. "We are excited to grow together as we bring our strategic plan and collective vision to life."

### Supporting Grower Success and Advancing Sustainability

In addition to tackling the marketplace challenges with strategy, innovation and expansion, *Blue Diamond Growers* also created a new grower-focused buying coalition. To help connect growers with trusted, well-known suppliers and build local, long-term relationships, *Blue Diamond's* Growers Connect Marketplace aims to reduce input costs for farmers by negotiating



*Blue Diamond's* Growers Connect Marketplace aims to reduce production costs for farmers by negotiating better discounts with suppliers

better discounts with suppliers via group purchasing organizations and the co-ops' own internal platform. The goal of the marketplace is to reduce growers' input costs by 5-15%.

Additionally, a notable highlight from the year is *Blue Diamond Growers'* advancements in sustainability. To continue growing the cooperative's commitment to stewardship, *Blue Diamond's* Member Relations team held several online webinars encouraging grower participation in *Blue Diamond's* Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP), a program where growers can earn financial incentives for implementing best practices related to orchard management, environmental issues, occupational health and safety, and community investment. These webinars also hosted the



*Almond Breeze*® Barista Blend was introduced in 6,500 Starbucks across China earlier this year

Almond Board of California Almond Stewardship Platform and technical partners, the Pollinator Partnership and Project *Apis m.*, to discuss and educate growers on Bee-Friendly Farming.

In July of this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded *Blue Diamond* a five-year, \$45 million “Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities” grant, a program designed to help farmers implement climate-smart practices on their land. The program offers growers no-cost cover crop seed and a financial incentive to plant cover crops and/or conservation cover on their land. These practices not only work toward taking carbon out of the atmosphere, but they also enhance orchard biodiversity and improve soil health. The USDA Climate-Smart grant complements *Blue Diamond*’s OSIP by lowering the cost of implementing the pollinator-friendly practices required to receive Bee-Friendly Farming certification.



## Blue Diamond Announces New Board Chairman and Industry Recognitions

In addition to sharing a vision for the future and highlights from the past year, *Blue Diamond Growers* announced a new Board Chairman and recognized the efforts of industry leaders.



Steve Van Duyn enters his role as newly elected Board Chair. Photo credit: Gerry McIntyre

Steve Van Duyn was elected to serve as the new *Blue Diamond* Board Chairman. Van Duyn is a longtime almond farmer and *Blue Diamond* grower who has served on *Blue Diamond Growers*’ Board of Directors, representing District 5, since 2005 and served as Vice Chair since 2021. Van Duyn is the owner, president, and CEO of Van Duyn Family Farms in Ripon where he and his family grow almonds, walnuts, grapes and cherries. Van Duyn enters his role as newly elected chairman from current Board Chair, Dan Cummings – a third-generation almond farmer from Chico – after a distinguished 17 years of service on the *Blue Diamond* Board.

“We cannot underestimate the incredible impact that Dan has had on the success of *Blue Diamond Growers* during his leadership on the board,” said Bockmann. “His wisdom, dedication, business accumen, global industry knowledge and steadfast commitment to progress – in any marketplace condition – has served the growers of *Blue Diamond* incredibly well and will be positively felt for many years to come. As Dan transitions leadership to Steve Van Duyn we are excited for the start of this new chapter and working together to carry on the legacy of service that Dan so admirably exemplified.”

In addition to the new Board Chairman announcement, long-time industry champion, Julian Heron, was recognized for his remarkable leadership on behalf of *Blue Diamond Growers*. As a long-time, highly influential advocate, Heron is credited with advancing *Blue Diamond Growers*’ voice and positions in Washington, D.C. for more than five decades. Among his many accomplishments are creation of the Market Access Program (MAP), a program that has benefited *Blue Diamond Growers* and countless other agricultural entities over the years. Heron was also instrumental in securing high-profile *Blue Diamond Growers*’ representation on Presidential Advisory Boards during the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations to ensure *Blue Diamond Growers* had a seat at the table at the highest levels of federal decision making and policy-related input. Also participating in the recognition was Julian’s colleague, Lynn Jacquez, who will help lead *Blue Diamond*’s federal advocacy initiatives moving forward.



Kelli Evans was named the 2023 Chairman’s Grower Ambassador of the year. Evans is a third-generation Hispanic almond and rice farmer from Live Oak, CA. She is a staunch advocate for the almond industry in California and has served in numerous leadership roles and committees in support of *Blue Diamond Growers* and the almond industry. Additionally, Evans is highly visible on her social media platforms, advancing education and understanding about the agriculture industry.

“Without question, it has been a challenging year, but the loyalty and leadership demonstrated by deeply committed individuals — such as Julian and Kelli — along with our current and incoming board leadership coupled with the dedication of *Blue Diamond* employees, will allow us to overcome these challenges together,” said Cummings. “I’m confident *Blue Diamond* will deliver great prosperity and a sustainable future for our growers, employees, their families, and the communities we call home.” ♦

### Blue Diamond Annual Report Now Available

In conjunction with the Annual Growers Meeting, the *Blue Diamond Growers* 2023 “Growing Together” Annual Report is now available on the *Blue Diamond* website at [www.bluediamond.com/press/](http://www.bluediamond.com/press/)



Long-time industry champion, Julian Heron, was recognized for his remarkable leadership on behalf of *Blue Diamond Growers*. Photo credit: Mari Patterson



Kelli Evans was named the 2023 Chairman’s Grower Ambassador of the year. Photo credit: Mari Patterson



# ANNUAL MEETING







# GROWING TOGETHER

## Meeting SHOTS





## ANNUAL GROWERS MEETING GROWER SESSIONS

### Sustainability: Translating Orchard Stewardship to Market Value



At *Blue Diamond*, sustainability provides an opportunity for growth. Customers who use our almonds to manufacture cereals, chocolate, snack bars and more are asking their almond suppliers to align with federally mandated and consumer-driven sustainability goals. Consumers who buy our snack almonds and *Almond Breeze*® products expect brands to reflect their sustainability values. Dr. Dan Sonke was joined by other *Blue Diamond* sustainability and marketing experts to discuss how *Blue Diamond*'s Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP) and the USDA Climate-Smart Grant are driving returns for our grower-owners.



#### Panelists from *Blue Diamond Growers*:

- **Dr. Dan Sonke**, Sr. Director of Sustainability (Moderator)
- **Erik Stanek**, Sustainability Specialist
- **Sarb Dhanjal**, Sr. Director of Consumer Insights Analytics and Advocacy
- **Jasdeep Bains**, Sustainability Specialist
- **Loretta Kelly**, Director of Global Strategic Marketing

#### Deep Dive on Navel Orangeworm

With record Navel Orangeworm (NOW) numbers inflicting severe damages on an already struggling almond harvest, *Blue Diamond*'s receiving stations saw incredible numbers of low-quality, worm-eaten almonds statewide. Mel Machado sat down with other industry professionals to discuss how the almond industry arrived at such high levels of NOW in 2023 and how growers can alleviate NOW issues in the future.



*Sustainability: Translating Orchard Stewardship to Market Value. Photo credit: Mari Patterson*

**Panelists:**

- **Mel Machado**, Vice President of Member Relations, *Blue Diamond Growers* (Moderator)
- **Dr. Joel Siegel**, Research Entomologist, US Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service
- **Trent Voss**, Regional Manager, *Blue Diamond Growers*
- **Carla Youngblood**, Regional Manager, *Blue Diamond Growers*



*Deep Dive on Navel Orangeworm. Photo credit: Mari Patterson*

**Growers Connect Marketplace**

*Blue Diamond's* Procurement Team is creating a new platform that provides our members lower prices and larger discounts on a wide range of products, services and inputs. *Blue Diamond's* Coe Hawkins and others discussed how the Growers Connect Marketplace combines *Blue Diamond's* procurement experts with grower insights to offer reduced discounts, higher rebates and other cost-saving mechanisms to *Blue Diamond's* grower-owners on a variety of commonly used materials, consumable products and other agricultural needs.



**Presenters:**

- **Coe Hawkins**, Director of Procurement and Global Sourcing, *Blue Diamond Growers*
- **Ben Goudie**, Director of Member Relations, *Blue Diamond Growers*
- **Joe Barnett**, Director of Global Supply Technologies, *Blue Diamond Growers*
- **Kelli Evans**, Grower, *Blue Diamond Growers* ♦



*Growers Connect Marketplace. Photo credit: Herta Wright*

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## 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) <small>(Maturity Date of 6/30/2026)</small>
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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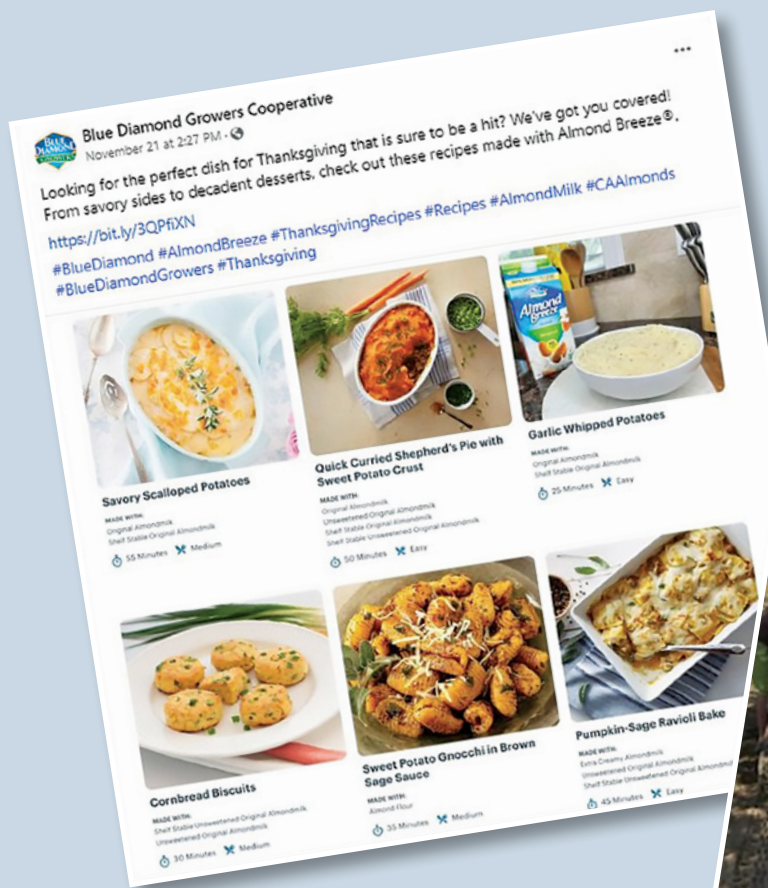
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## #WeAreBlueDiamond2023 Social Media Activity



We've had a busy few months! Our Regional Managers hosted a booth at the first annual Spotlight Ag Conference, where we had the opportunity to connect with ag industry experts. To celebrate National Farmers Day our office staff passed around a fun sign that said, in no uncertain terms, "WE LOVE OUR GROWERS!" Thanks to the USDA Climate-Smart Grant, we were able to host cover crop field days with our technical partners, Project Apis m., where growers learned the ins and outs of cover crop maintenance. We highlighted various *Blue Diamond* employees who go the extra mile and work to make *Blue Diamond Growers* a successful cooperative and a great place to work. During the Thanksgiving season, we highlighted [bluediamond.com](https://www.bluediamond.com), where you can find many tasty recipes that use almond ingredients. To celebrate Giving Tuesday, *Blue Diamond* partnered with California Future Farmers of America (FFA) to provide over 650 iconic blue jackets to California FFA members. ♦







**bluediamondgrowers**

bluediamondgrowers Thank you to everyone who donated to @californiaffa yesterday for Giving Tuesday! They raised an incredible amount of \$57,630, providing 678 California FFA members with their very own blue jacket! We are so glad to be a part of this effort and support agricultural education and FFA.

#CommunityGiving #GivingTuesday #AgEd #WeAreBlueDiamond

22h

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Innovation is a key ingredient in our journey. Kaojue Xiong, Site Training Coordinator, talks about how her innovative ideas are shaping the future of Blue Diamond.

Thinking big and taking informed risks shows that we continuously seek improvement in all our processes. A recent collaboration I was acknowledged for involved supporting the creation of content for our 10-year anniversary interview videos. While this was not part of my designated responsibilities, I am always up to contribute wherever possible. Another accomplishment was my role in the Lean Practitioner Project. Together with my team, we successfully diminished downtime on one of our intricate scales and devised a specialized training module that equips operators with the knowledge to efficiently manage and troubleshoot the equipment.

One of my newest favorite BDG products is the Carolina Reaper! GIMME XTREMES!

#BlueDiamondSpotlight #Innovate #WeAreBlueDiamond #EmployeeSpotlight



**bluediamondgrowers**

bluediamondgrowers In every Blue Diamond almond, there's a story of dedication, resilience, and a passion for excellence, cultivated by the hands that have worked tirelessly to nurture them. Today on #NationalFarmersDay, and every day, we extend our deepest gratitude to our invaluable #BlueDiamondGrowers.

Thank you for being the core of Blue Diamond. Let's celebrate the power of cooperative farming, unity, and collective growth.

#NationalFarmersDay #WeAreBlueDiamond #BlueDiamondProud #CAAlmonds #CAAgriculture #Almonds

kgbee2426 🌱 To all our farmers and the farmers workers, and everyone involved in agriculture. You all make it seem like magic, putting food on our tables ❤️

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**BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS**

**EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT**

**Kaojue Xiong**  
Site Training Coordinator  
Turlock, CA

Thinking big and taking informed risks shows that we continuously seek improvement in all our processes.



## Apple Cinnamon Cream Cheese Muffins

Time: 45 minutes   Difficulty: Easy   Servings: 12

### Ingredients

- 2 cups complete (just add water) pancake mix (plain or honey wheat)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup *Almond Breeze*® Vanilla Almondmilk
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. almond extract
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup peeled, chopped green apple
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup dried cranberries (optional)
- 4 oz. Neufchatel or regular cream cheese (dairy or non-dairy), torn into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped *Blue Diamond* Honey Roasted Almonds (optional)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F and line 12 muffin cups with paper liners.
2. Stir together pancake mix, *Almond Breeze*®, sugar, oil, extract and cinnamon in a medium bowl. Lightly stir in apples, cranberries and cream cheese.
3. Spoon into prepared cups and sprinkle with almonds. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool then store in a covered container with a loose fitting lid. Muffins may be frozen. To reheat, leave wrapped muffins on the counter overnight, or microwave a frozen muffin on 50% power for about 20 seconds.



# Dairy Free Holiday Sugar Cookies

Cook Time: 25 minutes    Difficulty: Easy    Servings: 48

## Ingredients

### Cookies:

- 1 cup butter flavored vegetable shortening
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. cream of tartar
- 3 to 4 tbsp. *Almond Breeze*® Original Almondmilk, divided
- Decorator sugar or sprinkles

### Icing:

- 4 cups powdered sugar
- ¾ cup vegetable shortening
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 to 4 tbsp. *Almond Breeze*® Vanilla Almondmilk
- Food coloring



## Directions

1. Heat oven to 375°F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
2. In large bowl, beat 1 cup shortening, sugar, egg and vanilla with electric mixer on medium speed until creamy, scraping sides of bowl if necessary. Add flour, baking soda, baking powder and cream of tartar. Mix on low speed until well mixed. Add 2 tablespoons of *Almond Breeze* and beat until smooth.
3. Form into 1¼" balls, using rounded tablespoonfuls of dough. Place 2 inches apart on cookie sheets. Spray flat bottom of measuring cup or drinking glass with cooking spray; dip in sugar. Press each cookie flat, dipping into sugar every other time.
4. If desired, lightly brush tops of cookies with remaining *Almond Breeze* and sprinkle with colored decorator sugar or sprinkles or leave plain and frost when cooled.
5. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until edges start to brown. Cool on cookie sheets 2 minutes. Remove to cooling racks.
6. In large bowl, beat powdered sugar, ¾ cup shortening, vanilla and 3 tablespoons of *Almond Breeze* with electric mixer on low speed until moistened. Beat on medium-high speed until smooth and creamy, adding *Almond Breeze* for desired spreading consistency. Tint as desired with food coloring.



# An Example of Partnership: The California Manufacturers and Technology Association

As a global brand and grower-owned cooperative, *Blue Diamond* has a long history of building robust networks and partnerships with other organizations and businesses in the industry. These relationships establish us as an industry leader in both agriculture and business. A key part of that leadership is our participation in and membership of industry associations, which are organizations that provide advocacy, coalition building, information-sharing, and leadership for their members. *Blue Diamond* belongs to several associations, all of which play an important role in our business and the ability to leverage the united voice of the industry at the state and federal levels.

The California Manufacturers and Technology Association (CMTA) is one of the associations *Blue Diamond* has partnered with. CMTA works to create and enhance a strong business climate for California's manufacturers, processors and technology-based companies. The organization has worked with the state government to develop balanced laws, effective regulations and sound public policies that stimulate economic growth and create new jobs while also safeguarding the state's environmental resources. Since *Blue Diamond* joined CMTA, the association has helped to increase *Blue Diamond Growers'* brand visibility and has helped to safeguard our operations through effective advocacy here in California.

In August, *Blue Diamond's* Vice President of Manufacturing, Jeff Hatfield, joined CMTA President and CEO, Lance Hastings, in an on-air interview with Fox 40 to discuss manufacturing at *Blue Diamond*. That same month, CMTA Communications Vice President, Ananda Rochita, toured *Blue Diamond* grower Mike Doherty's farm, learning more about the almond growing process and featuring Doherty and *Blue Diamond* on CMTA social media to highlight the manufacturing side of the almond industry.



In August, Hatfield joined CMTA's Lance Hastings in an on-air interview with Fox 40 to discuss manufacturing at *Blue Diamond*.



CMTA's Ananda Rochita, toured Doherty's farm in August, learning more about the almond growing process, featuring Doherty on CMTA's social media pages. Photo credit: Jake Sonke





# Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship available for 2024 - 2025 School Year



## 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)





Hatfield was featured as a panelist at CMTA's MakingCA conference, discussing manufacturers' perspective on workforce needs and employee development. Photo credit: CMTA



Most recently, CMTA hosted the MakingCA conference this past October to celebrate National Manufacturing Day and bring together policy makers and California-based manufacturers from across the state. *Blue Diamond's* Hatfield was featured as a panelist at the conference, discussing manufacturers' perspective on workforce needs and employee development. Through these panels and conversations, attendees discussed important issues and topics in the industry and highlighted their needs and concerns to policy makers in the room.

In addition to its expertise in media and industry engagement, CMTA is an invaluable asset to manufacturers in California. With thousands of bills moving through the state legislature each year, it is important that *Blue Diamond* and the manufacturing industry have a pulse on the

potential impacts of incoming legislation and regulations. CMTA's team of policy and lobbying experts are incredibly effective, leveraging their influence and expertise to support or mitigate bills. A recent CMTA success this year included a veto of AB (Assembly Bill) 316, a law placing weight limitations on autonomous heavy-duty vehicles.

*Blue Diamond* is grateful for CMTA and their efforts this year. Their interactive approach to partnership and industry engagement have provided us with new ways to showcase the cooperative, increase our brand awareness, support our operations, and safeguard manufacturers, like *Blue Diamond*, from troublesome legislation. Partnerships like these are an invaluable asset to *Blue Diamond* and our ability to support and protect the cooperative and our grower-owners. ◆



**Beth Miller,**  
Government Affairs Intern,  
*Blue Diamond Growers*



**Mallorie Hayes,**  
Government & Public Affairs  
Manager, *Blue Diamond Growers*



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## Lessons Learned During International Delegation Travel and Connections to California Advocacy

*In 2023, I had the privilege of joining two separate delegations of business and agricultural leaders seeking to gain a greater understanding of global energy and climate issues.*



*Emily Rooney with Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis, CDFA Secretary Karen Ross, GO-Biz Director DeeDee Myers, Blue Diamond's Alicia Rockwell and ag industry leaders. Photo credit: Ag Council of California*

### Trade Mission to Japan

On the trade mission to Japan this past spring, I participated in meetings alongside California's Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary Karen Ross, *Blue Diamond's* Alicia Rockwell and others.

Japan's Smart Energy Week coincided with our trip, and the nation highlighted their commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050. Similarly, California is

committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2045 through greenhouse gas emission reductions and the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Japan is advancing smart and sustainable energy solutions through innovative technologies. In my observation, Japan is more focused on tangible progress in areas that are often neglected in California. Importantly, and my personal favorite, was the use of biomass energy. Public and private Japanese funding is being dedicated to biomass initiatives, showing a commitment to moving the technology forward, advancements that we would like to replicate here in California.

### Delegation to Spain

In October I participated in a delegation led by Secretary Ross to Spain regarding climate-smart agriculture and connected with our Spanish counterparts over the issues we face in California.

Spain is embarking on research over the next few years to attempt to measure carbon emissions at the farm level. The *Institut Valencia d'Investigacions Agraries* (IVIA), an agricultural research entity, is one of the participants in this research and I am eager to learn more about the findings.

As we discussed Governor Newsom's signing of Senate Bill (SB) 253, a bill that requires significant emissions reporting, the IVIA director quipped, "the farmers are not going to like that." At least in this space, it seems we have a universal language. SB 253 requires businesses with over one billion dollars in annual revenues to report not only direct (Scope 1) and indirect greenhouse gas emissions (Scope 2), but also supply chain emissions (Scope 3). The Ag Council advocated



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for a California Air Resources Board (CARB)-supported amendment to remove Scope 3 from the bill, but the proponents rejected it.

Of note, Governor Newsom has already stated that the implementation deadlines in SB 253 are “likely infeasible” and that the reporting could result in “inconsistent reporting across businesses.” Given these potential inconsistencies, the governor has directed his Administration to work with the Legislature on what is known as “clean-up” legislation in 2024.

### Ag Council Leadership on Climate Policies

One theme I notice here at home is that California’s environmental aims are so high that the state can sometimes neglect its ability to attain more realistic solutions. It is important that we seek collaboration and resources to help us achieve climate goals, just as our international partners have done.

At Ag Council, we have demonstrated leadership in the climate policy arena. Over a decade ago, we were one of the only entities in the agricultural sector testifying at CARB ahead of the first cap-and-trade auction market, which impacts many growers and businesses in the agriculture industry.

Early on, we highlighted the need for a reinvestment of funds into agriculture. Initially, our sector was not on the priority list for funding from the auction market, but with the support of Secretary Ross and others, we are now successfully reducing greenhouse gas emissions through multiple state climate programs.

Ag Council partnered with others to successfully negotiate strong investments in climate smart agriculture programs with former Governor Jerry Brown in 2018. We advocated for the creation of the Food Production Investment Program (FPIP) and *Blue Diamond Growers* was awarded a grant through FPIP in 2019 to install high efficiency boilers at its Sacramento facility.

Overall, the state has invested approximately \$2 billion in the climate-smart agriculture space. The federal government



Emily Rooney with CDFA Secretary Ross and others in Spain. Photo credit: Ag Council of California

has followed with funding via the USDA to advance climate-smart agricultural practices, such as the USDA Climate-Smart Grant awarded to *Blue Diamond Growers*.

With SB 253 recently signed into law, Ag Council has a seat at the table once again, and our team will continue to demonstrate leadership by working to find achievable solutions for *Blue Diamond* and all of our members as you work to meet California’s ambitious climate standards.

### State Legislature — Big Changes Coming in 2024

Pivoting to the next election, 2024 is a huge election year in California, and not simply because it’s a presidential year. 2024 will also bring the largest turnover in the State Legislature in many years. Currently, 28 legislative seats are open in 2024, meaning there are no incumbents in those races.

This means that a massive opportunity exists to affect change in the composition of the Legislature. Ag Council has a strategy to identify and promote candidates who recognize our issues and who are willing to hear us out when tough policy issues come before them.

In preparation for the 2024 election season, our team is analyzing district races to make the best decisions possible for our members by boosting candidates who can help us achieve success for our members.

Ag Council is grateful for *Blue Diamond* and its commitment to supporting our association's Political Action Committee (PAC). A robust PAC allows us to connect with candidates and raise the profile of our membership. There is unity and strength in numbers, and we appreciate *Blue Diamond Growers'* generosity in support of our PAC.

Ag Council is also active in another way — through its state-level Building a Healthy Future for California Committee. This effort is primarily funded through our dairy members and focuses on critical legislative races. The Committee enters selected competitive districts to help promote the best candidates. We are pleased the Committee had an 83 percent success rate in 2022.

We appreciate *Blue Diamond Growers* on so many levels. With your cooperative serving as one of our founding members, our partnership runs deep on policy issues and political efforts. We look forward to continuing to collaborate in 2024 and for years to come.

To stay apprised of our advocacy, please subscribe to our newsletter at: [www.agcouncil.org](http://www.agcouncil.org), or email Jacob at [jacob@agcouncil.org](mailto:jacob@agcouncil.org) to subscribe. ♦



**Emily Rooney,**  
President, Ag Council  
of California

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## Ag Council's 105<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

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Omni La Costa in  
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Details available in early January 2024 on  
our events page at: [www.agcouncil.org](http://www.agcouncil.org)

### We look forward to seeing you!



## SUSTAINABILITY SPEAKING, WITH DR. DAN

---

### What's the Latest in the Sustainability Marketplace?

*In September, our small Blue Diamond sustainability team made a significant move. While our desks have stayed in the same location in the office, we now report into the Growth Team at the cooperative. This team was created from the new strategic plan that our board of directors approved to drive faster growth in sales for the cooperative. Combining our sustainability efforts with the marketing-oriented Growth Team will help communicate to our customers the value of what Blue Diamond Growers is doing in the sustainability field. Our team is eager to contribute to these efforts.*

Recently, a few new reports on market research in sustainable food came across my desk. I'd like to share a few of the things gleaned from these reports. There are both encouraging and sobering trends in these reports, but they speak to the value of thoughtful investment in sustainability at *Blue Diamond*. By "thoughtful" investment, I mean that we intentionally keep our financial investment lean, leveraging existing programs and our USDA grant funds to extend the reach of what we do.

#### Consumers Like Sustainability, But Quality and Price Come First

One of the resources I reviewed is the *Sustainability 2023* report from The Hartman Group, Inc., a company that has specialized in researching the topic of sustainability and food with consumers for over two decades. I have followed their work for nearly that long and have found them to be very insightful. The Hartman Group, Inc. publishes this report every 2-3 years and the most recent research came out this summer.

The first thing to share from their research is not really a surprise and fits what most of us experience when we go to the grocery store. (I mention this finding because I often hear people say something else, particularly when they're trying to sell me some sustainability service) Sometimes folks imply that sustainability is the *most important thing* consumers look for

in their purchases. No surprise to those of us who actually shop and eat, the Hartman research clearly demonstrates that quality, price, and taste come before sustainability in how people shop. On the *Blue Diamond* sustainability team, we understand this and encourage our marketing and sales teams to lead with those topics first. Fortunately, our products are already well-positioned in those characteristics.

That said, the Hartman research has shown increased consumer interest in sustainability over the years. Their recent report suggests that 70% of U.S. adults at least occasionally



*The recent Hartman report indicates that consumers are more interested in products that are sourced with environmentally sustainable practices. Photo credit: Mel Machado*



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factor sustainability into their purchase decisions, with 44% of U.S. adults aspiring to regularly do so. Younger consumers in particular are likely to take sustainability into account. That's a large group of consumers for whom a sustainability message might be "icing on the cake" for their purchase decision. We need to keep this in mind for not only consumers who buy *Blue Diamond* products off the shelf, but also for our manufacturing customers who buy *Blue Diamond* almonds for their own products. These customers often ask us for information that can assure them that we are helping them to meet their sustainability objectives. I should add that in some markets, consumers are more actively using sustainability as a purchase driver, while in others, less so. In our international sales and marketing, we take all these things into consideration.

## Sustainability Can Drive Product Sales

Another recent market analysis done on behalf of the Almond Board of California (ABC) stated that between 2017 and 2022, the compounded annual growth rate of "food products marketed as sustainable" was 1.5 times that of their "conventional counterparts." This is a simplistic summary, of course, and there is a lot more detail in the analysis about the types of claims, the certifications used, and the rates of growth for different types of products. All of this must be taken into consideration by our *Blue Diamond* marketing experts for each product and customer interaction we have. We are committed to exploring the best ways to use our sustainability work to maximize the returns to the growers who entrust us with their almonds.

## New Requirements En Route

Both reports I've mentioned discussed the rise in governmental action on things like climate change. The Hartman report suggests that Americans are becoming more like Europeans in that they expect governments to act on issues like climate change, though they also expect private companies to play a significant role. The research done on behalf of ABC



California Senate Bills SB 253 and SB 261 will make it in *Blue Diamond*'s best interest to demonstrate progress in adopting climate-smart practices like Whole Orchard Recycling (pictured). Photo credit: Mel Machado

specifically mentions two California bills which were recently signed into law, SB (Senate Bill) 253 and SB 261. The first requires larger companies like *Blue Diamond*, even if privately owned, to publicly report data on greenhouse gas emissions across its manufacturing and supply chain. As a cooperative, this would include those emissions generated on farms owned by our members. The second, SB 261, requires companies to report risk of impacts to their business from climate change. The regulations implemented through these laws will make it in our best interest to demonstrate progress in adopting practices such as cover crops and Whole Orchard Recycling, which are believed to both lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduce climate change impacts from conditions like drought or flood.

In short, our sustainability team is working to demonstrate to consumers, customers and regulators that *Blue Diamond* members, our processing facilities and our products are the best available in the global almond industry. ♦



**Dr. Dan Sonke,**  
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### THE BEE BOX

## Winter Cover Crops: What to Expect

Having winter vegetation via planted cover crops in your orchard rows can bring your orchard many benefits, both during the winter months and into the rest of the year. Adding organic matter through cover crops can result in noticeable improvement of soil health and overall soil structure, which can result in better water infiltration, reducing the risk of runoff and minimizing erosion concerns.<sup>1</sup> Cover crops provide a variety of positive agronomic functions and promote biodiversity and forage for pollinators. With a growing consumer market for sustainably grown products and incentive programs for improving on-farm conservation, there is a real opportunity for growers to try out more climate-smart farming practices in their orchards.

This year, *Blue Diamond* launched the USDA Climate Smart Grant and more than 90 growers signed up to plant winter cover crops in their orchard. Whether you've barely thought about using cover crops or had them as part of your system for years, now is a great time to experience the benefits. *Blue Diamond Growers* has partnered with Project Apis m.'s [Seeds for Bees](#) program to provide growers with free cover crop seeds, up-to-date information and technical advice to get the most out of your cover crop investment. As part of the USDA Grant, *Blue Diamond* growers can also receive an implementation incentive to help offset the cost of planting cover crops.

Whether you're already enrolled in the program and have seeds in the ground or are curious about cover crops — this article provides an overview of what you can expect to see through the winter months with cover crops in your orchard regarding cover crop growth, management considerations, winter sanitation and frost risks.

### Cover Crop Growth & Emergence

By late October to November, cover crop seeds should be planted and watered (by either well-timed rainfall or applied irrigation) for seeds to germinate and begin to grow. Time of emergence, the time when you first start to see growth, will depend on a variety of conditions. Time of planting, water availability, soil temperatures, daylength and seed selection are all factors at play while your stand is growing over winter.

The [Pollinator Brassica mix](#) (comprised of mustards, canola and daikon radish) is quick to emerge, fastest to grow through winter, and you can see growth in as little as 6-8 days after planting! The [NitroBuilder mix](#) (comprised of Common Vetch and Triticale grass) takes around 10 days to see initial growth. In contrast, the [Annual Clover mix](#) requires 12-14 days to show first growth, and it grows more slowly throughout the winter compared to our other seed mixtures.



*Timing of emergence, rate of growth, and date of maturation depends on time of planting, water availability, rainfall and seed variety. Photo credit: Project Apis m.*



The PAm. Pollinator Brassica Mix (pictured above) will begin to see growth in as little as 6-8 days after planting. Photo credit: Project Apis m.

## Orchard Maintenance and Sanitation

During the winter months, cover crops can be managed in a way that does not interfere with orchard maintenance like tree pruning, spraying and winter sanitation. Planting in alternate rows or at alternate times, as well as the selection of low-growing cover, can help keep bare, workable rows open for any planned orchard maintenance. According to UC Davis Integrated Pest Management, having ground cover in your orchard during wet winters can even aid in mummy nut decomposition.<sup>2</sup> Though more research on the topic is needed, a recent study suggests that winter cover crops in almonds “appear to contribute to the reduction” of

Navel Orangeworm (NOW) populations in the orchard.<sup>3</sup> Despite the potential to increase decomposition rates of NOW host nuts, it is still critical to shake and remove mummy nuts from the orchard to manage NOW emergence.

## Frost Risks and Research

Another common concern is how cover crops may impact overnight orchard temperatures and frost damage. Cover crops do keep orchard temperatures lower than bare soil, which can be a cause for concern for frost damage during almond bloom. As of right now, the standard management practice is to terminate cover crops in your field before an anticipated frost event.

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Research funded by Project Apis m. is investigating the connection of cover crops to lower overnight temperatures and attempting to develop frost-damage mitigation strategies that farmers can implement in their fields. Dr. Kosana Suvočarev, Assistant Professor of Cooperative Extension at UC Davis, is conducting research to investigate the potential of timed sprinkler irrigation on cover crops to serve as a frost-protection strategy. This method experiments with turning on sprinklers before an anticipated frost event, which creates ice formation in the orchard that then releases heat, resulting in higher overnight temperatures and the capacity to mitigate frost damage. These management strategies are still being studied but aim to provide more insight into potential measures and protocols for frost prevention to minimize potential damage in the future. More research is still needed to confirm the efficacy of such a practice. Stay tuned as new and evolving management practices emerge from scientific research, industry practices and innovative growers.<sup>4</sup>

Until more conclusive research is published, concerns about frost in your orchard should be addressed by terminating the cover crop to protect your orchard from prolonged exposure to critically low nighttime temperatures. If you are worried about frost, a common practice is to low-mow (less than 2 inches) to achieve early termination of the cover crop.

### Learn more about cover crops and the Climate Smart Grant

Cover crops can be used to address many of the issues that we see in our fields — issues such as erosion, water runoff, compaction, loss of pollinator habitat and other complications related to many years of intensive management and degraded soil conditions. There are several programs and resources aimed at assisting almond growers financially to integrate cover crops into their orchards, as well as empowering them with the technical knowledge and skills to continue leading the charge in sustainable farming strategies. More growers are making the shift toward regenerative practices and using cover crops to boost resilience to changing conditions caused by climate change.

To learn more about cover crops, the Seeds for Bees program, or the Climate Smart Grant reach out to [Brett LeDuc, Climate Smart Habitat Manager](mailto:Brett.LeDuc@projectapism.org), at Project Apis m. for more information. ♦



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

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## THE ALMOND BOARD

### New and Proven Tactics to Leverage Almonds Among Traditions in India

Since the early 2000s, the Almond Board of California (ABC) has been strategically navigating the Indian market to promote almond consumption. Over the last decade, ABC has extended and intensified its reach, targeting various segments of the Indian population and maximizing the health attributes of almonds in the region. In 2020, India was the number one export market for California almonds — more than doubling over a five-year period and exceeding 40 million pounds — and proved the potential of the market. This fall, ABC took those efforts even further by leveraging the region’s most popular sport, cricket, and ingraining almonds with old traditions.

#### Riding the Cricket Wave

Cricket is not just a pastime in India: it’s a cultural phenomenon that unites the entire nation. “Cricket is the number one sport in India and while I may call it a sport, that’s really cutting it short. It is more like a religion,” said Sudarshan Mazumdar, ABC’s consultant for the India market. As the International Cricket Council Men’s Cricket World Cup — hosted in India for the first time since 2011 — loomed on the horizon, ABC saw an opportunity to integrate almonds into the popular sport. The “Energy Leading to Success” messaging naturally aligned with the sport’s enthusiasm and energy.

ABC outdoor advertising campaigns were prominent in major cities like Mumbai and Delhi, where cricket fervor runs high, as does international trade. ABC also launched television campaigns promoting almonds as a source of energy and success around the game of cricket. “The television campaign is running across the country, which again is talking about energy leading to success. It’s definitely a different target for us, but it’s also another way in which we are driving almond consumption,” Mazumdar said. ABC’s presence in the cricket world is poised to create a new wave of almond enthusiasts across the large country.



ABC’s new marketing campaign in India combines the consumer’s love of cricket and current “Tomorrow Begins Today” messaging in the region. Photo credit: Almond Board of California

#### The Gift of Good Health

Diwali, a prominent Indian festival celebrated in the fall, involves exchanging dry food boxes as gifts to wish loved ones good health and prosperity. Almonds have found a special place in these festive gift boxes. ABC’s television campaigns over the last few years have reinforced almonds as a symbol of well-being during Diwali, securing the almond’s position in a time-honored tradition.

To drive the gifting of almonds even more, ABC also expanded its presence this year during Raksha Bandhan, a summer festival where brothers promise to protect their sisters in return for a heartfelt wish. “In turn, the brother promises to protect the sister against all evil, and because of his appreciation of her wishes, he hands over a gift to her,” explained Mazumdar.

ABC launched a campaign to encourage using almonds as that gift during Raksha Bandhan. "What we're trying to do is to make this a gift of good health. For the first time this year, we ran a campaign for 15 days and we started seeing interest in it right away," Mazumdar said.

Weddings are also a grand affair in India, marked by numerous events and large ceremonies. Invitations are an integral part of the wedding experience. ABC recognized the opportunity to include almonds in wedding invitation packages, making almonds a part of the celebration.

ABC has partnered with Indian wedding magazines to explore the link between almonds and weddings. Additionally, they have adopted a strategy to display Google Ads when users search for wedding-related content. These initiatives aim to increase the gifting of almonds, making them a significant part of wedding celebrations in India.

Article contributed by the Almond Board. ♦



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### TIME TO CONSIDER

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In 2017 a lot happened in our country. Former President Trump was inaugurated, Taylor Swift came out with a new album, and California faced one of the worst wildfire seasons on record. These facts are all important to different types of people, but one other event happened in 2017 that has remained on the minds of almond growers. 2017 was one of the worst years for rejects that California almond growers had ever experienced.

If you've heard Mel Machado, Vice President of Member Relations, speak on the topic you may have heard him refer to 2017 as "The Wreck." If 2017 is known as "The Wreck", then we may want to start referring to 2023 as "The Disaster." The 2023 almond harvest is showing reject levels above those from 2017 and leaving many growers with a bad taste in their mouth when looking at their statements. Let's talk about the significance of the damage, what may have caused it, and what we can do to prevent another year like this.

2023 has been a bad year for rejects, but just how bad is it? Since we haven't received all the 2023 product yet, all these numbers are still subject to change, but let's start by looking at Nonpareil. So far in 2023, 64% of deliveries have been given the standard grade (S1) on the grower statements. The average reject percentage of those S1 deliveries is 4.93%! Compare that to "The Wreck" of 2017, where 34% of Nonpareil deliveries were given the S1 grade, and the average reject percentage was 4.16%. That is an 18% increase in rejects from what is considered a "bad reject" year. This number looks even worse when compared to last year, where the average rejects of Nonpareil S1 deliveries was 3.1%. That is a 59% increase from last year! Currently, pollinator conditions are not looking any better, but we simply don't have enough data to make any assumptions yet. I know there were a lot of percentages above, here's the gist: this year was bad, just plain bad.



*Figure 1 NOW Moths on Inshell Delivery. Photo credit: Christine Ivory*

"cut back" out of necessity because of these economic conditions. Finally, we are seeing an unprecedented number of abandoned or unharvested orchards. These orchards are breeding grounds for NOW, and since NOW moths are excellent flyers, they can reach well-managed orchards two miles away. NOW is not the only the issue, as Leaf-footed Plantbugs and Stinkbugs are still an issue in many almond orchards. The amount of damage may look like it has decreased, but it actually has not.

We know 2023 has been a bad year, but what caused it? Navel Orangeworm (NOW) is still the biggest issue in the almond industry. This isn't news to any grower, but why was NOW so bad this year? There may be a few factors. First, a lack of winter sanitation. The amount of rain that California received during the dormant season made it incredibly difficult to complete winter shaking, so we started off with a high overwintering population. Second, a prolonged bloom period. A prolonged bloom period leads to a prolonged hull split later in the year. Prolonged hull split makes it difficult to properly time a hull split application. Third is economics. As growers, you know all too well how the costs of materials have increased, and the almond market is not currently in a place to offset those costs. Growers may have needed to



Figure 2 Abandoned Orchard. Photo credit: Mel Machado



Figure 3 *Carpophilus beetle*. Photo credit: Lauren Fann

In California, growers are familiar with many pests, but a new one is showing up in the *Blue Diamond* test rooms. The *Carpophilus* beetle is a sap feeding beetle that appears to be causing damage in almonds. The juvenile beetle, which is a grub, feeds on the almond kernel. While the damage looks different from NOW, the *Carpophilus* grub is often mistaken for a NOW. There is not much information on this new pest yet, but there is work being done to study its life cycle and management techniques.

Reducing pest problems always starts with winter sanitation. This is true for new pests as well as old ones. At the moment, winter sanitation is the only mitigating factor we can use against the *Carpophilus* beetle. Removing the mummy nuts early, especially before heavy rain events set in, should be the

top priority for growers in the next few weeks. Next, communicate with your PCA on a budget for 2024 and start planning applications and materials that may be used. Some of you may be reading this and saying, “I’ve been doing all this, and I sprayed multiple times, but nothing worked.” You’re right — this may have been a year when the damage was out of your control. However, I should offer this advice: once you have learned something, it is always good to go back and pay closer attention. This means checking the calibration and quality of your sprayer, confirming that the correct amounts of material were used, and ensuring that winter shaking met the standard you set.

After all that, it may be time to try something new. Never done a May/Mummy Spray application? That could be a possibility this year. Mating Disruption? Talk to your PCA about the options available. There is a website, NOW Neighborhood Management ([agneighbors.com](http://agneighbors.com), password: *nowmd*), developed by the Almond Board of California, *Blue Diamond*, and other stakeholders where you can select your field on a map and indicate that you are interested in mating disruption. Once enough growers in your area have shown an interest in mating disruption, you will receive an email instructing you to proceed with disruption. There are many methods that we can use, but we may simply have to look at the problem from a new angle.

2023 harvest has certainly been one for the record books. It is not the record the industry was hoping for, but it is the reality of the year. The



Figure 4 Winter Shaking. Photo credit: Mel Machado

high rate of rejects that the industry is experiencing has a significant impact on you, the grower. It causes a reduction in payment because of the missed premiums, in addition to the weight lost to the rejects. In a time when every cent and pound matters, quality is an issue growers cannot afford to ignore. If you have any questions on what may be causing your rejects, please contact your Regional Manager to see if there is a Reject Breakdown on your delivery. If you don’t see one, you can request a retest for this information so that you can know exactly what was causing the damage and how to make changes for the future. ♦



**Trent Voss,**  
**Regional Manager,**  
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### FOR SALE

- John Deere low profile 5100ML with exact cab tractor
- 12' V Risimo flail mower
- 8' V Risimo flail mower
- PBM 500 gallon weed sprayer with electric valves (new, never used)
- Durand Wallon 500 gallon tree sprayer
- 12' Domries orchard leveler float

Contact Joe at (209) 404-3326

**Free listings in this section are for the exclusive use of Blue Diamond members.**

Classified ads for personal use — not as an additional means of advertising commercial ventures members may own. Ads are limited to a maximum of 10 lines and may be submitted to Blue Diamond regional manager or the editor at:

**Editor: Blue Diamond Growers  
P.O. Box 1768, Sacramento, CA 95812**

**Or contact BDG Communications  
Email: [communications@bdgrowers.com](mailto:communications@bdgrowers.com)**

Unless advised otherwise, ads will run two consecutive issues. To guarantee placement, classified listings must be submitted by the 10th of: January, March, May, July, September & November.

### FOR SALE

2008 8 Channel Satake Ultrascan.  
\$60,000

- 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**

1802 C Street  
Sacramento, CA 95811

PRESORT  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SACRAMENTO, CA  
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**Shockwave Sprint**  
SIDE-MOUNT SHAKER



**Aftershock CC-350LP**  
LOW PROFILE CONVEYOR CART



**Hedgehog**  
3000-Series HEDGER



**Shockwave 3WMB**  
FRONT-MOUNT SHAKER



**Aftershock AR-400**  
SIDE-DUMP SHUTTLE



**Skirter**  
HYDRAULIC HEDGER/SKIRTER



**Brush Hog**  
HYDRAULIC RAKE



**Aftershock AR-500**  
REAR-DISCHARGE SHUTTLE



**Aftershock SD-36**  
SIDE-DUMP FIELD ELEVATOR



**E-LIMB-INATOR**  
SHREDDER

Yuba City 2700 Colusa Hwy Yuba City, CA 530-673-2822	Orland 6480-A Road 27 Orland, CA 530-865-1006	Modesto 4207 E. Ceres Rd Ceres, CA 209-669-2522	Firebaugh 1529 N Street, Ste B Firebaugh, CA 559-659-0200	Tulare 5200 Tex Dr Tulare, CA 559-688-2081	Shafter 30715 San Diego St. Shafter, CA 661-746-7232
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