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NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

MAY-JUNE 2024



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A Letter from
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Steve Van Duyen

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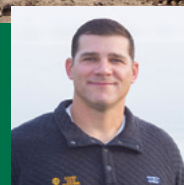
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26 NEW! Membership Basics

Director of Member Relations, Ben Goudie introduces "Membership Basics," a column where he will dive deep into foundational topics from contracts and assignments to deferrals and investment opportunities. Goudie's aim is to help demystify the complex and help you become an even more knowledgeable grower-member.

ON THE COVER:

Blue Diamond's Limited Edition, Ranch flavored almonds are a must try! Get them at your local retailer!



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● ALMOND FACTS STAFF

Blue Diamond Growers Communications Department,
communications@bdgrowers.com

Jillian Luna, *Managing Editor*

Jake Sonke, *Assistant Editor*

Mel Machado, *Contributing Photographer*

Gray Allen, *Advertising Sales*
916.783.4334 & 916.765.3234

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Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



I can hardly believe that summer is just around the corner. It's been great to connect with many of you throughout these past couple of months. Whether you were able to catch the webinar update with Mel Machado, Laura Gerhard, and me, or joined us at the Grower Liaison Committee meetings, it's important that we stay connected on all things happening at Blue Diamond. We are all working hard to ensure our success in these tough market conditions. I am committed to strengthening our lines of communication and ensuring that we keep you up to date on our growth plans.

I wasn't the only one on the road; I know some of you had the opportunity to meet Carmen Bourgaize, our Chief Commercial Officer, at several of the Grower Liaison Committee meetings. You may recall Carmen was unable to attend the Annual Grower Meeting last November because she was hard at work selling your almonds and building relationships with potential customers. Carmen has extensive experience when it comes to managing commercial functions, as well as deep knowledge of the market, consumer behavior and strategic planning. I hope you had the chance to engage with her and discuss what's on your mind. Carmen and her team are leading the charge to bring more *Blue Diamond* almonds to customers everywhere. Our new Thin Dipped Almonds range is reaching across U.S. retailers and will soon be available in over 1,400 Albertson's stores starting in June, and expanding to 500 additional locations this fall. You can also keep an eye out for Thin Dipped Almonds landing at 7-Eleven locations near you this summer.

In early May, members of the sales team and I attended the INC World Nut & Dried Fruit Congress 2024 in Vancouver, Canada. The INC conference gathers professionals, experts, researchers and stakeholders from around the world to discuss various aspects of the industry, including production, processing, marketing, health benefits, innovation and sustainability. It was great to be there, especially because

we are growing and expanding our product lines in the Canadian market. In fact, just this week, Walmart Canada listed our new range of mid-size bags. We couldn't be more excited to introduce Canadian shoppers to our popular Smokehouse, Honey Roasted and Wasabi & Soy flavors this August. I will share more on some of our wins in Canada in the coming months.

I know many of you joined us for the Masters Meeting in April and received important updates directly from industry leaders. We are keeping a close eye on the crop this year given the plentiful April showers and unexpected hail in some parts of the valley. We know that many growers have battled with the inclement weather, making it difficult to tend to the orchards. Based on the most recent Land IQ estimates, we have seen a decrease in the total acreage of land where almond trees are growing compared to the last few years. Plantings of new orchards have diminished in recent years, due to the challenging times all of you in the almond industry are enduring.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) also released their Subject Crop Forecast for the 2024 almond crop, and based on the same acreage as last year, they have forecast that 3.0 billion pounds of almonds will be harvested. Mel Machado tells me that the new crop appears to be developing well ahead of last year's.



In the coming months, I plan to meet with many more of you. Meeting with you all is one of the highlights of what I do. Our people, our farmers and our employees make the difference and shape *Blue Diamond*. Although we've had to adjust our approach and navigate the changing winds, I remain positive and excited about what we can achieve at *Blue Diamond*. Brick by brick, we are building

a solid foundation for the future. I couldn't wish to be doing this with a better team than you, and I look forward to continuing this journey with you. ♦

Kai

Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



A Letter from Steve Van Duyn, *Blue Diamond's* Chairman of the Board

It's been nearly a year since *Blue Diamond* launched its new strategic growth plan and I'm pleased to see the progress we've made. I am sure you've enjoyed hearing about the consistent wins the team is working so hard to achieve. The plan focuses on reinforcing our core business, expanding into new markets and innovative product lines, and of course optimizing costs where we can. It's encouraging to see that, even in these difficult market conditions, we're making strides in expanding our business and finding new customers both domestically and internationally.

While Kai shared in April's webinar that *Blue Diamond* is advancing with a heavy foot on the gas pedal, let's all remember that even though we've been gaining some excellent ground with these wins, we won't truly reap the benefits until next year and beyond. Much like the work we do in our almond orchards, the trees we plant and tend to today become fruit harvested the following season.

The world will always need almonds, and we all know the best almonds come from *Blue Diamond*. Thank you for working so hard day in and day out to ensure your almonds are the highest quality the world has come to know and expect from *Blue Diamond*. I am proud to call you my colleagues and friends. You truly make a difference. These are tough times for sure, but as a 114-year-old cooperative, we know how to manage the rough with the smooth. With your continued dedication, we will blaze forward and bring more of our almonds to families across the world.

I am confident in the leadership team and the plan in place. Good times are coming again, and I want to enjoy those with you just as much as I've been honored to link arms and walk through the tough times together. We're stronger when we stand together. Thank you for your continued commitment to *Blue Diamond* and to a successful future for all of us. ♦



Steve Van Duyn
Chairman of the Board





Regional Managers



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Mel Machado
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(209) 531-6352 – Cellular

Director, Member Relations

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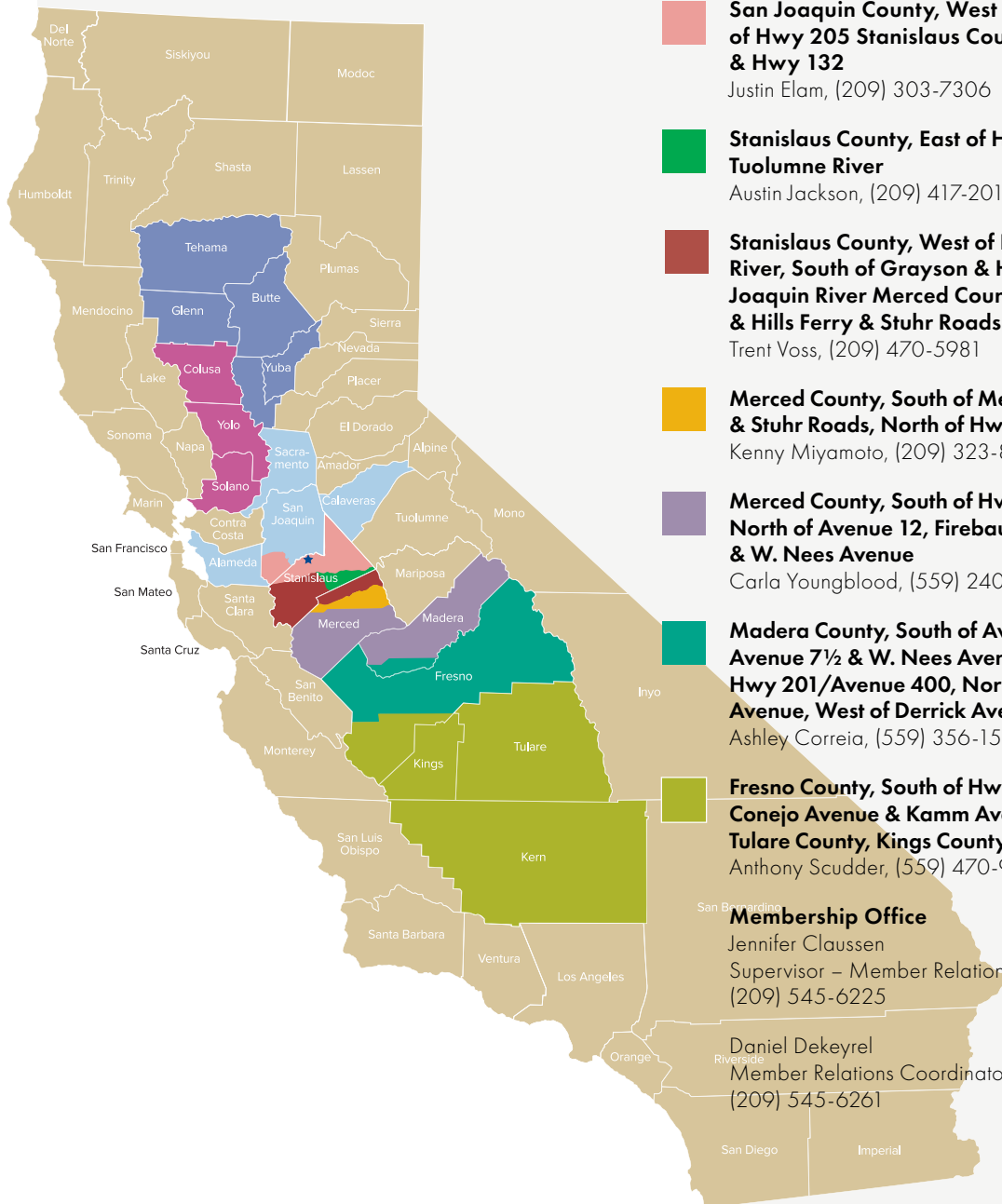
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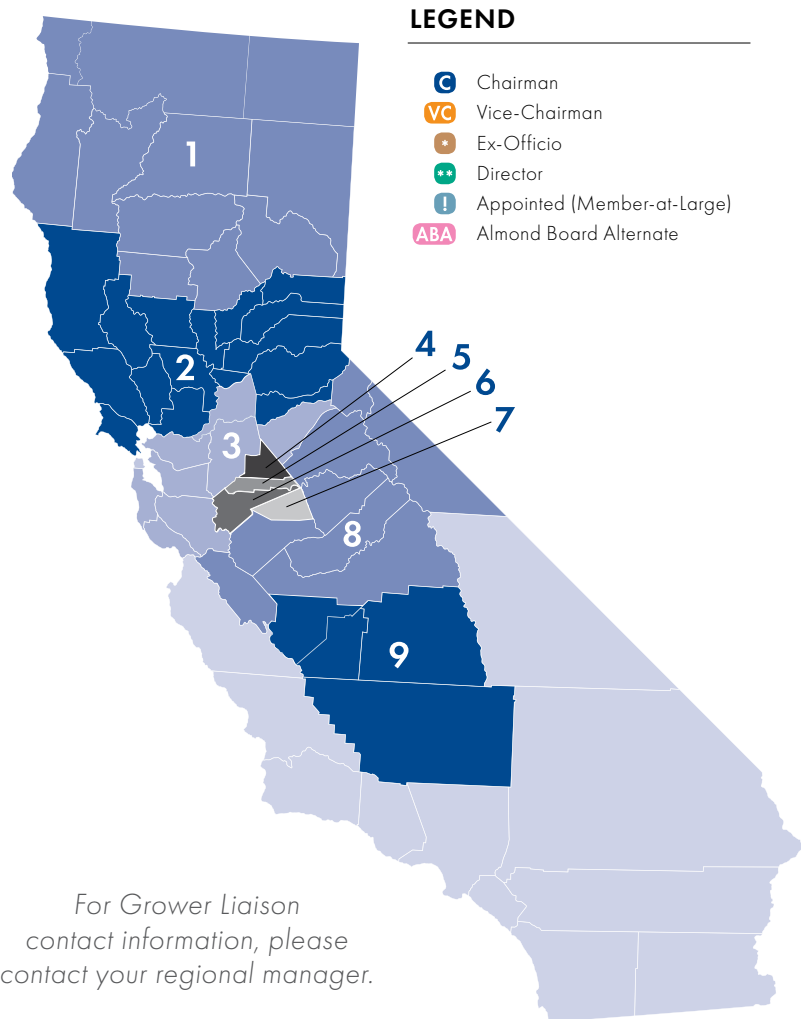
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ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



Blue Diamond Growers Almond Market Report – May 17, 2024

OVERVIEW

Shipments for April totaled 241.5 million pounds, marking a 2% increase from the previous month and a 22% rise compared to the same period last year. April marks the second strongest shipping month of the crop year to date, coming in well above industry expectations. Domestic shipments achieved their best performance of the year at 64.8 million pounds, reflecting a 4% increase from the previous month and a 14% increase over last year. Export shipments turned in another strong month at 176.7 million pounds, up 1% from last month and up 26% from last year. Total shipments increased their lead over last year's pace and are now 4.2% ahead.

SHIPMENTS

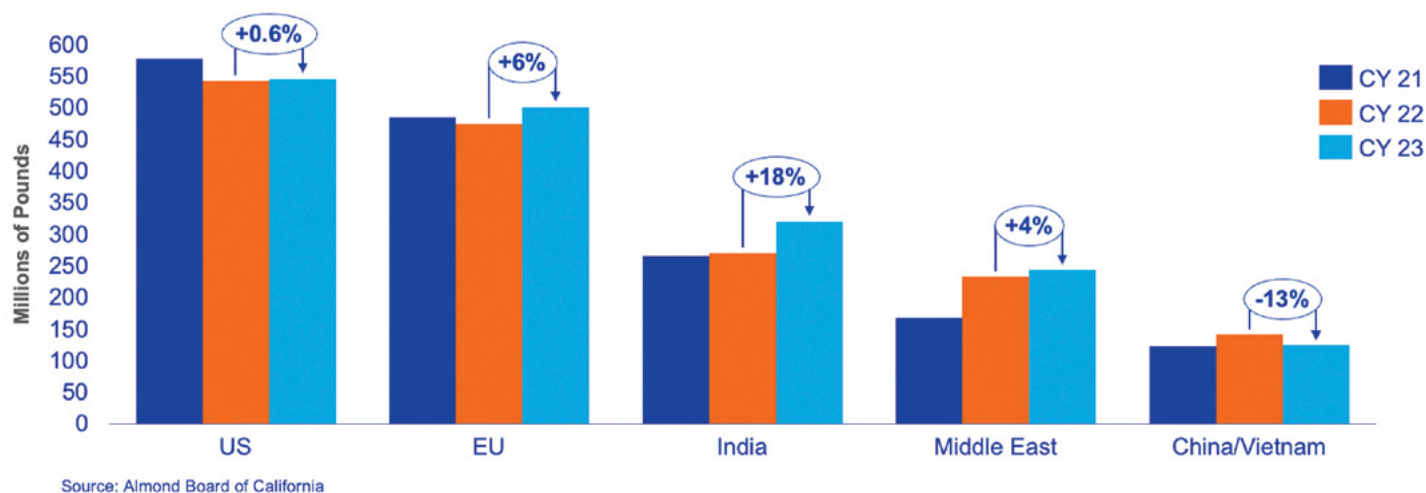
India:

Shipments to India reached 33 million pounds, a 64% increase from last year with year-to-date shipments now 18% ahead of last year. Buying activity was limited in the weeks leading up to the Subjective Estimate but quickly picked up following its release. This uptick was expected given India will have to cover a good portion of its needs for Diwali from current crop supplies. The 2024 Diwali festival begins October 31, approximately two weeks earlier than in 2023. Demand is expected to persist in the coming weeks.

China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:

Shipments to the region totaled 12 million pounds, a 2% increase to last year. Year-to-date shipments are 13% behind last season. Buying activity was quiet and mainly limited to Australian purchases leading up to the Subjective Estimate. Activity increased following the estimate release, with buyers beginning to make new crop purchases.

Year-Over-Year Shipments August-May



Europe:

Shipments to the region totaled 54 million pounds, a 6% increase over last year. Year-to-date shipments are now 6% ahead of last season. Demand has been favorable, driven by an increase in snack consumption in recent months, primarily due to more favorable pricing at the retail level.

Middle East:

Shipments to the Middle East were 27 million pounds, up 55% from last year with year-to-date sales now 4% ahead of last season. This region has been quite active with affordable pricing driving post-Ramadan demand. Buying activity is expected to continue as the market positions itself for the upcoming Eid al Adha festival in June. This region is expected to remain a bright spot for the industry going forward.

Domestic:

April shipments reached 64.8 million pounds, the strongest monthly performance all year, up 14% over the prior year. Year-to-date domestic shipments now stand at 547 million pounds, which is a modest 0.6% ahead. Buyers have re-entered the market as indicated by an 8% increase in sales over the previous month. With the published Subjective Estimate within industry expectations and a strong April shipment report, contracting activity is expected to pick up the balance of the current crop year.

COMMITMENTS

Total commitments improved for the third consecutive month compared to last season and now stand at 552.7 million pounds, which is 2% behind last year. Uncommitted inventory remains favorable at 557.7 million pounds reflecting a 29% decrease from last year. Buying patterns have remained hand-to-mouth all year, still seeing strong new sales for the month

at 218.6 million pounds, up 20% from last year. Total new sales for the year now exceed last season by 7%. Assuming a 2.45-billion-pound crop, shipments and commitments represent 84% of total supply versus 76% last year. Given the current level of total commitments and the strong shipment pace sustained this crop year, the industry is on pace to reach a carryout below 500 million pounds, a level not seen in the past three years. This is a welcome sign and much needed as the industry eyes a larger 2024 crop ahead.

CROP

Land IQ posted their estimate for crop year 2024 bearing acreage of 1.373 million acres. This is a slight downturn from last year. The non-bearing acreage estimate will be released in November and is likely to be lower than last year's 189,000 acres. New plantings are declining given the economic challenges for the grower. Total acreage peaked in 2021 at 1.65 million acres and has been trending downward. Depending on the results of the non-bearing portion, acreage has declined 8-10%.

The 2024 Subjective Estimate was released on May 10 with the NASS forecasting a 3.0-billion-pound crop against 1.38 million bearing acres, which are unchanged from last year. This implies a yield of 2,170 pounds per acre. This estimate is widely considered price-neutral, given the industry was already pricing in a 3.0-billion-pound crop. ♦

Market Perspective

April shipments exceeded market expectations for a second consecutive month. Both export and domestic shipments gave a strong performance to increase the shipment pace over last year while improving expectations for a carryout at or below 500 million pounds. Market activity has been limited with buyers waiting for the Subjective Estimate for price clarity and confidence. Buying activity is starting to pick up with that estimate behind us confirming market expectations for a 3.0-billion-pound crop. The demand outlook is positive as buyers look to cover their remaining needs of current crop supplies to ensure a smooth transition to the new crop. This should provide for stable to firmer pricing in the coming weeks.



Laura Gerhard,
Vice President of Ingredients
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#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



Blue Diamond celebrated several new business milestones and opportunities on social media, including the release of the newest limited edition snack nuts: Ranch Flavored Almonds. Chilé 'N Lime, a fan-favorite snack nut flavor, has joined the permanent rotation of flavors. Blue Diamond celebrated that it is now the "Official Snack of the Big Ten Conference." Be on the lookout for more examples of Blue Diamond's partnership with the TIAA Big Ten Conference in the coming months! In May, Blue Diamond launched the second year of enrollment for the USDA Climate Smart Grant. We're also looking forward to exploring more recipes with almond ingredients and taking a closer look at what's happening in the orchards throughout the year. Finally, we showcased our employees' opportunities to volunteer in the local Stanislaus and Sacramento areas, sharing the Blue Diamond love with our neighbors in need! ♦



bluediamondgrowers

The Blue Diamond teams at our Salina and Turlock facilities recently participated in Love Modesto and Love Turlock, an annual volunteer day in the Stanislaus County region. An employee-driven volunteer opportunity, the Blue Diamond team helped with registration for the over 3,500 community volunteers and hosted a vendor booth with games and trivia. Our Blue Diamond, Turlock team went on to help with the weeding/landscaping crew at Donnelly Park in Turlock, CA, while the Blue Diamond, Salina team crafted flower pens to thank and encourage local teachers and educators.

#communityengagement #lovestanislaus #wearebluediamond

Blue Diamond Growers Cooperative

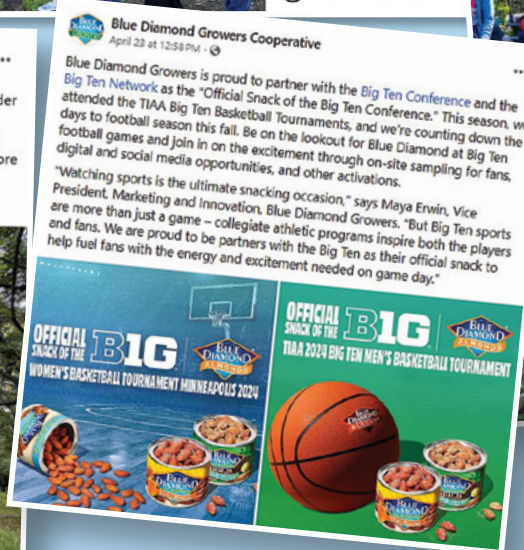
As part of our continuing partnership with local nonprofits, Blue Diamond team members recently participated in "Day in the Dirt," an annual volunteer day with The GreenHouse. The GreenHouse is a nonprofit that offers youth in the Sacramento area the opportunity to work in their community garden while learning valuable skills. The Blue Diamond team prepared the garden for The GreenHouse's upcoming summer programs by weeding, rebuilding planters and trellises and installing a ... See more

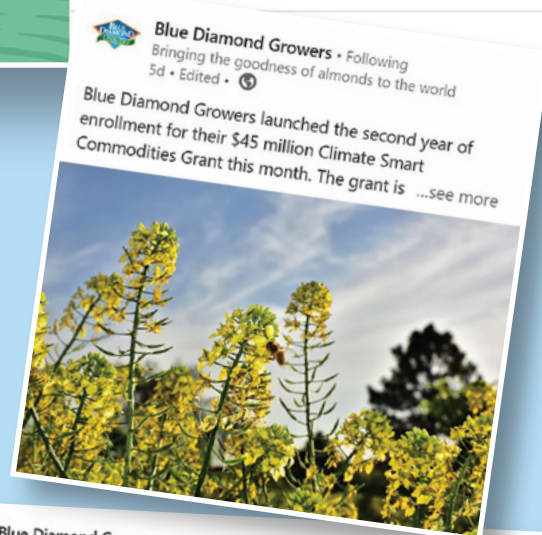
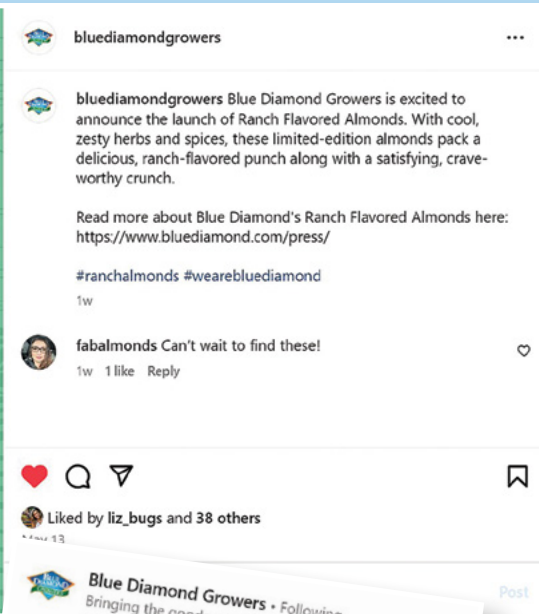


Blue Diamond Growers Cooperative

Welcome to the orchard! The trees are lush and green these days under the influence of California's springtime weather. Almond orchards across the state experienced a mix of rain and sunshine over the past few weeks, helping to support the developing crop. Stay tuned for more updates from the orchard!

#wearebluediamond





Blue Diamond Growers Awarded \$3 Million from USDA's Regional Agricultural Promotion Program Funding Awards

Blue Diamond applauds the USDA's announcement of the Regional Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) funding awards and is pleased to have been awarded \$3 million in funding that provides essential support for Blue Diamond's export promotion initiatives. This critical funding will benefit thousands of California almond farmers and their suppliers through international market expansion.

70% of California's almonds are exported, making international sales an important source of value for the California almond industry, and Blue Diamond Growers has been active

in export promotion for over 60 years. Global market development is a core component of Blue Diamond's growth strategy; the cooperative has a proven track record of opening and developing new markets around the world for value-added almond products to the direct benefit of the California almond industry. In total, Blue Diamond has opened more than 100 markets and invests in advertising, promoting and selling to large food manufacturers and retailers.

"The award of this funding by USDA demonstrates its understanding of the essential role international marketing

plays in the economic viability of our farmers, and we are very grateful for that," stated Alicia Rockwell, Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer. "With RAPP funding, Blue Diamond looks forward to continuing this important work to drive long-term positive impacts for California almond farmers."

Blue Diamond would like to thank the Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, USDA leadership, and congressional leaders for their efforts to establish this program and award funding to the California almond industry. ♦

"With RAPP funding, Blue Diamond looks forward to continuing this important work to drive long-term positive impacts for California almond farmers."

— Alicia Rockwell, Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer, Blue Diamond Growers

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BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of May 2024

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 to provide *Blue Diamond Growers* with a steady source of funds. The interest rates effective May 2024, 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.

Port of Oakland Update



Blue Diamond Growers: Enduring Partnerships, Navigating Disruptions

Since the 1930s, *Blue Diamond Growers* has maintained a longstanding partnership with the Port of Oakland, utilizing its facilities as a primary conduit for shipping almonds to over 100 global markets. This partnership has played a pivotal role in the growth and success of *Blue Diamond Growers* and the Port of Oakland, shaping the landscape of agricultural exports in California and beyond.

Through periods of economic prosperity and uncertainty, the partnership has remained steadfast. During the Great Depression, when financial hardships gripped the nation, the port was a lifeline for

California's agricultural producers, providing access to global markets and sustaining the state's economy. Similarly, in recent years, amid international trade tensions and the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the port has continued to serve as a gateway for *Blue Diamond*.

Navigating Labor Disputes: Striking a Balance

In the past, labor disputes with West Coast Dock Workers had disrupted operations and caused delays and uncertainties in the export process for several years. Strikes and slowdowns that had stemmed from negotiations between labor unions and port management had strained the supply chain and impacted the timely shipment of *Blue Diamond's* almonds. Fortunately, members of the ILWU voted 75% in favor of approving the West Coast port worker agreement that will expire on July 1, 2028.

Downtown Ballpark Proposal: Shifting Landscapes

Previously proposed construction of a water-front ballpark near the port at the Howard Street Terminal introduced a new dimension of complexity, raising concerns about traffic congestion, infrastructure strain and logistical challenges. As plans for the ballpark took shape, stakeholders grappled with the potential ramifications on port operations, including access to terminals, congestion along transport routes and the overall efficiency of cargo handling. However, the proposal failed to gain traction due to the team's decision to leave Oakland and search for a new city. The vacancy has opened opportunities to rezone the Howard Street Terminal for industrial use, which once again will serve as a critical economic resource to ensure the port's maritime support of agricultural products for California and inland producers.

Investment in Sustainable and Renewable Energy:

Recent investments at the Port of Oakland include hydrogen fuel cell infrastructure and electrification projects. These initiatives aim to reduce emissions and improve operational efficiency. The port has leveraged expertise and resources to accelerate the adoption of clean energy solutions through partnerships with companies specializing in hydrogen fuel

cell technology and electric vehicle infrastructure. Critical support from local, state and federal government agencies has also provided support for hydrogen and electrification projects at the Port of Oakland through funding, incentives and regulatory frameworks that promote sustainable transportation.

Global Disruption and a Return to Normal:

Global disruptions, such as Middle East conflicts and Panama Canal congestion, have shifted shipping volumes from the East Coast to the West Coast, increasing cargo to the Port of Oakland. Despite challenges, the port foresees a return to normalcy as supply chains stabilize. Collaboration and adaptability are crucial for navigating uncertainties and ensuring a resilient maritime trade environment amidst evolving dynamics.

Our Partnership and Future Look Bright:

Blue Diamond Growers' legacy intertwines with the Port of Oakland's future as a pivotal cargo hub. Despite challenges, the port remains committed to efficiently delivering cargo, ensuring *Blue Diamond's* almonds reach global markets for years. Collaboration and innovation pave the way for sustained success in maritime trade. ♦



Steve Schult,
Vice President, Global Supply Chain,
Blue Diamond Growers

Blue Diamond's New Almond Breeze® Partner in Japan: Kagome

Blue Diamond has a new *Almond Breeze®* partner, Kagome Co., for all production and distribution in Japan. The partnership will focus on accelerating market growth and driving new demand for *Almond Breeze®* with new *Blue Diamond* products through Kagome launching in September 2024.

The almondmilk category in Japan continues to see year-over-year growth as health-conscious consumers look for more plant-based products and ingredients. *Almond Breeze®* almondmilk meets consumers' needs for a healthy product that also delivers in taste. The partnership will harness the great qualities of *Almond Breeze®* while leveraging the in-market expertise of Kagome Co. to drive additional consumption within Japan.

"Both *Blue Diamond* and Kagome have a rich history rooted in strong values and a commitment to producing quality products for consumers," said Kai Bockmann, President and CEO of *Blue Diamond Growers*. "I look forward to our strong partnership that will create growth in Japan and ultimately, support our 3,000 California almond growers."

Blue Diamond selected Kagome as its licensee partner after a rigorous evaluation process. Like *Blue Diamond*, Kagome has been in the market for over 100 years with an integrated value chain from agriculture to production, processing and sales. Kagome's processing and marketing capabilities and well-established distribution network within the Japanese market demonstrate its unique position to deliver great results with *Almond Breeze®*. ♦





Cinnamon Roll Smoothie

Prep Time: 10 minutes Difficulty: Easy Servings: 2

Ingredients

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| ½ cup rolled oats | 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| 1 cup plain Greek yogurt | 1 banana, frozen |
| 1 Tablespoon honey | 1 cup ice cubes |
| 1 cup <i>Almond Breeze</i> ® Original Almond & Oat Blend | |

Directions

1. In a blender, add oats, yogurt, honey, almond and oat blend, cinnamon, banana and ice cubes. Blend until smooth.
2. Serve and refrigerate leftovers.

Lemon Zucchini Cake

Bake Time: 55 minutes Difficulty: Easy Servings: 10

Ingredients

For Cake:

- 2 cups cake flour
- 1¼ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1¼ cups granulated sugar
- 6 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 eggs room temperature
- ⅓ cup *Almond Breeze*® Vanilla Almondmilk
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract
- 1½ cups shredded zucchini drained and squeezed dry
- 2 Tablespoons lemon zest

For Glaze:

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1-2 Tablespoons lemon juice



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a loaf pan with baking spray and line with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Combine flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl and whisk together. Set aside. In a large bowl, combine the sugar and olive oil. Whisk to combine. Add eggs and almondmilk and whisk together. Add lemon juice and vanilla extract and stir to combine. Add flour mixture and stir just until incorporated. Fold in zucchini and lemon zest.
3. Pour batter into the prepared pan and bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until an inserted toothpick comes out with moist crumbs. The top of the cake should look dry.
4. Place the loaf on a cooling rack and cool for 15 minutes. Use the parchment paper to carefully lift the cake from the pan. Let cool completely on rack.
5. In a small bowl, combine powdered sugar and lemon juice. Whisk until smooth. Drizzle the glaze over the cake. Slice and serve.

Blue Diamond Launches Limited-Edition Ranch Flavored Almonds

Trending Ranch flavor will be a new summertime favorite snack

Blue Diamond has officially launched an exciting, new snack nut flavor: Ranch Flavored Almonds. With cool, zesty herbs and spices, the latest addition to Blue Diamond's limited-edition line of snack nuts packs a delicious, ranch-flavored punch.

Blue Diamond is a world-class leader in analyzing consumer trends and forecasting the flavors that snackers enjoy. Blue Diamond has established several award-winning additions to its flavor roster in recent years, including the 2023 People Food Award winner Chile 'N Lime and the 2024 Good Housekeeping Best Snack Award winner, Thin Dipped Double Dark Chocolate, both of which are now permanent additions to the snacking portfolio.

Recent research found that 70% of ranch flavor usage occurs outside of the salad bowl, presenting a prime opportunity to introduce a snack nut flavor that consumers are craving across a range of food channels.

"We're so excited to bring a flavor that is loved by so many to our Blue Diamond snack portfolio," said Maya Erwin, Vice President, Marketing & Innovation, Blue Diamond Growers. "We're always looking for new ways to incorporate trending flavors into our products,



and with Ranch, we hope our customers feel inspired to take their taste buds to a new level of deliciousness."

Blue Diamond's Ranch flavored almonds contain 6 grams of protein per serving and are vegan, kosher, Ketogenic Certified, and Non-GMO Project verified.

Available in a variety of sizes, the 6-ounce, 40-ounce and 45-ounce options are portable and resealable, making Ranch Almonds the perfect addition for summer entertainment, family gatherings or whenever hunger strikes! The limited-edition flavor will be available in select sizes at the following retail locations:

- **Walmart** – 6-ounce cans will be available May 2024 - October 2024.
- **Costco** – 45-ounce bags will be available May 2024 while supplies last.
- **Sam's Club** – 40-ounce bags will be available August 2024 while supplies last.

Blue Diamond's Almond Breeze® Wins “Thailand’s Most Admired Brand” for Second Consecutive Year



For the second year in a row, *Blue Diamond's Almond Breeze®* almondmilk has received “Thailand’s Most Admired Brand” award by *BrandAge Magazine*. The award, which is based on a rigorous screening process that includes ratings from expert marketers, honors the top choice brands for Thai consumers. *Blue Diamond's Almond Breeze®* is currently the number one almondmilk within Thailand. The award recognizes *Blue Diamond's* high-quality product and deep commitment to satisfying customers’ desires for plant-based milk.

For several years, the plant-based milk category in Thailand has seen significant growth due to the increase of health-conscious consumers. While dairy and soy milk have historically dominated the market, consumers became more interested in milk alternatives following the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the category has grown exponentially with almondmilk holding the largest share of the plant-based milk market. Since *Blue Diamond's Almond Breeze®* launch in Thailand, it has become the consumer favorite.

Walaitip Suetrongmunkong, Communication Director of Heritage Group, revealed that Thai consumers choose *Almond Breeze®* for several reasons: First, because of *Almond Breeze's®* position as a global brand and the number one almondmilk brand in the United States. Second, *Blue Diamond* products are made from high-quality California almonds. And third, *Blue Diamond* continues to produce locally relevant products to suit the needs and tastes of Thai consumers.

Because of the high-demand for *Almond Breeze®* almondmilk, *Blue Diamond* launched *Almond Breeze®* Drinking Yogurt, a desirable product for Thai consumers that is rich in nutrients like calcium and Vitamin E, is dairy-free, soy-free and contains no cholesterol. It provides an option for those who are lactose-intolerant, interested in alternative milk products or who adhere to a vegan diet. The product uses high-quality, fermented almondmilk mixed with real, fresh juice and is offered in two flavors: Tropical Fruit and Mixed Berries. ◆



Planning for the 2024 Harvest

I'd like to introduce you to a new column called "Membership Basics" where we'll have the opportunity to explore foundational topics of importance to you as a *Blue Diamond* grower-member. If you are like many *Blue Diamond* grower-members you likely have a good understanding of the contract, paperwork and systems that enable you to manage your farm with *Blue Diamond* each year. But do you truly know the process behind the paperwork, and why our programs work as they do? Each month, the goal will be to "lift the hood" on one to two processes and dig deep so that you can become a more knowledgeable grower-member. From contracts and assignments to deferrals and investment opportunities, *Blue Diamond* processes can be complex. My goal will be to demystify these subjects and simplify the complex.

For this first article, I think it's most appropriate to take on what's bearing down on us right now, which is the 2024 crop. Believe it or not, that crop will be ready for harvest before we know it! *Being extraordinary at the basics* is a mantra often heard around the membership offices. In that spirit, let's take a look at the most basic considerations for getting this crop harvested, delivered and paid out to you.

Accurate Acreage is the Foundation

Each year at *Blue Diamond* we receive, grade, process and make payments on approximately 50,000 individual lots or deliveries. Amazingly, we do this with unbelievable accuracy and although errors are possible, we do our best to try to avoid inaccuracies, which starts with sound data. We leverage our custom Grower Information System (GIS) which manages this stream of data all through the process from receiving pit to your bank account. All of it is based on the information set up in your contract and sub-contracts. Accurate information is the foundation. The very simple point to be made here is that we need to have the most accurate and up to date acreage information and payment instructions for everything to work as planned. Please let us know if you've pulled any orchards, sold orchards or reduced any acreage. Double-check your acreage records on any young orchards that will be coming into their first harvest this year.

Huller Changes

We will start to print delivery tags after the first of June. As mentioned, it is essential that each tag be coded to the correct sub-contract, which is based on acreage records as mentioned to the left. A key piece of information that gets printed on the tag is the huller identification number. If you plan on changing your huller, we need to know that as well. Although we do make additional tag printing runs after the initial print period, it is much more efficient to print them in the first round as it saves us the need for smaller custom printing that we do in-house. The later we get this information, the more work it takes to ensure accuracy as we often must add, replace and deliver new tags once we are close to harvest in August. One additional note that is important to consider if you change hullers this year: if you had an assignment directing *Blue Diamond* to pay funds from your sub-contract to your previous huller, the previous huller will need to submit a termination of assignment form to stop the assessment of hulling fees. Just notifying us of a hulling change will not automatically affect any assignments currently in place. Please contact your Regional Manager or the Grower Information Portal for assignment termination forms.

Assignments

Assignments are a service from the cooperative that allows you to divert funds from a crop payment to another party. We'll go more in-depth on assignments in a future article, but for now, I want to focus on the assignments that need renewals.

Each year, we have hundreds of assignments that end with the previous crop year. If you want to continue paying funds to another party out of the new crop year, these assignments will need to be renewed. Grower Accounting recently sent out notices to growers-members with assignments that ended with the 2023 crop year. Please be sure to sign and complete the form with the assignee's signature and return it as soon as possible so we can process them before harvest. If you need additional forms for new assignments, they are available at www.bluediamondgrowers.com or in the forms section of the Grower Information Portal.

Set Up Direct Deposit

Believe it or not, only about 60% of *Blue Diamond* grower-members receive their crop payments via direct deposit. I know many people feel more comfortable with a physical check, but direct deposits are more secure and efficient. Why wait for the mail to arrive when at a stroke past midnight on payment day, your funds are deposited silently and securely into your bank account? Unfortunately, with regular checks, our Grower Accounting department sometimes must reissue checks that are lost or stolen. Not counting the time that is spent simply printing new checks, we often must issue a stop payment, which racks up fees and takes additional time. To set up direct deposit, you will need to request a direct deposit form directly from your Regional Manager. For security reasons, we do not offer these forms online. Plan on sending the form to us at least two weeks prior to the first anticipated payment window, as processing takes time to complete and verify. That said, once it's set up, it will run like clockwork for future payments. If you're not yet prepared to drop the paper check, let me make one more appeal, this time to efficiency. Printing standard checks takes hours to print, stuff in envelopes and add postage. This is a considerable cost, given the thousands of checks we print and mail for each payment run. We all want to be as efficient as possible at *Blue Diamond*, because as a cooperative grower-member, you benefit from that efficiency too.



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Not Too Early for Tax Planning

If you are considering deferring any income this year you will need to make the decision at least two weeks prior to your first delivery of the 2024 crop. Ideally, we'd like to have deferral forms in place and processed as soon as you make the decision to delay funds. It may seem early, but tax planning starts now. Touching base with your accountant soon to run scenarios will help you make the call if deferring is right for you. Unfortunately, **we cannot retroactively defer payments from any sub-contract after you have received any funds for the crop year from that sub-contract.** If you had deferred income in the past, we will be sending deferral forms directly to you for your convenience and prompt processing. Deferral forms are located at www.bluediamondgrowers.com or in the Grower Information Portal.

Are You on the Portal?

The Grower Information Portal is your all-access window to your *Blue Diamond* records and information. It houses all your recent and previous crop year's delivery, grade, yield records, payment history and other key information. The system provides a current view of up-to-date data. One piece of feedback that I often hear from grower-members is how easy it is to keep informed with delivery and grade information as it gets posted in real time. Another nice feature is the handy library of preset reports that is helpful in record keeping and planning. The portal is accessible by any web enabled device including smart phones and tablets, as well as your computer at home. It is secured utilizing a two-factor authentication which keeps your account information viewable only to you. A good number of our grower-members are already on the system, and if you are not, I encourage you to sign up. For more information and to sign up please email Membership Coordinator, Daniel Dekeyrel at ddekeyrel@bdgrowers.com.

Your Regional Manager is here to help!

One last focus item that I'll mention is that in the past, the Grower Accounting Department has been open to receive direct calls from grower-members, and you might have noticed that our recent publications now list only the Salida Membership Office and direct contact information for your local Regional Manager. This is a change made to direct phone traffic directly to your frontline Regional Manager or the Membership office as your first point of contact. Our Grower Accounting Department experiences a high volume of transactions and I think you'll agree that we would like their first focus to be on managing *Blue Diamond's* payment process. So, having our Membership team manage calls allows them to do what they do best: pay you.

We are here to help you excel at the basics. I know that if we partner together to focus on the details, we will be ready for this year's harvest! ♦



Ben Goudie,
Director, Member Relations,
Blue Diamond Growers



SHIELD YOUR YIELD.

GET FAST-ACTING, LONG-LASTING CONTROL OF KEY ALMOND ORCHARD PESTS.

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Visit your FMC retailer or [SHIELDYOURYIELD.COM](https://www.shieldyouryield.com) to punish pests this season.

Day in the Dirt – 2024

As part of *Blue Diamond's* continuing partnership with local nonprofit organizations, employees recently participated in the fifth "Day in the Dirt" volunteer day with The GreenHouse, a 501(c)(3) organization located in the Gardenland/Northgate region of Sacramento. The GreenHouse offers after-school tutoring, mentoring, culinary and gardening education, and leadership development for youth in a neighborhood with one of the highest concentrations of children.

The GreenHouse is a repeat recipient of *Blue Diamond's* Community Giving program, which offers small grants to local nonprofit organizations that reflect the cooperative's values. In addition to their participation in the Community Giving program, *Blue Diamond* also participates in the annual "Day in the Dirt," an opportunity for employees to serve in The GreenHouse's educational garden. This garden is a cornerstone of The GreenHouse's summer programs, serving as an "outdoor classroom" that allows elementary students to learn more about gardening and the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables. *Blue Diamond* employees took a few hours to weed the garden, rebuild planters and trellises and install a new potting bench, which is decorated with tiles that were hand-painted by The GreenHouse students. ♦



“Each year, we can’t wait for Day in the Dirt with Blue Diamond. The efforts of the volunteers who invest in The GreenHouse’s Educational Garden [are] incredibly significant as we move towards spring and summer, our full season. Students learn, tend, and harvest which becomes sharing, sampling and preparing food. Blue Diamond’s investment is pivotal in laying the foundation for this growth in our youth and community. We are so grateful for your significant partnership!”

— Heather Haight, Executive Director, The GreenHouse



“Like many other businesses in the food and agriculture industry, Blue Diamond Growers is compelled and honored to support our local communities. We take our commitment seriously, ensuring that the nonprofits we partner with reflect the values of our cooperative and have lasting, tangible effects on the communities where our growers and employees live.”

— Alicia Rockwell, Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer, Blue Diamond Growers

111th First Lady's Luncheon Featured *Blue Diamond* Snack Nuts

The Congressional Club's First Lady's Luncheon is one of Washington DC's historical, bipartisan annual events held in honor of the First Lady and in support of bipartisan community service. The theme of the 111th luncheon, "Soaring to New Heights," embodied the mission of the Congressional Club: to set aside differences and work together for the betterment of our country. First Lady, Dr. Jill Biden, Ed.D. spoke on the administration's dedication to improving care for women's health needs.

Blue Diamond has supported and attended the event twice, this year and under the prior administration, honoring both first ladies. This year working closely with the spouses of Congressmen Obernolte, Garamendi and Duarte, *Blue Diamond* provided snack nuts for each attendee's individual charcuterie board! ♦



A Presidential Snack!

Did you know that *Blue Diamond* almonds are a cherished snack of U.S. presidents? Snack nuts are served on Air Force One, Marine One, and in special presidential areas like the private box at the Kennedy Center.



Joe Lavagnino Retires after 45 Years with *Blue Diamond*

In May 2024, Joe Lavagnino retired after a 45-year tenure with *Blue Diamond Growers*! *Blue Diamond* was Lavagnino's third job in his long career, the first being a cashier at his parents' deli in Buenos Aires, where he's from. Lavagnino began working for *Blue Diamond* in 1979 and held five different positions within the cooperative.

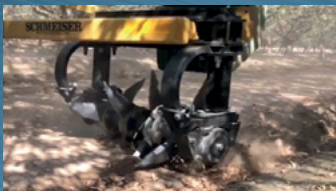
Over the past several decades, Lavagnino regularly engaged with *Blue Diamond's* farmers and helped them navigate the changing almond industry. His ability to explain complex financial programs to growers and employees alike made him a valuable asset to the cooperative and its farmers. Joe's longstanding contribution to *Blue Diamond* will be missed, but we're excited for him to enjoy his well-earned retirement. From all of us at *Blue Diamond*, we wish you a happy retirement, Joe! ♦



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Blue Diamond Engages with Key State Leaders During Ag Council's Legislative Conference

Agricultural Council of California (Ag Council) held its annual Legislative Conference in Sacramento on May 7, 2024. *Blue Diamond Growers'* Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer, Alicia Rockwell and Government and Public Affairs Manager, Mallorie Hayes helped bring together over two dozen *Blue Diamond* growers and staff to participate in the conference to educate elected officials on issues surrounding water, crop protection materials and climate programs.

Blue Diamond was joined by Ag Council's other members including Sun-Maid Growers, Land O'Lakes, Dairy Farmers of America, CALAMCO, Four Winds Growers and Bonnie Plants, among many others.

"Having our members visit the State Capitol is vital to our advocacy efforts," Ag Council President, Emily Rooney said. "Our members can provide detailed experiences and expertise about how policies from Sacramento impact our community at the local level. We appreciate *Blue Diamond's* leadership and continued engagement in our Legislative Conference."

This year's attendees raised concerns regarding harmful legislation relating to groundwater wells and crop protection materials. In addition, participants lent support to two pieces of legislation improving the regulatory requirements for groundwater recharge efforts during flood events. They also expressed support for funding for the Food Production Investment Program (FPIP), which is a grant program providing energy savings and lowering emissions at food processing facilities. *Blue Diamond* has received funds from FPIP and is a strong supporter of the program.

State Senator Josh Newman (D-Fullerton) addressed the conference attendees and discussed his work in the Legislative Problem Solvers Caucus. The goal of the Caucus is to analyze proposals with an objective mindset, while



Kabir Tumber and Christine Ivory (*Blue Diamond Growers*), Assemblyman Flora, Kelli Evans (*Blue Diamond grower*), and Jonnalee Dunn (*Henderson Farms*)



Blue Diamond Growers team and guest attendees



Ashley Dowden (*Henderson Farms*), Alicia Rockwell (*Blue Diamond Growers*), Senator Glazer, Dr. Dan Sonke and Beth Miller (*Blue Diamond Growers*)

considering costs, implementation challenges and realistic outcomes. The Caucus is bipartisan in nature and considers some of the state's most complex challenges on a whole suite of issues ranging from energy to retail theft. Senator Newman made a commitment to connect with Ag Council members again to learn more about issues impacting agriculture.

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Undersecretary Christy Birdsong spoke to attendees about CDFA's role in engaging with sister agencies to tackle some of the toughest issues impacting agriculture. While CDFA does not have direct jurisdiction over many of the labor or environmental regulations impacting farmers, the Department often engages in the early stages of rulemaking to voice opportunities and challenges ahead of the rulemaking process. Undersecretary Birdsong highlighted the Department's early and active engagement on SB 54, a recently passed packaging law, and their planned activities

to convene stakeholders so that agriculture can keep packaging needed for food safety purposes. SB 54 was signed into law in 2022 and Ag Council and *Blue Diamond Growers* were both heavily engaged in its development.

Overall, Ag Council members visited nearly 30 offices and held a reception in downtown Sacramento attended by legislators and regulatory officials, including CDFA Secretary, Karen Ross. The conference is held annually in May, and we thank *Blue Diamond* — both growers and staff — for their participation. ♦

Ag Council Recognizes Majority Leader Aguiar-Curry with Influential Legislator Award

Agricultural Council of California (Ag Council) presented its Influential Legislator Award to Majority Leader Cecelia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters) during the organization's 2024 Legislative Conference in May. The award is given on an annual basis to legislators who embody an active and collaborative approach to finding positive outcomes for agriculture and all of California.

Ag Council President, Emily Rooney said, "Majority Leader Aguiar-Curry works strategically with others in the Legislature to achieve critical results for our members and is a staunch ally of agriculture on a wide variety of policy issues. When considering policies, she asks, 'What do my ag people think about this issue?' She has worked to ensure funding is available for ag programs to reduce emissions and meet climate goals. She also helped secure a grant program for farmers and ag-related businesses affected by recent flood or drought events."

As majority leader, Aguiar-Curry works in close communication with the Assembly speaker to build agreement across the Democrat Caucus and expedite Assembly proceedings. She also serves as vice chair of the Legislative Women's Caucus.

She is a member of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, the Committee on Health, the Committee on Transportation, and is chair of the Select Committee on Wine.

Aguiar-Curry was elected to the Assembly in 2016 to represent the 4th District comprising all of Napa, Lake, Yolo, Colusa and Solano Counties and part of Sonoma County. Previously, she served as mayor of Winters and was an elected city councilmember.

Her leadership is commendable, and Ag Council thanks her for being a steadfast advocate for our members. Congratulations to Majority



Emily Rooney, President, Ag Council with Aguiar-Curry

Leader Aguiar-Curry for being named Ag Council's Influential Legislator of the Year. ♦



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

Blue Diamond Launches Year Two of USDA Climate Smart Grant

This May, *Blue Diamond* launched the second year of enrollment for the \$45 million Climate Smart Grant (CSG). The CSG, which was awarded to *Blue Diamond* by the USDA, provides farmers with funding to implement climate-smart practices on-farm, including planting cover crops, conservation cover and hedgerows. *Blue Diamond's* farmers planted more than 17,000 acres of cover crop within their almond orchards and over 100 acres of conservation cover in the first year of the CSG.

The Climate Smart Grant is part of the USDA's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program, which works to equip farmers with the resources and incentives needed to further their sustainable practices on-farm. Through this grant, *Blue Diamond* has provided members with almost \$800,000 in funds for seeds and incentive payments for 91 farmers in the first year. The total acres of almond orchards implementing pollinator habitat practices through the grant would be large enough to cover the island of Manhattan.

"This grant is an important piece of *Blue Diamond's* sustainability story, and we are proud of our first-year successes," said Dr. Dan Sonke, Sr. Director of Sustainability. "We are thankful for our partnership with the USDA as we

invest in the future of agriculture and assist our farmers with implementing these critical practices."

The Climate Smart Grant expands *Blue Diamond's* current sustainability efforts, including the cooperative's flagship Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP), which began providing incentive payments to participating farmers in the 2020 crop year. Through OSIP, *Blue Diamond* has provided millions of dollars in incentives to farmers and has the most acres in an almond sustainability program in the world. Today, over 57% of *Blue Diamond* member acreage is participating in OSIP. The Climate Smart Grant will bolster *Blue Diamond's* farmers to employ practices that support the good stewardship of their orchards.

"*Blue Diamond* has always been synonymous with quality because of our commitment to producing the best product possible," said Carmen Bourgaize, Chief Commercial Officer. "This commitment continues through our investment in sustainability and in turn, increases our value proposition because our retail and manufacturing customers know they are receiving almonds that are not only safe and high-quality, but are supported by important on-farm stewardship initiatives." ◆





Blue Diamond Growers USDA Climate Smart Grant Launch NOW LIVE

We are excited to announce the launch of the second cycle of our Blue Diamond USDA Climate Smart Farming Grant. This grant is \$45 million over the course of 5 years and we have completed the first year. For the 2024 Grant cycle, we have launched three practices with associated implementation incentives:

- Cover Crops
- Conservation Cover
- Hedgerows (new this year!)

The application window for this second cycle is open now through June 30th

Please see the table below to see the practices with their associated incentives.

BLUE DIAMOND CLIMATE-SMART GRANT PRACTICES AND ASSOCIATED INCENTIVES

Cover Crops	Conservation Cover	Hedgerows
Planting a temporary crop, typically flowering and nitrogen-fixing species every or every other row	Planting perennial, vegetative plants on idle/fallow or marginal land	Planting permanent, perennial woody shrubs and trees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FREE Seeds • \$35/acre incentive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FREE Seeds • \$50/acre incentive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FREE Plant materials • \$8/Linear foot incentive

Growers will need to compile the required items to participate in the grant, please see the items below.

Required Items:

- **Blue Diamond Items**
 - Associated Contract Numbers
 - OSIP Participation for the 2023 Crop Year
 - OSIP enrollment closes May 31, 2024
 - CASP Assessment Report
 - If you participated in OSIP, you have completed this item
- **Farm Service Agency(FSA) Items**
 - Subsidiary Print
 - Farm Maps for each property to be enrolled in the grant
 - FSA 156 EZ (Abbreviated Farm Record)

Apply Now:

- To start your application and see more information please click the link below!
 - You will be redirected to our *Blue Diamond Growers* website where you can see more program information as well as a link to start your application

Use the link or QR code below to learn more and apply



bluediamondgrowers.com/usda-climate-smart-grant/

If you have any questions, please contact Jasdeep Bains, jbains@bdgrowers.com

THE BEE BOX

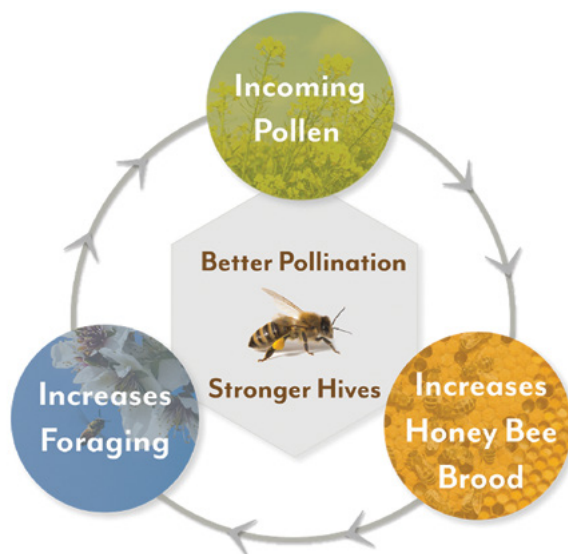
Conversations with a Beekeeper: Mitigating Risks Through Climate Smart Practices

Spring is well underway, which means almond bloom has come and gone and the bees have completed their important work of pollinating California's almond orchards. Despite some wet and windy conditions, warmer temperatures prevailed, and several periods of near-perfect weather had growers and beekeepers celebrating a fruitful pollination season! The industry is now shifting gears; beekeepers have moved bees into different crops across the country and growers are tending to their quickly-developing orchards. Those who grew cover crops through the Climate Smart Grant are terminating their stands and preparing orchards for yet another year of supporting pollinators through climate smart practices. I spoke with local beekeeper, Jason Miller, to discuss the various benefits of cover crops from a beekeeper's perspective. Read on to learn more about the pollinator-friendly practices covered through the grant and how growers and beekeepers are working together to protect bee health.

Jason Miller, owner of Miller Honey Farms, is a fourth-generation beekeeper here in California. Every year, their bees get their start pollinating almonds, and despite some complications from the rainy winter, he reports that "from pollination to nut set, it was a good year." There are many variables outside our control that determine how bloom and pollination will go. (Take it from Miller, who had about 200 colonies washed away in a flash flood this year!) Factors such as weather, temperature, frost, hive strength, orchard location and soil type can play a significant role in the season's outcomes. Miller supposes that if you can "retain control of your pollinators, keep them healthy, and keep them in your orchards," the less likely it is for those unknown elements to have adverse impacts in your orchard. By planting cover crops to help manage bee health, you can build a better defense against these factors and foster a more resilient system for the bees and your trees.

Using the example of exceptionally cold winters, Miller says "it's all about the strong colonies." He explained that in winter, when almonds are in bloom, a beehive doesn't naturally want to be big, but instead, like everything else in winter, bees slow down and rest. A weaker hive might end up spending most of its resources keeping warm instead of building brood and foraging in response to the almond bloom. By providing additional natural forage for bees during this critical period, a grower can "retain control" and mitigate the risks of unpredictable conditions.

When bees find a reliable source of nutritious food, it triggers a positive response throughout the entire hive. Incoming pollen from cover crops stimulates the hive to begin its reproduction cycle and start increasing its population. As the number of bees increases inside the colony, more bees are freed up for foraging. This leads



Early-blooming cover crops can signal the coming of spring, which encourages bees to break their winter dormancy and begin the foraging cycle. Bare soils that lack forage and diversity compel bees to stay inside to keep warm, signaling that winter is not yet over! Image Credit: Project Apis m.

to even more pollen collection, which results in vigorous hive strength and increased pollination in the orchard overall. By planting early-blooming cover crop varieties in the fall, growers can initiate this hive response before the almond bloom. Even if cold or wet weather is on the horizon, bees with access to cover crops are more likely to be geared up and ready at the first sign of good weather.

Another “unknown” that Miller has experienced firsthand is the potential for unintentional pesticide exposure from neighboring farms. As the almond bloom progresses and flowers open each day, pollen released from the anthers is collected and removed by the bees by mid-afternoon (if you see bees carrying pollen late in the day, after 3:00 pm or 4:00 pm, you probably don’t have enough bees in the orchard). When the bees have stripped that day’s pollen, they will go looking for other sources of food. Having flowers in the orchard from a blooming cover crop will keep the bees in your orchard.



PAm.’s Annual Clover Mix, a reliable nitrogen-fixer, can bloom from March — June to extend forage resources for pollinators through the season. Image Credit: Project Apis m. — Seeds for Bees® participant photo submission

whether that’s through reduced pesticides, fewer artificial inputs or planting cover crops, will benefit you both at bloom time and in subsequent years. If you’re managing your orchard with pollinator health in mind and bees start healthy in your orchard, it’s going to pay dividends. “There are more reasons to plant cover crops than may be obvious at first,” says Miller. The growers he is acquainted with who plant cover crops or hedgerows for pollinators have shared that they tend to see the connections between all these aspects on the farm. Soil health, nematodes, pests, weed pressure, nutrients and crop productivity are all positively impacted, he says, “all the benefits start to add up.”

Miller shared a story about an almond orchard that was experiencing significant bee die-offs at the tail end of bloom. They had to remove bees earlier than necessary, rushing to move their bees due to an unknown source of pesticide poisoning. Without a diversity of forage in the orchard, bees were traveling to nearby farms and getting exposed to pesticides. However, the next year the grower planted cover crops, which kept the floral resources local and anchored the bees right there in the orchard. Miller says, “Like night and day, they stopped seeing the pesticide kill.” In the morning, bees pollinated the almonds, and throughout the day they stayed in the cover crop with no need to scout for additional sources. They were able to keep the bees in longer without worrying about them getting into trouble at nearby farms.

Planting cover crops and bee habitat is a win-win for the grower and the beekeeper. Cover crops not only support bigger colonies but can also save your beekeeper on inputs and labor. Bees are healthier when eating a diverse, natural diet, which can reduce costs for labor and artificial food sources. Miller says that feeding bees artificial pollen patties “is like eating macaroni and cheese three meals a day.” Bees are not as healthy with such limited provisions; their immune systems are down, and they aren’t as vigorous or resilient as they could be. Many beekeepers, including Miller, are willing to offer a discount on pollination services if you plant cover crops. He says, “If you’re putting your best foot forward for bee health, I’ll put my best bees forward!”

The health of the almond industry and the bee industry are intrinsically tied. Miller suggests that taking care of your bees,



Hives that have access to natural pollen sources early in the year result in bigger colonies and increased pollination potential. Image Credit: Project Apis m.

IN YOUR ORCHARD

This year marks the second year of *Blue Diamond's* USDA Climate Smart Grant. Rolling out over five years, the project promotes the adoption of soil-building and pollinator-friendly practices in California's almond farms. A response to the growing market of eco-conscious consumers, the grant also aims to expand market opportunities and premium prices for sustainably grown almonds. You can receive payments and free materials for the following practices:

Cover Cropping

- Planting a temporary crop, typically flowering and nitrogen-fixing species in between orchard rows
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Conservation Cover

- Planting perennial, vegetative plants on idle/fallow or marginal land
- Receive no-cost seeds and a \$50/acre incentive payment

Hedgerows

- Planting permanent, perennial woody shrubs and trees
- Receive no-cost plant material and a \$8/linear ft. incentive payment

These climate smart practices, like installing permanent pollinator habitat and planting winter cover crops in orchard rows, provide a broad range of benefits for your orchard. In addition to increased pollination and bee health, these practices help to reduce erosion, suppress weeds, improve water-use efficiency and improve overall soil health.

Last year, *Blue Diamond* growers planted cover crops in over 17,000 acres through the Climate Smart Grant (that's an area of land larger than the entire island of Manhattan!). *Blue Diamond* partnered with Project Apis m.'s Seeds for Bees® program to provide seed and technical assistance to support growers to adopt cover crops and conservation cover in their orchards. Grant applications are open now through the end of June; if you are interested in planting



Planted in a Blue Diamond orchard through the Climate Smart Grant, this cover crop stand seen here was blooming on February 29, 2024. Image Credit: Project Apis m.

cover crops for pollinator health and want to get paid for these practices, apply today! ♦

Applications are open! Learn more at bluediamondgrowers.com/usda-climate-smart-grant/



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THE ALMOND BOARD

Doing the Math: Understanding the Economic Impact of Navel Orangeworm Management

Whether for economic reasons or the inability to access orchards because of the weather last winter, inadequate winter sanitation efforts are becoming increasingly evident. Industry reports confirm high damage numbers in last season's crop and

Navel orangeworm is likely the main culprit. To combat this issue, experts are advocating for a comprehensive integrated pest management (IPM) plan that begins with good winter sanitation, but labor and inputs are costly. In the current economic climate, where every dollar spent requires meticulous scrutiny, understanding the economic impact of NOW is of paramount importance.

Brittney Goodrich, assistant cooperative extension specialist at UC Davis, emphasizes the need for a closer examination of expenditures on pest management practices. In a collaborative effort, Goodrich and her team at UC Davis conducted an in-depth analysis to quantify the economic impact of NOW on growers. Their study involved assessing 53 conventional chemical pesticide products and seven mating disruption products, considering the number of applications and associated costs.

The research revealed that, on average statewide, 1.4 pesticide applications are applied per acre to control NOW. However, this figure exhibits significant variability based on geographic location. For instance, in Placer County with fewer almond orchards, the application rate was a mere 0.2 per acre. In contrast, Fresno County, with



a more extensive almond presence, saw an average of 2.0 applications per acre.

In terms of costs, the statewide average amounted to \$99 per acre, encompassing both application costs and mating disruption costs when applicable. Again, the costs

varied by county, with Placer County totaling \$8 per acre and Fresno County averaging \$146 per acre.

This past harvest is proof that there is an obvious need for more resources to help growers assess the economic impact of various IPM practices, which is why UC Davis is piloting the NOW IPM Program Comparison Decision Tool (<https://coststudies.ucdavis.edu/pest-management-calculators>). This innovative tool empowers growers to input combinations of different IPM programs, allowing them to determine the most effective strategy for their specific operation.

Using the decision tool, Goodrich presented a case study comparing Program 1, involving winter sanitation, spring pesticide application and hull split pesticide application, with Program 2, consisting of winter sanitation, mating disruption and hull split pesticide application. The tool revealed that while reject percentages were identical between the two programs, Program 2 resulted in less price loss, about \$35 per acre.

Beyond comparing programs, the tool provides valuable insights into a farmer's breakeven point, considering factors such as damage percentages, input costs and market prices for almonds. Goodrich emphasizes the significance

of considering more expensive pest management methods like mating disruption, stating that the initial costs may be outweighed by lower damage rates, making it a net benefit for growers.

Learn more about the economics of NOW control by watching the session (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xROaSr4iScE>) from the IPM + NOW Summit last year and the NOW session (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXfU_ntDsXc) from The Almond Conference 2023. ♦

Dr. Frank Zalom Receives Lifetime Achievement Award for Pioneering Work in IPM



Dr. Frank Zalom. Photo courtesy of UC Davis/UCCE

In a recent virtual ceremony hosted by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, Dr. Frank Zalom was honored with a prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award for his remarkable 40-plus year career as a distinguished professor of entomology at the University of California, Davis. The Almond Board of California (ABC) proudly recognizes Dr. Zalom's outstanding contributions to integrated pest management (IPM) practices for all major almond insect pests, including Navel orangeworm (NOW).

Throughout his illustrious career, Dr. Zalom has been a driving force behind the advancement of IPM practices in California crops, fostering economic sustainability, environmental stewardship and human health. His dedication to reducing insecticide use, minimizing runoff impacts, lowering pesticide exposure and streamlining application processes has significantly shaped the landscape of pest management in agriculture.

As a pivotal figure from 1980 to 2018, Dr. Zalom served as the first Extension IPM Coordinator for the Statewide UC Integrated Pest Management Program, and from 1986 to 2002, he directed the program, establishing it as a gold standard for accurate and up to date IPM knowledge.

One of Dr. Zalom's noteworthy collaborations was with the Almond Board of California in the 1980s, where he worked alongside UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors to develop a groundbreaking pest management program for NOW in almonds. This program, which included winter sanitation, early harvest and the development of a degree-day model, led to a substantial reduction in NOW damage and insecticide use, benefitting the entire almond industry.

Dr. Zalom expressed his gratitude for the award, acknowledging the generational efforts that preceded him in developing the IPM concept. He thanked administrators and fellow IPM enthusiasts, including those at ABC, for their critical roles in transitioning IPM research into practical applications.

Dr. Zalom's legacy in the almond industry and beyond is a testament to his unwavering commitment to sustainable and holistic pest management approaches. His impact will continue to resonate, shaping the future of IPM practices and inspiring the next generation of consultants, specialists, researchers and decision-makers in the agricultural landscape.

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California ♦

TIME TO CONSIDER

According to the World Health Organization, “nutrition is a critical part of health and development.” We know this to be true for ourselves, and it is no different for the trees in your orchard. Nutrition is critical for the health, development, and maybe most importantly, the yield of your orchard. This spring has brought multiple storms, which has made fertilizer applications difficult. If you feel that you are behind in your nutrient program, you are not alone; there is still time to catch up. In this “Time to Consider” article I’ll discuss some of the main nutrients important to the health of almonds and why you may want to consider adding them to your nutrition program.

I want to start off first by saying that before you decide to apply any nutrients, talk with your PCA/CCA about your specific orchard. What works for one orchard may not be helpful for another. A good place to start is by taking tissue and soil samples, so you have a baseline of what your orchard has and what it may be missing. The base of any nutrient program should start with the macronutrients needed for plant growth. Those macronutrients are **nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium**.

Nitrogen is thought to be the most important nutrient when talking about almond production. That may be up for debate, but more on that later. Nitrogen is the driver for tree growth and development. It encourages stem, shoot and leaf growth. Nitrogen is vital in the development of a full tree canopy. The greater the tree canopy, the more sunlight is captured. With a full canopy, a higher rate of photosynthesis is achieved leading to the potential of higher and more consistent yields. However, there can

be too much of a good thing. Overapplying nitrogen or applying it late in the growing season can lead to the development of hull rot, which can have negative impacts on your field. The second macronutrient is **phosphorus**, which plays an important role in root development and energy transportation throughout the tree. In my local soils in Stanislaus County, soil samples tend to show high levels of phosphorus. These high levels can represent a false positive because the phosphorus may be tied up in the soil and not available to the plant. Applying phosphorus is not always needed in mature orchards but is important for young establishing orchards. In young plantings, root development is critical and should not be overlooked. The last macronutrient is **potassium**. Potassium might have something to say about nitrogen being the most important nutrient. Potassium is needed for the transportation of carbohydrates (sugar) throughout the tree. This aids in photosynthesis, which is important for the growth and



Figure 1 Fertilization Setup by Trent Voss



Figure 3 Fertilizer Application via Tag-A-Long by Trent Voss

development of fruiting buds. UC Davis recommends the potassium range for summer leaf samples be between 1.4%-2.0%. In my experience, orchards always did better at the 2%-2.2% range. There are multiple forms or ways potassium can be applied. The main ways are soil applied using Sulfate of Potash (SOP) or fertigation using liquid Potassium Carbonate. In a perfect world you would use a combination of the two. I like to think of my soil application as my savings account for potassium nutrition. It keeps the soil level up but does take time to become plant available. The fertigation of liquid application is more of a checking account. It is a quick way to raise tissue levels of potassium and can correct deficiencies. All three of these macronutrients are vital but the need for each one will differ for each situation.

Micronutrients also play a pivotal role in the production of almonds. The three I am going to break down today are **calcium, boron and zinc**. Having sufficient **calcium** levels can help prevent disease by strengthening the cells within the plant. Calcium is also crucial in new root growth, especially at the time of root flush. The second micronutrient is **boron**. Boron is needed for flower production, which ultimately leads to good production. Boron levels need to be checked by taking a hull sample around the time of harvest. Boron accumulates in the hulls themselves and will give the best representation of the levels in the orchard. Boron deficiency can also be identified as what I call a "rat tail." In Figure 2 you can see what looks to be normal growth followed by a blank area and ending with a new tuft of growth. Boron can be applied on the soil or foliage to treat deficiencies. Monitor levels after application to make sure the pendulum does not swing in the opposite direction leading to boron toxicity. **Zinc** is the last of the micronutrients that I am going to go over today. Zinc is important in the growth process of the tree and is apparent especially in the new growth. Zinc deficiency can be identified by the tree having tightly stacked nodes at the end of a shoot. When I was working as a PCA, I would say it looked like a "Chia Pet" because of all the growth being stunted at the end of the shoot. Zinc can be applied with soil and foliar applications. Foliar applications are an easy way to show a quick response within the tree. Other



Figure 2 Boron deficiency by Yara

forms of zinc can be mixed with common nitrogen sources like UN-32 and applied through fertigation. As with the macronutrients all these micronutrients are needed for optimal plant health, but each orchard is different and will require its own unique nutrition program.

We all know health and wellness are important. As farmers, you have an even better understanding of this concept. If the nutritional balance of an orchard is not correct, it can lead to stunted growth, higher disease and insect impact and an overall loss in yield. Nutrition is a cornerstone for a successful and sustainable yield for every grower's almond orchard. ♦



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