



almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

JULY-AUGUST 2024



Federal Update
from our Advocates

USDA Under
Secretary Bonnie
Visits an Orchard

A Chat with
BDG's CCO,
Carmen Bourgaize



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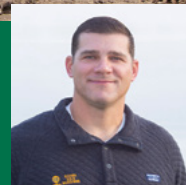
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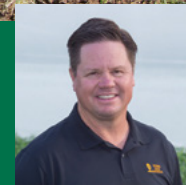
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Learn about USDA Under Secretary Bonnie’s *Blue Diamond* orchard and Almond Innovation Center® visit. The cooperative was proud to share about the many member-growers who have participated in on-farm projects utilizing funds from the \$45 million USDA Climate-Smart Commodities grant the cooperative was awarded in 2023.

22 A Conversation with CCO, Carmen Bourgaize

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Blue Diamond’s advocates in Washington DC, Lynn Jacquez and Stacy McBride, share updates on Congress, the Farm Bill, government funding and international trade.

ON THE COVER:

The almond orchards are getting even closer to harvest! Photo credit: Mel Machado, VP of Member Relations, *Blue Diamond Growers*.



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Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



Summer has turned up the heat this year in California, creating uncomfortable conditions for almond orchards and their growers! The high temperatures you have endured over the past few weeks have created significant stress for all involved. But I'm happy to say that, as I write this note, it appears that your dedication, perseverance and hard work are about to pay off with the start of the harvest.

Compared to last year, improved pollination opportunities have resulted in a larger crop, which was confirmed by the USDA National Ag Statistics Service estimates. The newly released 2024 California Almond Objective Measurement Report predicted a 2.8-billion-pound harvest for this year. Despite the larger crop, increased industry sales and shipments are producing a significantly smaller carryover this year, prompting the response to the Objective Forecast as an approximate \$0.20 per pound increase in pricing.

As nurturing our orchards requires dedication and an investment of resources, our path at *Blue Diamond* reflects a similar commitment to cultivating success. We have invested in new initiatives, and while it takes time to see results, we are eager to reap the fruits of our labor. As we continue to expand into new markets and focus on driving consumption in ways that will strengthen our value-added business, we remain committed to growing sustainably for the future.

During my recent visit to board member, George te Velde's home, I was glad to meet with some of you as we celebrated the graduation of our Leadership Program. To date, the program boasts over 500 graduates and is a crucial channel for leadership in our industry. Marking

its 20th year, the program is a symbol of the shared spirit that unites each one of you and the almond community. Meeting so many of our talented leaders highlights the deep-rooted family traditions within our cooperative, bringing in new energy and fresh ideas.

For me, family is really what it's all about. Leading a cooperative family of 4,500 of our growers and team members is a privilege, and each person is key to our success. My family relocated here to Sacramento almost a year ago and it has been a blessing beyond measure to have them with me as I focus on leading *Blue Diamond* towards a stronger future.

I had a wonderful time meeting with many of you at the District Meetings, and I look forward to meeting even more of you at our Annual Meeting on November 20 in Modesto.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and hard work. Together, we're cultivating not just almonds, orchards, and trees, but a legacy of excellence and resilience to stay for many years to come. ♦

Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



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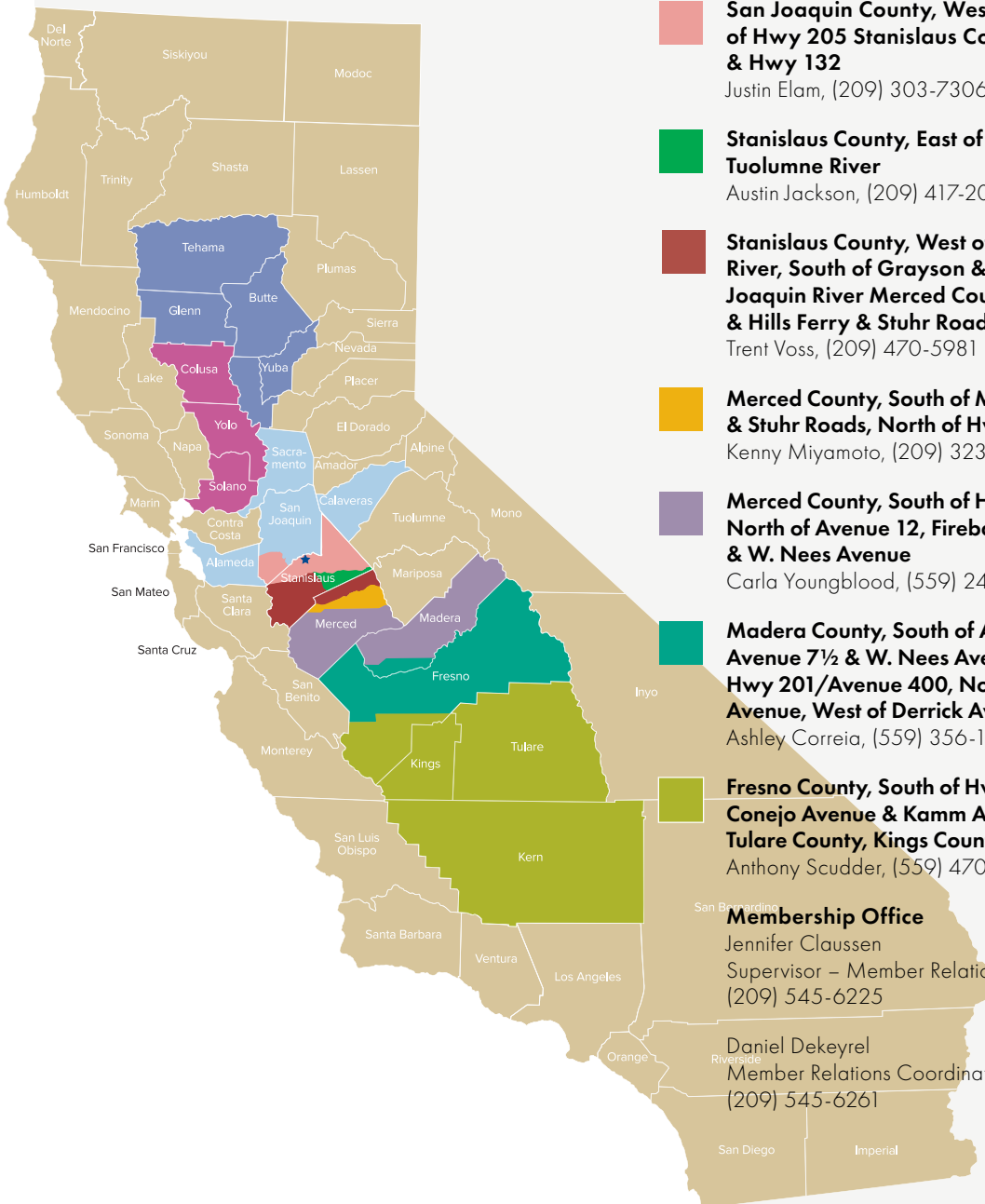
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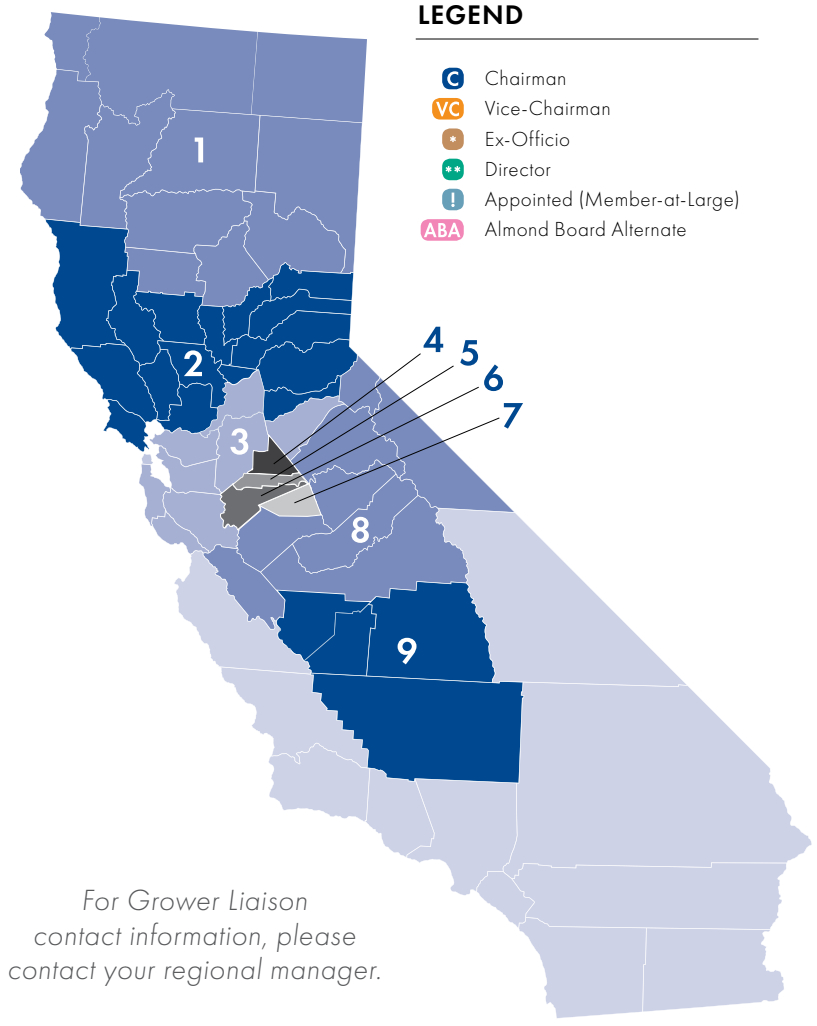
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ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



Blue Diamond Almond Market Update – July 2024

OVERVIEW

June shipments met industry expectations reaching 206.2 million pounds. This marks a 9% decrease from last month and a 10.5% increase from the same time last year. Domestic shipments were 62.0 million pounds, reflecting a 2% increase over last year, while export shipments were up 15% compared to last year at 144.1 million pounds. These results continue the theme of strong shipments observed throughout the season, leading to a year-to-date shipment increase of 5.7% compared to the previous season. With one month remaining in the crop year, the industry is on pace to ship over 2.7 billion pounds, ending the year with a carryout of around 485 million pounds.

SHIPMENTS

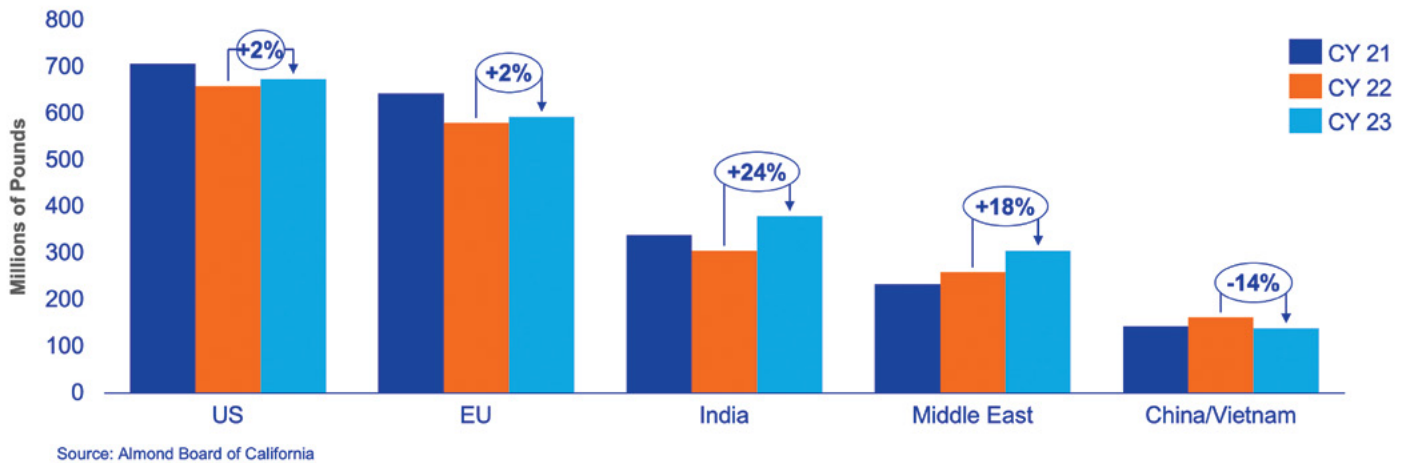
India:

India continues its strong pace with 26.9 million pounds in shipments for the month, recording a 74% increase from last year. Year-to-date shipments have increased 24% compared to the previous season. Leading up to the objective estimate, buyers have been relatively quiet. However, now that the report has been released, activity is expected to resume. With a smaller crop projection, California prices are firming, making local Indian prices more attractive and more likely to drive increased demand. Additionally, an earlier Diwali festival is expected to further boost demand.

China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:

Shipments to the region are still facing obstacles, amounting to 5.5 million pounds for the month. This marks a 52% decrease compared to last year and a 14.7% decrease year-to-date. Lower than usual demand continues to challenge the region with buyers remaining quiet in June after an active May. At present, local prices are lower than California offers. Buyers are expected to maintain a cautious approach until demand increases. The upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival in September is expected to present an opportunity for improvement.

Year-Over-Year Shipments August - June



Europe:

Shipments to the region totaled 43.5 million pounds, an 11% decrease compared to last year with year-to-date shipments 2% higher than the previous season. Like other regions, market activity was quiet in the two weeks preceding the Objective Estimate. Buyers awaited the forecast to instill some confidence that prices would not dip from their current levels. Buying activity is expected to increase as this region has more demand to fulfill to cover new crop supplies.

Middle East:

This region continues to show persistent growth with June shipments of 31.3 million pounds, marking a 145% increase from last year and an 18% increase year-to-date. Following the Objective Estimate, many in the market adopted a cautious approach. Buyers have their short-term needs covered and will wait for pricing to stabilize before making further decisions. Overall, demand is expected to remain steady into the new crop.

Domestic:

June shipments reached over 62 million pounds continuing the upward trend for the third consecutive month, with a 1.9% increase from June 2023. Year-to-date domestic shipments totaled 675 million pounds, a 2.3% increase compared to last year. The industry needs to ship 41.4 million pounds in July to match last year's total. Following three years of declining shipments, we expect July to solidify year-over-year growth.

COMMITMENTS

Total committed shipments are 347 million pounds, a 23% decrease compared to last year. Uncommitted inventories now stand at 338 million pounds, 36% lower than last year. New sales for the current crop have reached 92 million pounds, down 40% compared to last year, which is attributed to the limited pre-Objective Estimate activity. Year-to-date sales after 11 months are 5% higher than last season. Year-to-date new crop sales are 122% higher at 271 million pounds compared to the previous year.

Assuming a 2.44-billion-pound crop, shipments and commitments now account for 91% of total supply compared to 84% from the previous year. The industry is on pace to achieve a carryout of around 485 million pounds. This estimation factors in a 2% loss and exemption but actual damage this season has been greater than 4%. The additional damage will impact the 2024 carry-in driving this number down below 450 million pounds. This would put stocks/use ratios at 16% to 17%, a level not observed in the past five years.

CROP

On July 10, the USDA Objective Estimate was published, forecasting 2.8 billion pounds for the 2024 crop. This projection is 7% lower than the Subjective Estimate and 13% higher than the 2023 crop. The forecast is based on 1.38 million bearing acres. This estimate unquestionably caught the market by surprise, prompting prices to firm since its release. Crop development and quality remain a top focus for the industry. Recent heatwaves in California have raised concerns about the impact on the maturing crop, chief among them being a slowdown or halting of the hull split stage. A prolonged hull split may increase susceptibility to insect damage, a concern already on the minds of growers. The impact on harvest timing remains uncertain at this point. ◆

Market Perspective

The June position report met industry expectations and maintained a strong pace as the crop year nears its end. Remaining inventories consist of lower quality almonds, leading to limited offers, making for a tight transition to the new crop. The Objective Estimate firmed prices with a smaller forecasted 2024 crop. This, coupled with a favorable carryout, will draw supply closer to demand and contribute to price stability in the global market. With minimal inventories at destination, demand is expected to persist in the weeks leading to harvest.

Moving forward, the industry will continue to evaluate the 2024 crop. Post Objective Estimate, our attention now turns to price discovery as market activity is expected to increase in the coming weeks.



Laura Gerhard,
Vice President of Ingredients
and International Branded,
Blue Diamond Growers

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#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



Blue Diamond enjoyed celebrating Independence Day, which was closely followed by the beginning of hull split. Hull split signals that harvest season is drawing near. The cooperative also expressed excitement over the International Day of Co-Ops and recognized the 25 students who have received the Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship (read more about these students on page 30). ♦






BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of July 1, 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 July 1, 2024, for the program are listed here:

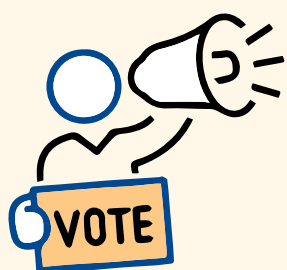
	Short-Term Investment Certificate (STIC)	Long-Term Investment Certificate (LTIC) (Maturity Date of 6/30/2027)
Initial Investment Required	\$1,000	\$50,000
Interest Rate	6.25%	4.50%
	(Variable, subject to change)	(Fixed rate)

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.

Blue Diamond Growers Annual Meeting Voting What is a Proxy & Why is a Quorum Needed at Annual Meeting?

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

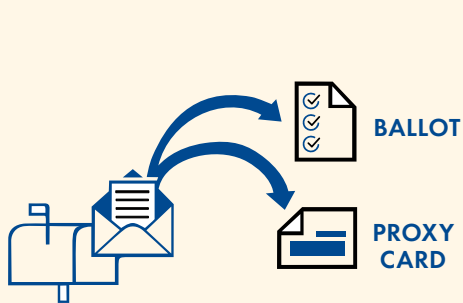


Annual General Election

It is time for the Blue Diamond annual general elections. This is a great opportunity for you to exercise one of your fundamental rights as a voting member to shape the future of your Blue Diamond Growers cooperative: electing members of the Board of Directors and Grower Liaison Committees. This year, you have the opportunity to vote for District Directors in districts 1, 4 and 6. You also have the opportunity to vote for Grower Liaisons in each of the nine districts. Ballots will be mailed the week of October 3 to voting members with Crop Agency Agreements. Voting will close on November 8, 2024. Only ballots received by this date will be counted. Your vote matters! Be sure to submit your ballot in plenty of time so your vote is received before this deadline.

How to Vote

Like last year, there are three ways to vote: paper ballot, online, or by phone. Your election packet will include the paper ballot, return envelope and instructions for online and phone voting. This year, if you choose to vote by proxy, you will be able to return the Proxy Card by mail or assign a proxy online.



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

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

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

Make Sure You Are Represented — Return the Proxy Card!

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



november 20

114th

Annual Meeting



GROWING TOGETHER

MODESTO CENTRE PLAZA | 1000 L ST. | MODESTO, CA



USDA Under Secretary, Robert Bonnie, Visits a *Blue Diamond* Orchard and the Almond Innovation Center®

Blue Diamond showcased their application of the \$45 million Climate-Smart Commodities Grant awarded by the USDA

The USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, Robert Bonnie, met with *Blue Diamond* team members for an orchard tour followed by a discussion at the Almond Innovation Center® in Sacramento.

Joining Under Secretary Bonnie were members of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Division: State Conservationist, Carlos Suarez, Deputy State Conservationist, RaeAnn Dubay, State Resource Conservationist, Jon Gustafson, and Public Affairs and Outreach Director, Jonathan Groveman.

Mr. Bonnie and the NRCS team toured *Blue Diamond* farmer Ben King's orchard along with *Blue Diamond* team members. Dr. Dan Sonke, Head of Sustainability for *Blue Diamond*, provided insight into the engagement *Blue Diamond's* participating farmers, like King, have made with the \$45 million USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant awarded to *Blue Diamond*.

The project is one of approximately 140 grant projects being funded by the USDA's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. The USDA is investing \$3 billion to build and expand markets for commodities made with climate-smart practices. To advance rural communities, the department hopes to increase the competitive advantage of U.S. agriculture both domestically and internationally. These climate-smart projects support a diverse range of producers and operations as they voluntarily adopt climate-smart agricultural practices and market their climate-smart commodities.

The *Blue Diamond* team shared the work they are accomplishing with grant partners: Project *Apis m.* (PAm.) and Pollinator Partnership (P2). PAm. provides participating *Blue Diamond* farmers with funds and resources to plant temporary cover crops through the "Seeds for Bees" program and perennial conservation cover. P2 supports *Blue Diamond* farmers implementing permanent pollinator habitat with hedgerows. These practices are supported by the USDA's grant, which was awarded to *Blue Diamond* in 2023, and is being disbursed over five years to support participating farmers' sustainability activities and to develop markets for those climate-smart commodities.

Under Secretary Bonnie was shown that, like many *Blue Diamond* farmers, King's application of the USDA-awarded Climate-Smart Grant has enhanced his ability to



Dr. Dan Sonke, Head of Sustainability, *Blue Diamond Growers* discusses *Blue Diamond's* utilization of the \$45 million USDA grant with Under Secretary Robert Bonnie at the Almond Innovation Center®

“I appreciate what you [*Blue Diamond*] are doing with the grant to help position American agriculture as a leader in delivering climate solutions.”

—Robert Bonnie, USDA Under Secretary



Blue Diamond farmer, Ben King, Under Secretary Bonnie, and King's Ranch Property Manager, Mike Powell

implement conservation practices across his land, which is especially relevant in the current economically challenging environment. This year, cover crops were successfully established in all the King farm's orchards.

"Under Secretary Bonnie's and the local NRCS partnerships have made it possible for *Blue Diamond* farmers to install practices like cover crops, hedgerows and conservation cover, that are so beneficial to the wellbeing of pollinators and local wildlife," said Dr. Dan Sonke. "The Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities funding has made a significant impact for many of our growers. We are grateful for this partnership and look forward to doing even more together and deepening our efforts with them in the coming years."

After the orchard tour, Under Secretary Bonnie joined *Blue Diamond's* Chief Government & Public Affairs Officer, Alicia Rockwell and Vice President of Member Relations, Mel Machado, at the *Blue Diamond* Almond Innovation Center® in Sacramento. Mr. Bonnie sampled several of *Blue Diamond's* latest innovations, including Thin Dipped almonds and *Almond Breeze*® Almond & Oat Blend, while hearing from *Blue Diamond's* Strategic Growth Accounts

Lead, Bobby McCuan. McCuan shared about *Blue Diamond's* domestic and global reach.

Under Secretary Bonnie discussed the crucial partnership between the USDA and *Blue Diamond* and wishes to keep an open discussion about how the USDA can further bolster *Blue Diamond's* efforts to continue advancing its farmers' sustainability practices and creating opportunities for new sources of revenue through the development of climate-smart markets. Mr. Bonnie closed by sharing that he is pleased with *Blue Diamond's* application of the funds by saying, "I appreciate what you [*Blue Diamond*] are doing with the grant to help position American agriculture as a leader in delivering climate solutions." ◆



Jillian Luna,
Communications Manager,
Blue Diamond Growers

Almond Breeze® Banana Coconut Ice Pops

Prep Time: 3.5 hours Difficulty: Easy Servings: 2

Ingredients

2⅓ cups *Almond Breeze®*
Almondmilk Blended with
Real Bananas or *Almond
Breeze®* Unsweetened
Original Almondmilk
Coconutmilk blend

1¼ cups sliced or diced
firm, ripe bananas

½ cup coconut flakes

Directions

1. Place ½ ounce (about 2-3 slices) of banana in the bottom of each ice pop mold. Pour ¼ cup of your choice of *Almond Breeze®* Almondmilk over bananas.
2. Place ice pop mold on a tray in the freezer for 30-45 minutes. (This helps hold bananas in place before adding more almondmilk.) Once partially frozen, add 3-4 more banana slices and top all ice pops off with more almondmilk, leaving ¼ inch at the top to allow for expansion when freezing.
3. Freeze for 2-3 hours or overnight. Before serving, pour ½ cup *Almond Breeze®* Almondmilk in a small bowl. Remove ice pops from container and dip the tip of each ice pop in the almondmilk and then coat in the coconut shavings.



Tropical Smoothie Bowl

Prep Time: 15 minutes Difficulty: Easy Servings: 2

Ingredients

- 2 containers (5.3 oz.) yogurt
- ½ cup *Almond Breeze*® Almondmilk
Blended with Real Bananas
- ½ cup frozen mango
- ½ cup frozen pineapple
- 2 Tablespoons coconut chips
- 1½ cups assorted sliced fruit like
kiwi, mango and/or banana
- 2 teaspoons hemp seeds

Directions

1. In a blender, combine yogurt, *Almond Breeze*® Blended with Real Bananas Almondmilk, mango and pineapple.
2. Blend about 1 minute or until smooth.
3. Divide mixture between bowls and top with coconut chips, sliced fruit and hemp seeds.



A Conversation with Carmen Bourgaize, Chief Commercial Officer for *Blue Diamond*



Almond Facts was pleased to spend some time with Carmen Bourgaize, Chief Commercial Officer for Blue Diamond. Bourgaize shared how Blue Diamond's commercial reach is expanding and what the cooperative is doing to ensure Blue Diamond's continued success around the world.

Almond Facts (AF)

Thank you for joining us here at Almond Facts, Carmen! We're looking forward to learning the latest in commercial and

the great successes you and your team have been working hard to achieve. But first, let's take a moment to get to know you better. Could you share about yourself and some highlights from your amazing career in food service, sales, and strategic business development?

Carmen Bourgaize (CB)

I've been working in sales and marketing in the food/CPG sector for over 20 years.

I started out in confectionary sales and then moved over to one of the largest dairy companies in the world where I led account teams on the food service side of the business. I've always had a passion for sales, and I was in my element creating winning partnerships with customers, strategizing to outperform the competition and creating high-performance teams. Over time, my role expanded, and I eventually shifted from sales to marketing and business development. I was most recently the senior vice president of Strategic Business Development, where I was leading the team responsible for a large portfolio of major retail and food service dairy brands.

My team was responsible for consumer and market insights, commercial strategy, innovation, revenue management, product management, marketing and ecommerce sales. Together we leveraged data and company expertise to create a winning strategy, and we assembled an incredible

team of talented individuals to implement the plan. This was vital because it doesn't matter if you have the largest marketing budget and the best products; it's not going anywhere without a clear plan and a strong team. Together we had tremendous success through brand development and expansion, innovation and sales growth.

AF

That's amazing! What a wonderful career you've had so far. I know that we can really lean on your experience for more growth for *Blue Diamond*. How do you see your experience aiding in *Blue Diamond's* success?

CB

Blue Diamond already has two leading brands that are beloved by consumers. *Almond Breeze*® is the number one brand in almondmilk and we're also the number one brand in snack almonds. We're well established and leading by a large margin, which is a fantastic place to begin. In the U.S., it's difficult to find a retailer that doesn't carry our products. To drive growth, we must expand our reach and bring more products and innovation to retailers and give consumers more reasons to pick up our products.



I'm excited about our strong strategic growth plan and we're ensuring we find additional new markets to grow in whether it's food service, ecommerce or international

markets. And innovation! Our two leading brands need continued investment to stay relevant and meet our consumers' changing needs. People have changing habits; some have different dietary requirements and many have new financial pressures. Our brands must be ready to meet all consumer needs and we have dynamic plans to take our brands to new places and drive growth.

AF

I love that aggressive growth! Let's talk more about innovation. We have many incredible products and ingredients out there. Is there still room for innovation?

CB

People love our products! We wouldn't have been around for over 100 years if they didn't, and there are so many applications and usage occasions for our products. Our ingredients customers are doing wonderful things with almonds. Since almonds have such an incredible nutritional profile, they remain relevant, but the vehicles in which we bring them to consumers could expand. For instance, how can we make it more convenient to consume almonds and almondmilk? How do we make it available everywhere our customers are? This is where we're focusing our innovation to make sure we're maximizing our strengths, like our snacking flavors. Nobody does flavor better than *Blue Diamond*. As flavor trends change, we will be there to lead



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“We’re ensuring that people develop a preference for Blue Diamond almonds because of their top quality, great nutrition, and the fantastic people who grow them. It’s a wonderful responsibility. It’s an honor.”

the charge. With all the applications for almonds, our portfolio has incredible reach and potential!

AF

Yes, absolutely. I like that you're talking about being innovative, not just with the product itself, but in how our existing and new customers access it. So, other than our delicious product that's loved around the world, what else drew you to join *Blue Diamond*?

CB

Blue Diamond is privileged to market a product that is good for you and comes from good people. Our amazing grower families truly appealed to me. Serving them is something I can feel proud of. It's purposeful work. Our farmers grow these first-class almonds as their livelihood, and they need *Blue Diamond* to be the intermediary that gets them the best possible demand and financial return for that product. Part of that is understanding what consumers, retailers and food service customers need. We're ensuring that people develop a preference for *Blue Diamond* almonds because of their top quality, great nutrition, and the fantastic people who grow them. It's a wonderful responsibility. It's an honor. The commercial function is that connecting point from moving the product off the farm and into the hands of consumers and customers around the world. It's our job to maximize those returns. It's not easy work, but it's worthwhile.

AF

I know we've been discussing our wins lately. Some were mentioned in the growers' webinar with Kai and Mel back in April, but could you share more of *Blue Diamond's* wins that have been secured along with those coming up?

CB

We've accomplished a lot over the past few months. We've had wins with some of the biggest retailers in the U.S. We're also breaking into channels, like natural foods, in a bigger way. Not every consumer in the grocery store will head down the snack nut aisle and they don't all visit the plant-based milk section or the cracker section, so we're working to interrupt them and delight them throughout the

“We don't move product in club anywhere like we move it in Canada. When you mention Blue Diamond in Canada, people list the flavors they've tried from the club channel because they love them and that's how they're discovering them.”

store with features, displays and promotions.

Consumer awareness takes time, so we are making sure we stand behind new products we launch. New products like Thin Dipped Almonds keep growing. This summer we launched them across the Albertson's chain of stores. As I'm traveling around for work, I'm always excited to pick up Thin Dipped Almonds in the airport. Several major convenience retailers have recently added Thin Dipped Almonds in smaller grab-and-go sizes. This fall you'll see us expanding our ecommerce with the Amazon platform and continuing to bring new, exciting things to the club channel as well. We have many more flavors and formats for consumers to discover.

There's also great work happening on the ingredients and international side. Our new partner in Japan is working with us on *Almond Breeze*® and they have aggressive growth plans, too. We're working on snack nuts expansion for Europe, and we've added a new team member to help us with expansion in the Middle East. We also have new folks working with us on commodities and ingredients. Some of



our long-time ingredients sales folks have gained some very large bookings in this space. Customers know they can count on our quality and service, and when they hear about our growers and sustainability practices, they feel good when they purchase from us! The sales team has done a great job communicating all the great things our growers do from a sustainability perspective and they continue to book millions and millions of pounds of almonds that go into many of your favorite products. There's a lot to be proud of!

AF

Wonderful! Can we talk about the great market opportunity in Canada? Please share what you've been doing there and some of *Blue Diamond's* wins in that market.

CB

Yes! We expect our Canadian business to be equally as strong and just as large per capita as our U.S. business. This means our Canadian business should be approximately 10% the size of our U.S. business, so there's a lot of room for growth. As part of our strategic growth plan, this is the year we're going to make it happen. To do that, we've invested in the team. We have a fantastic new sales director in Canada, Montana Sly, and she is already picking up significant new business across Canada's retailers. Our marketing team has a portfolio of flavors and sizes they can break out as needed to meet the tastes of Canadians. Some of our top flavors in the U.S. have a lot of opportunity in Canada. When we put them into the club channel, they fly off the shelves. We don't move product in club anywhere like we move it in Canada. When you mention *Blue Diamond* in Canada, people list the flavors they've tried from the club channel because they love them and that's how they're discovering them. So, there's room there for flavors like Smokehouse and Chile 'n' Lime. Dill Pickle was a huge mover in Canada, too. For the first time ever, *Blue Diamond* has become a permanent fixture in Walmart's snack nut aisle. There's a lot in the works with Canada's largest retailers to expand the *Blue Diamond* portfolio and get the right products on the shelves. We're working hard to ensure that *Blue Diamond* becomes a household name in Canada like it is in the U.S. We've also recently picked up some great *Almond Breeze*® business in Canada, so stay tuned!

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“At the heart of it, we represent the growers, and we must all get creative and work together to maximize their returns.”

AF

We will! So, are there any Canada-specific *Blue Diamond* products coming that you could share about, like Maple Almonds or anything like that?

CB

The innovation team does a great job staying ahead of flavors and understanding what's on trend by market. Yes, we have a portfolio of new flavors crafted for Canadians ready to go and we have some mainstay flavors like Smokehouse and Lightly Salted that need to increase their distribution footprint because they are top sellers for us, and we know people love them.

AF

Oh, that's awesome. Have you tried any of the new flavors?

CB

Yes, and they're very delicious. But I develop a new favorite flavor constantly. First, Elote Almonds were my favorite. Then it was Blueberry Almonds. Now it's Spicy Dill Pickle Almonds. They're all so delicious!

AF

They are! It's hard to keep one favorite when they're all so good. So, you shared a little about some of the new team members who have joined the commercial team and you've expressed the importance of a strong team. What can we expect to see coming from these new team members and their contributions to *Blue Diamond*?

CB

Chris Bolton is our new food service director. Every day, Chris works on our food service business, putting our products

into all the major distribution channels so they are used in culinary, in restaurants, and for grab-and-go opportunities.

Craig DeSimone joined as our director of revenue growth management. He advises us on pricing and promotional strategy to make sure we have the right product at the right price at the right place and that we're using analytics to study the influence pricing has on sales.

As I mentioned earlier, our new Canada sales director, Montana Sly is pulling in many wins for us as well. And we're working to have the right people in all the right accounts, so we've hired some key account managers and sales managers to round out the team and connect us to more customers. They're already having a positive impact on booking us many features, displays and promotions. I'm pleased about that.

AF

So you have a lot of confidence in the team?

CB

The team is incredible! We're finding opportunities for many of our enthusiastic teammates to expand their responsibilities. We have a culture of accountability where team members understand the plan and their role in executing it. There's such pride from the team when they share an idea. We might decide to run after an idea that a brand new team member has brought forward; if it's a good idea, it doesn't matter whose it was. At the heart of it, we represent the growers, and we must all get creative and work together to maximize their returns. We're leaving no stone unturned.

AF

Are there any other areas of growth that you want to share on?

CB

We're updating our communications and how our brand shows up to meet the ever-changing needs of the consumer. There are many exciting things in the works for the consumer. Whether they're looking at our packaging on-shelf or seeing a digital ad from us, we want to be sure our core messages reach them. The team is working hard not just on innovating products, but in evolving our brands. So that's a little bit of a teaser I'll give you because we've got a lot happening with the brands.

AF

I can't wait to hear more about that! Are there any closing thoughts you'd like to leave with our *Blue Diamond* farmers?

CB

It's an honor and a privilege to represent our growers every day. It's a duty that we take very seriously and I'm extremely optimistic about all the great things in the works that will ensure our brands are the brands people prefer and that the portfolio continues to expand to meet the changing needs of the consumer. I joke with a lot of the growers and Kai that I dream about almonds every night, but I literally do! That's how seriously I take it. We're confident in the plan and there are so many exciting things in the works. We're very enthusiastic about *Blue Diamond's* future! ♦



Jillian Luna,
Communications Manager,
Blue Diamond Growers

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The Orchestra of Harvest

When it comes time to think about almond harvest, I often refer to it as the “Orchestra.” In an orchestra, a conductor motivates and directs all the musicians playing diverse instruments to bring the final sounds together to create a masterpiece. Even though each musician is reading the same musical score, the conductor nudges some players to add nuances to bring the combined sound to life. This also happens when you, as the almond harvest conductor, set in motion the collaboration amongst all your harvest resources, including multiple pieces of harvest equipment, operators, field trucks, hulling and shelling operations, delivery trucks and the chain of people responsible for your crop. This ends with *Blue Diamond* receiving the crop and placing it into a warehouse for processing. That is just the first song. The results of that delivery set off another round of activity behind the gates of *Blue Diamond* culminating in your first delivery advance payment. I wanted to highlight and explain a few lesser-known instruments in the Stockpile Advance, Volume Premium Program and the ability to request a breakdown request, that are available to you to fully optimize your harvest.

Should I Stockpile in 2024?

No matter how many acres you farm, you may be faced with the option (or requirement in some cases) of stockpiling your almonds before hulling. Most hullers must stockpile a sizable portion of their customer’s product to efficiently schedule their hulling runs for the season. With estimates projecting the 2024 crop to be around 2.8 billion pounds, this year will be no exception as hullers will likely need to run into the next year to finish running their stockpiled product.

Most stockpile decisions are based on logistics. Does the huller have the capacity to run the product when it arrives? The quality of the finished crop is also a consideration.

Virtually all orchards have a natural variation in soil types that can produce inconsistency in the moisture of the

crop at harvest. If hulled and shelled immediately upon arrival, this variation can complicate the adjustment of the shelling machinery. When stockpiled properly, this moisture variation can “equalize” within the pile, providing greater consistency during the shelling process and resulting in more efficient shelling and a lower level of chipped and broken kernels.

Let me make a very important point: **almonds do not dry in a stockpile.** The moisture level within the pile will equalize, at best. Almonds should not be stockpiled if the hull moisture is greater than 12% or the kernel moisture is greater than 6%. If piled above these levels, fungal growth within the pile can ruin your crop.

With that in mind, one of the recommendations for managing Navel orangeworm is “early harvest.” However, if shaken while still green and not given sufficient time to dry, stockpiling green almonds can create serious problems and a decrease in crop value.

Simply stated, do not stockpile green or high moisture almonds.

To avoid problems with stockpiles, be sure to shake the crop at the proper timing and leave almonds in the orchard to properly dry. If you run into a situation such as a major rain event, please contact your huller immediately or consult with your regional manager for guidance. For more information on stockpile best practices, please refer to the “Stockpile Management” section of your 2024 Crop Delivery Guide.

Manage Cash Flow with Stockpile Advances

Trade-offs are always part of farming. You may be thinking now that your crop is in a stockpile, what do you do for cash flow? This is where *Blue Diamond’s* Stockpile Advance Program comes into play. You can receive partial payment of the Delivery Advance based on the weight of the crop in each stockpile. This year’s advance is \$0.25 per Estimated Good Meat pound.

Contact your regional manager to sign a Stockpile Advance Agreement. Then, when the crop has been harvested and stockpiled, your regional manager will work with the huller to calculate the estimated meat weight and document the weights on a Stockpile Description form. For piles located on your farm, measurements will be taken to estimate the meat weight.

When the stockpile is picked up and hulled and/or shelled and received, our Grower Information System will determine the full value of the delivery and deduct the amount paid on through the Stockpile Advance Program. No interest is charged on stockpile advances. This program is offered as a service to our grower-members to help them through the critical harvest period.

Leverage the Volume Premium

A longstanding program that can be a significant benefit to grower-members is *Blue Diamond's* Volume Premium Program. You receive an incentive for delivery in bulk trailers. While most of the almond industry is standardized on 2200-pound wooden boxes delivered by flatbed truck, *Blue Diamond* is uniquely set up to receive and process bulk trailer deliveries very efficiently. Overall, about 80% of *Blue Diamond's* handle is delivered via bulk trailers. Each bin delivery has five times the processing cost per pound than each pound delivered in a bulk trailer. Just think about the number of steps involved in making a bin delivery. Every bin must be filled, placed on a flatbed truck, tied down, received, truck weighed, untied, each bin moved individually with a forklift, weighed again, dumped at receiving, and have tags entered into our system. Bulk deliveries provide a significant efficiency advantage due to their inherently simple process that requires only a few steps with minimal hands-on labor. If your huller-sheller is set up for bulk deliveries, and your product is not routinely delivered in bulk, it is wise to connect with your huller-sheller or regional manager to see if you may take advantage of the Volume Premium Program. More details regarding the program are listed in the Grower Statement section of your Crop Delivery Guide.

Breakdown Requests

Do not forget about breakdown requests. The foundation of an effective pest management program is accurate identification of the pest that's causing the issue. With that in mind, it's a good practice to request a reject breakdown on at least one delivery tag per orchard to receive detailed information on your delivery advance statement. The breakdown request will identify and list the percentage of damage caused by each type of pest (ants, Navel orangeworm, etc.) or the makeup of foreign material in each sample. Your huller can check the box marked "Rejects" and/or "Foreign Material" to get a clearer picture of the makeup of your sample. A new category for 2024 will be "Beetle" to designate the damage caused by the emerging pest, *Carpophilis truncates*. Many huller-shellers will routinely mark these on your behalf, but it may be worth sending them a reminder to be sure to mark a breakdown for each of your orchards.

Tracking Loads with the Portal

As I mentioned in my last article, being connected to the *Blue Diamond* Portal is essential to having updated information at your disposal. We plan to enable daily email notices of delivery, letting you know your almonds have been received. This new feature will allow you to open the portal to check weights and view grade information once tested. Check your Portal regularly for updates through harvest.

Amazingly, this "harvest orchestra" moves along in unison with grower-member, huller-sheller, and *Blue Diamond* all working hand in hand to yield the best results. Lastly, you should have received your 2024 Crop Delivery Guide at the end of July. This guide contains additional details on these topics and in-depth information to help you make the most of the 2024 almond harvest. ♦



Ben Goudie,
Director, Member Relations,
Blue Diamond Growers



Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Awards 25 Students with 2024-2025 Scholarship

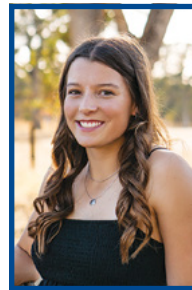
The next generation of agricultural professionals will need to put in hard work and be deeply dedicated to maintain the industry's continued success. The Blue Diamond Growers Foundation understands that well and has chosen 25 scholarship recipients who are students pursuing higher education in the 2024-2025 academic year. The Foundation supports the next generation of difference makers who are committed to upholding the future of their communities and agriculture.

Please meet this year's scholarship recipients and read excerpts from their essays to learn about their goals for the future.



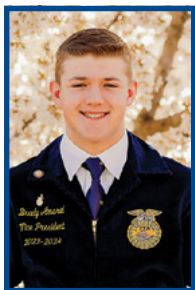
Lillian Agueda (Hughson, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Modesto Junior
College
Major: Ag Education

The connection with children when you interact with and introduce them to something is where my passion for education grew. This sparked my interest to become an ag educator. I have learned through experiences like these that engaging with those in our community will not only impact their knowledge of agriculture, but it will help support the future of our society.



Claire Boles (Hamilton City, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Kansas State
University
Major: Agronomics

I am excited to become an ag accountant to help farmers and ranchers address the financial and operational challenges of the industry. I want to show support for local farmers, like my dad, and ensure that their legacy stays alive. With hard work and advanced coursework, I am confident that I can become a qualified accountant and reach my goals.



Brady Amarel (Nicolaus, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Texas Tech
University
Major: Agribusiness

My goal is to return to our prune, almond and walnut farm as a fourth-generation farmer and to further my education by becoming a Certified Pest Control Advisor... I am ready for a career that teaches me to be an innovator out of necessity and cultivate a life I love and value. My dirty boots tell the story of a farmer's son eager to continue an eight-decade legacy of farming advancement.



Luis Bucio (Woodland, CA)
Fall 2024 School: UC Davis
Major: Plant and Soil Science

My purpose for pursuing a degree in the plant science field is my passion for agriculture. As a plant scientist, I want to breed and genetically modify plants to be able to grow in many different conditions throughout the world, hence, solving one of our major issues: the location of where to grow certain crops.



Javier E. Castillo (Orland, CA)
Fall 2024 School: CSU Chico
Major: Agribusiness

One day I want to become a farm manager. I love being outdoors; I want to be able to drive around and tell how my trees are doing or what they need to produce the maximum yield possible.



Ysabel Charter (Arbuckle, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Cal Poly, SLO
Major: Agriculture

I am confident that I will bring a new and fresh perspective to the farm and play a vital role in processing and creating products out of the almonds my dad produces. I wholeheartedly

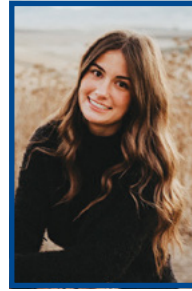
believe that I will help progress the almond industry by creating nutritious products that will give consumers new and innovative choices.



Cadence DeCoite (Modesto, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Modesto Junior College
Major: Ag Education

I will graduate from Modesto Junior College in spring 2024 with my associate degree then transfer to CSU Fresno in the fall of 2024. My

major will be agriculture education. I hope to graduate from CSU Fresno in spring 2026 and start my teaching credential program in fall 2026.



Ryann Dennis (Maxwell, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Texas Tech University
Major: Ag Education

I want to share my love and knowledge for the agriculture industry. During my time at Texas Tech, I plan to take advantage of every learning

opportunity. Agricultural educators play a vital role in benefiting our society and I wish to teach and prepare students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices.



Bailee Haywood (Maxwell, CA)
Fall 2024 School: University of Mississippi
Major: Bio-Environmental Science

As an arborist, I can help promote a healthy lifestyle through tree science and new regenerative agriculture practices. This will not only strengthen

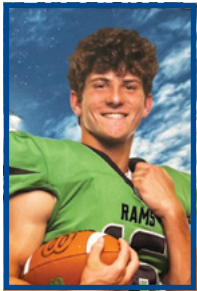
the California farmer but also help feed the world with high quality, nutritional commodities. I find the process of growing agriculture products fascinating and am eager to share that passion in my future career.



Mackenzie Hoekstra (Ripon, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Oklahoma State University
Major: Ag Communications

I have been surrounded by agriculture by living on a dairy farm and, more recently, almond orchards. I've built relationships with many people in

different agriculture careers and gained many skills through various activities that will benefit my agriculture career. I am excited to attend OSU where I can further my education and knowledge in the agriculture industry.



Alex Katzakian (Stockton, CA)
Fall 2024 School: University of Georgia
Major: Ag Engineering

My goal after graduating is to transform the way water is distributed and handled in California. I plan to receive a degree in agriculture/environmental engineering and discover a solution to the issue of water, not just to sustain the region itself but also to sustain agriculture and populations in Northern California.



Makenzie Mendes (Escalon, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Texas A&M
Major: Agronomics

Agriculture is the backbone of civilization, and without the dedication of farmers and agricultural leaders, our society would struggle. By shaping policies that support this vital industry, I aim to ensure its sustainability while promoting societal wellbeing. My path is not just about personal fulfillment but about contributing to sustaining our way of life.



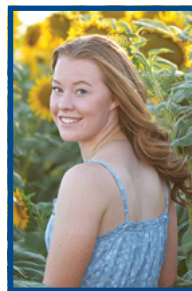
Brenda Monje Pineda (Tulare, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Cal Poly, SLO
Major: Ag Systems Management

I want to develop improvements in areas from the crop production industry to better resource management. Developing more precise technology that leads to proper soil conditions, nutrient management and more sustainable harvesting machinery to lessen the carbon footprint would progress the crop production for farmers.



Landon Nydam (Ripon, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Cal Poly, SLO or Oklahoma State University
Major: Ag Engineering

Producing more with less is the goal of ag technology; I hope to join in that process. When we produce more with less, food will be cheaper, making it more affordable in our local communities and our greater society. As a Christian and a proud FFA member, I hope I will have the opportunity to give back to the people of this generous community. I am truly blessed that God placed me where He has.



Madison Pearson (Maxwell, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Purdue University
Major: Agribusiness Management

After earning my bachelor's degree I plan to attend graduate school then work in the California almond industry. My degree will help me perform at my best. My goal is to give back to the community that has given me so much. I am grateful for everything that has been given to me and the best way I can think of giving back is by bettering the community through my education.



Briannah Perry (Visalia, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Texas A&M or Cal Poly, SLO
Major: Ag Mechanics, Crop Science

I have experienced the benefits that farming provides to our community and beyond. I am aware of the various struggles facing ag in our valley from being a youth leader with the Tulare County farm bureau. I am passionate about helping with the ongoing water issues and regulations farmers and dairymen are facing.



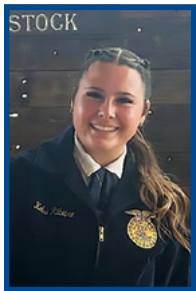
Nevin Purewal (Yuba City, CA)
Fall 2024 School: CSU Chico
Major: Agribusiness

My grandfather immigrated to the U.S. from India in search of a better life. He brought his farming skills from the fields of Punjab. Once I obtain my degree, I want to give to the community that gave so much to my grandfather. I want to help support the dreams of other farm laborers. My education will help me operationalize the ag farming business while maintaining what sets us apart from other communities, our people and sharing the wealth of knowledge.



Alonso Soto-Guzman (Dinuba, CA)
Fall 2024 School: UCLA or UC Davis
Major: Biochemistry

I would love to work and do my research on the reactions that plants have to pesticides and chemicals. I plan to work alongside other scientists to help change the crop industry. I could also see myself working in a lab testing how products influence insects or plants. Creating products that are successful in production and excel in deterring pests is crucial.



Kelsi Ribeiro (Riverdale, CA)
Fall 2024 School: CSU Fresno
Major: Ag Education

My teachers have inspired me to be a teacher and impact students' lives. I admire my teachers for teaching in and out of the classroom. I want to assist students with caring for and handling their FFA project animals. I know the care and work each student has for their animal, as I have raised market goats and replacement dairy heifers in high school.



Rohan Thiara (Merced, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Texas A&M
Major: Agribusiness

My goal is to not just maintain my family's business but to lead it toward becoming a dynamic and thriving entity in our community. Success in business is not merely about generating profits but also creating value for customers, employees and the community. I aim to lead with integrity, make informed decisions and foster a workplace culture that promotes growth and innovation.



Owen Rockemann (Tracy, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Cal Poly, SLO
Major: Ag Engineering

My goal is to start an ag operation business with my sister, with the intent of running a seasonal subsistence farm that feeds a small restaurant. This can be marketed both as a novelty venue and demonstrate sustainable food production. We hope to also use the farm side of the operation as a tool to educate youth about agriculture and the possibilities within the industry.



Grace Van Laar (Ripon, CA)
Fall 2024 School: Oklahoma State University
Major: Agribusiness

Our growing population is in desperate need of awareness of what the ag industry really stands for. Through technology and social media, we can take advantage of this source of outreach and use it to advocate to younger generations what agriculture is. This major will lead me to become an advocate for the industry I so strongly believe in.



Haley Vandermaarl (Visalia, CA)

Fall 2024 School: Texas Tech University

Major: Ag Communications

I plan to major in Ag Communications. I come from an ag-based community and I plan to ensure society understands the importance of agriculture and how

it is a necessity. I would love to get a job in marketing to make sure the real truth of ag is being heard and how it benefits humans.



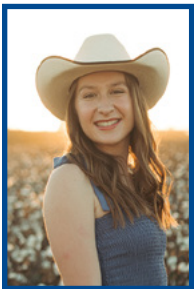
Anh Vu (Sacramento, CA)

Fall 2024 School: UC Davis

Major: Microbiology

I am majoring in microbiology, where I will gain the foundation to enable myself to take the MCAT to advance on to medical school. From there, I will work towards becoming a

neurosurgeon. This is truly my passion and my motivation. I want to give back to my community as well as give others another opportunity for a brighter future.



Kendra Ward (Reedley, CA)

Fall 2024 School: Cal Poly, SLO

Major: Ag Science

I want to become an ag teacher to inspire and teach the next generation about the importance of agriculture. There needs to be strong advocacy for the preservation of ag, and I feel I can

play a part in that and help raise up the next generation of agriculturalists, starting in the classroom. I want to be the advocate that agriculture needs to shape students who want to help. ♦

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Blue Diamond's Leader Program Class of 2024 Celebration

Blue Diamond grower and board director, George te Velde, hosted Blue Diamond's Leadership Program graduation celebration at his home on June 20. The celebration included a barbecue, recognition ceremony and remarks from Board Director, Nick Blom and President and CEO, Kai Bockmann. Throughout the year, the graduates had participated in in-depth education sessions that focused on being active members of the Blue Diamond cooperative, farming through difficult times, sustainability, in-orchard practices, and many more rich topics and tours. Amidst the educational pieces, they learned how to become even greater leaders and advocates for Blue Diamond and the almond and agricultural industries.

Congratulations, Class of 2024!

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Current Washington Situation

Congress, the Farm Bill, and Government Funding.

Only six months remain in the 118th Congress, and Congress appears poised to delay most significant legislative action until after the November elections. The most elusive agreement of the Congress has been the reauthorization of a five-year farm bill. Both the House and the Senate have made moves to advance a farm bill, but it is widely speculated that final action on the farm bill will occur after the election.

In May, the House Agriculture Committee passed its \$1.5 trillion farm bill proposal out of committee by a vote of 33-21, with four Democrats and all Republicans voting to advance the bill. The House Committee bill significantly boosts farm safety net programs, doubles funding for the Market Access Program (MAP), increases funding for specialty crop programs, expands access to programs that lower energy costs for farmers and improves tracking of farmland purchases by entities from China and other adversary countries.

The ability to move the House bill to consideration on the House Floor is hampered by two significant issues. First, the bill lacks complete cost offsets which creates issues for fiscally conservative members, particularly the House Freedom Caucus.

And second, Democrats are opposed to the bill's proposed funding limitations on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and restrictions on the Secretary's use of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

In reaction to the mostly partisan House farm bill proposal, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Stabenow (D-MI) released a Senate Democrat farm bill outline. Chair Stabenow's proposal diverges significantly from the House farm bill and does not limit SNAP and CCC funding. Senate Committee Ranking Member Boozman (R-AR) also released a competing Senate Republican proposal that closely mirrors the House bill and proposes to double funding for MAP. The Senate Agriculture Committee currently has no plan to markup a farm bill before Congress breaks for its annual August recess. As a result, the outlook for final enactment of a farm bill before the current September 30, 2024, expiration date is not promising, and another extension will need to be enacted.

The House Appropriations Committee began work on adopting an overall spending plan for the government and passing the 12 funding bills necessary to keep federal agencies funded. Democrats opposed the funding plan proposed by Chairman Cole (R-OK) stating that it violates last year's debt limit agreement by increasing funding for defense activities and reducing funding for domestic programs. Chairman Cole intends to have all 12 bills considered on the House floor before the August recess. The Senate Appropriations Committee announced that it plans to begin work on bills in Committee in July and has made no plans to take those bills to the Senate floor before government funding expires on September 30, 2024. Congress will need to pass a continuing resolution to fund the government beyond this date.

International Trade.

In May, President Biden increased tariffs on approximately \$18 billion in products imported from China, including steel and aluminum, semiconductors, electric vehicles (EVs), batteries, battery components, critical minerals, solar cells, ship-to-shore cranes and medical products. China's

Ministry of Commerce immediately responded with threats of retaliatory measures against U.S. products. Retaliatory actions have yet to materialize, however, the agriculture community remains concerned that China will retaliate against agriculture products with the same zeal it did after President Trump announced new tariffs on Chinese imports in 2018 and 2019. Those retaliatory measures specifically targeted the agriculture sector and significantly reduced U.S. agricultural exports to China.

Blue Diamond was awarded \$3 million in Regional and Agricultural Promotion Program (RAPP) funding which will be used to grow markets and expand exports to Asia and Africa. In addition to *Blue Diamond's* MAP funding, RAPP provides essential support for export promotion activities that will provide opportunities to sell more almonds. ♦



Lynn Jacquez
Of Counsel, JPH Law Firm,
Senior Advisor,
Husch Blackwell Strategies



Stacy McBride,
Executive Vice President,
Federal Government Affairs at
Husch Blackwell Strategies

THE BEE BOX

Leveraging Growers' Practices and Beekeepers' Preferences to Cover More Ground

Every February, the almond bloom pulls about 88% of the country's honey bee colonies to California for one huge pollination event.¹ The pollination migration presents an opportunity to positively impact the health of the majority of the nation's bees with practices that can also benefit the nation's almond growers. The cost of colony rentals for pollination has steadily increased year over year, alongside the increased cost incurred by the beekeeper to provide enough food for the bees and maintain healthy colonies.

Growers are now spending about \$400 dollars an acre on pollination, which represents roughly ~13% of the cash cost per acre of an established orchard in the northern part of the San Joaquin Valley, and about ~9% of the cash cost per acre of an established orchard in the southern San Joaquin Valley.^{4,5} As more almond acres go into production, the demand for honey bees grows. Beekeepers have been able to meet the demand so far, but there are not many extra colonies. This is especially true if a natural disaster or bee health issue impacts the number of available colonies.

Strategically timed cover cropping with blooming cover crops can provide a valuable source of nutrition for visiting honey bees, while also conveying soil benefits to the almond grower. Changes in pesticide application practices can also benefit beekeepers and bees. Information gained from two recent surveys could help increase the adoption



Growers attend a cover crop tour held by Blue Diamond Growers in 2023. Photo credit: Project Apis m.

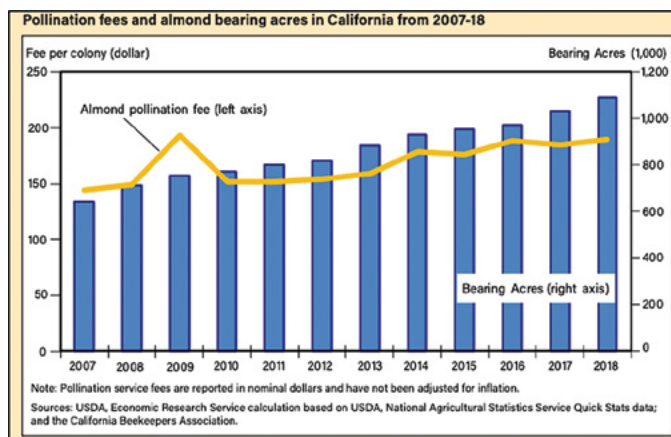


Chart from: "Honey Bees on the Move: From Pollination to Honey Production and Back" by Jennifer K. Bond, Claudia Hitaj, David Smith, Kevin Hunt, Agnes Perez, and Gustavo Ferreira, June 2021.

of these efforts by helping growers target practices for which beekeepers are willing to provide a discount on pollination fees.

In 2020 Project *Apis m.* (PAm.) awarded National Honey Board funds to Dr. Brittney Goodrich of UC Davis, for her project titled: “Measuring Beekeepers’ Economic Value of Cover Crops and Contract Enhancements in Almond Pollination Agreements.”

Dr. Goodrich surveyed over 90 commercial beekeepers, representing about 20% of all honey bees contracted for almond pollination, to determine their preferences and the value they place on various practices like cover crops in the almonds. Her findings revealed some clear preferences:

“Our results demonstrate that beekeepers place the highest value on additional pesticide protection. Secondly, we find that beekeepers value two types of cover crops, brassica and soil builder mixes, but do not value legume mixes, likely due to the timing of bloom. Our work shows there is potential for development of pollination contracts that could improve honey bee colony health, though future work must compare the costs of implementation of these practices.”

— Dr. Brittney Goodrich

Goodrich found that beekeepers were willing to reduce pollination fees in exchange for some practices that can provide benefits prior to and during the bloom: approximately, an eight-dollar-per-hive cost reduction for pesticide protection and five to seven dollars for cover crops.

Another survey, funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), was conducted in 2020 by Dr. Jennie Durant of UC Davis and Dr. Lauren Ponisio of the University of Oregon. The researchers gathered insights from 329 almond growers in the Central Valley about cover cropping practices and found that only 35% of growers have used cover crops in the last five years.³ This indicates that there is plenty of room to expand the practice if it makes sense for growers to invest in it.



Beekeepers feeding bees just after arriving in the almond orchards. Photo credit: Project *Apis m.*

The region where the growers were located within the Central Valley had an impact on cover cropping practices, likely due to local differences in rainfall and water costs. Growers who desired stronger colonies and were concerned about the future availability of bees had a higher likelihood of using cover crops. Durant and Ponisio summed up the findings this way:

“We found that region and concerns about future pollination services were consistently important factors in determining the adoption.”

Of the study, Durant and Ponisio state, “These findings suggest that a regionally flexible pollinator conservation strategy focused on supporting honey bee colonies might have the highest likelihood of grower participation and adoption.” Other considerations also moved the needle for growers considering cover crops: access to planting equipment, cost share programs, and reduced pollination rental fees.

Organizations, like Project *Apis m.*, that are working to cover more ground, can take the data-backed barriers, incentives, and beekeeper preferences from both surveys and provide the information in a way that helps growers and beekeepers broker new and more nuanced contracts. For example, communicating to growers clearly about the benefits these practices have for pollinators, and how much beekeepers value them, is important because that information directly addresses growers’ concerns about the supply of bees.

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Grace Kunkel,
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India Trip Underscores New Nutrition Research in Region

Earlier this year, Elena Hemler, associate director of Nutrition Research at the Almond Board of California (ABC), embarked on a trip to India with colleagues from ABC in marketing, trade and food quality. Her visit aimed to deepen the collaboration between the Almond Board and key Indian researchers and food processors and foster a better understanding of the nutritional benefits of almonds while promoting innovative uses of this versatile nut in Indian diets.

The primary motivation for Hemler's journey was the All India Food Processors' Conference. This event, organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Food Processing and the All India Food Processors' Association, served as a platform for the Almond Board team to present their research and insights. Hemler, along with other ABC colleagues engaged with Indian food processors to highlight the potential of almonds in their products.

Showcasing Nutritional Research

Hemler's primary role at the conference was to present the latest findings in almond nutrition research. She shared results from studies conducted specifically in India, as well as general research on the health benefits of almonds. Her goal was to inspire Indian food processors to incorporate almonds into their products, emphasizing the nut's potential to contribute to health and wellness.

Expanding Research Horizons

During her stay, Hemler also visited several prestigious research institutions in Mumbai and Delhi. She met with researchers at SNTD Women's University and the National

Diabetes, Obesity and Cholesterol Foundation, both renowned for their contributions to nutrition science. These institutions are currently conducting studies on various health aspects of almonds, including their impact on sleep, skin health and more.

"Our research in India has traditionally focused on diabetes, given the country's high prevalence of the disease. However, we are now expanding our scope to include other important health topics such as sleep, skin health and gut health" Hemler explained. "Almonds contain magnesium and melatonin, which are known to improve sleep. This new area of research could have significant implications for promoting better sleep among Indian consumers."

Almonds' Place in Indian Culture and Traditional Medicine

Almond consumption is deeply rooted in Indian diets and is an important component of traditional Indian medicine. A notable topic during Hemler's interactions with Indian media and researchers was the traditional practice of soaking almonds. Many in India believe that soaking almonds overnight and removing their skins and eating them in the morning enhances their health benefits, particularly for improving cognition. While respecting this cultural practice, Hemler clarified that the almond skin does not need to be discarded as it contains beneficial nutrients, including fiber and antioxidants.



India Hemler Trip - Courtesy: Almond Board of California.

“Our studies indicate that consuming whole almonds with their skins can offer numerous health benefits,” Hemler stated. “However, we respect traditional practices and encourage people to consume almonds in whatever form they prefer. Almonds are a healthy addition to the diet whether consumed raw or peeled and soaked.”

Looking Ahead

The trip underscored the importance of India as a market for almonds and highlighted the Almond Board’s commitment to supporting research that benefits both consumers and the industry. “It was inspiring to meet

with top researchers in India and see their dedication to improving public health through promoting healthy diets,” Hemler remarked. “We are confident that our collaborations will enhance the understanding and appreciation of almonds in India.”

As the Almond Board of California continues to invest in nutrition research and global outreach, visits like Hemler’s will play a crucial role in fostering international partnerships and promoting the health benefits of almonds worldwide.

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California ◆

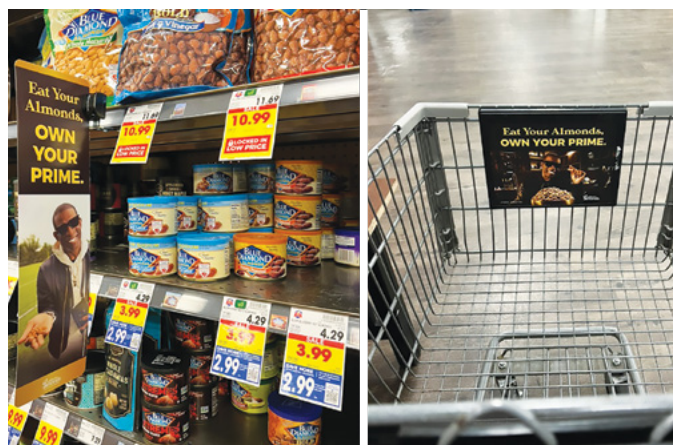
Analyzing the Impact of the “Own Your Prime” In-Store Campaign

In the realm of retail, where every placement is strategic, the collaboration between the Almond Board of California (ABC) and Coach Prime, Deion Sanders, yielded notable results. Since its launch last October, the “Own Your Prime” campaign aimed to elevate almonds’ appeal to consumers, encouraging them to own their prime.

Earlier this year, ABC conducted an in-store element to the campaign, meeting consumers where they make their purchasing decisions. Nut aisles were adorned with visuals and signage dangled from the shelves. Even shopping carts featured the “Own Your Prime” partnership. The initiative aimed to catch the eye of shoppers and encourage the consideration of almonds during their grocery trips.

The campaign was piloted in select markets: California, Colorado, Ohio and Michigan. Laura Morin, who oversees marketing in North America and China at ABC, said the data from the campaign revealed impressive results. “Across all those markets, when they compared the stores we were in versus the stores we were not, there was a **2.2% lift in almond dollar sales**,” she said. “That is a significant lift when a price promotion is not included.”

Moreover, the data showed that in three of the markets, **42% of purchasers were new to almonds**, suggesting that the campaign successfully attracted new consumers to the almond category. This aspect demonstrates the campaign’s effectiveness in expanding the almond consumer



Prime Results - The “Own Your Prime” campaign shelf-talkers (left) and shopping cart advertising (right) met consumers where they make their purchasing decisions in four states. Courtesy: Almond Board of California

base. Morin shared, “These are people whose loyalty card data had never shown almonds being purchased before. So not only are we seeing a lift in sales, but our partnership is helping us reach new users, which is hard to do.”

The success of this campaign underscores the importance of targeted marketing efforts in influencing consumer choices. By leveraging partnerships and strategic placements, California almonds can effectively engage with their target audience and drive meaningful results.

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California ◆

TIME TO CONSIDER

I'm not sure if I'm sweating because the weather has been over 100 degrees for more than a week (even as I write this article) or if it's the thought that harvest is right around the corner! You read that right, harvest is coming and it's coming fast. In this article, I will go through a few key reminders about harvest and how you can position yourself and your operation for a successful harvest season.

Irrigation is vital before and after harvest. Kernel weight will continue to increase through the month of July, depending on the water situation and irrigating at 100% ET will lead to full kernels at harvest. Trees under water stress during this time can have reduced kernel weight. Returning to normal irrigation right after shaking is important, not only for tree stress, but for next year's crop as well. According to the UC Davis Publication "Drought Tip: Drought Management for California Almonds (ucanr.edu)"¹ severely stressed post-harvest orchards had a 52% reduction in bloom density and a 94% reduction in fruit set, resulting in a 73.6% reduction in the following year's yield. Growers using drip irrigation can apply water as soon as the almonds are clear of the drip line. Growers with sprinklers or flood will have to pre-plan, so harvest is done in a timely manner and they can return to normal irrigation. Always keep in mind that the first irrigation for next year's crop starts after this year's harvest.

As growers enter the harvest home stretch, pest management still needs to be in the forefront of their minds. **Navel orangeworm**, which is one of the leading causes of reject levels, needs to be addressed prior to harvest. An insecticide application made at hull split will help reduce the possibility of damage. Growers with a high Navel orangeworm population may need to consider additional applications, depending on the insect flight and hull split timings. Consult with your PCA on the correct timing and products for your orchard. Timely harvesting can also reduce Navel orangeworm damage by avoiding the late generation flights of the insect. Keep in mind however, if a grower shakes before the nut has matured it can result in "peelers" at the huller. Shaking too early can also cause problems, such as excess moisture leading to crop damage, if your crop is stockpiled after harvest.

As the summer temperatures increase, so does **mite** pressure. In a year where input costs are high, it may be hard to decide to do an extra treatment for mites. Not treating a mite flare up can result in reduced production in the following years. Heavy mite pressure leads to early defoliation, then reduced photosynthesis, and ultimately, reduced flower production the following year.

Ants are what I like to call "The Silent Pest" at harvest time. In many cases, growers do not believe they have an ant issue, but they might not be able to see the damage. Ants typically only leave the skin of the almond after feeding. This skin is then lost through the pickup machine or at the huller, and the damage never shows up as a reject. Even though it may not be showing up as reject, it still has a fiscal impact on the grower. A simple way to scout for ants is to take an empty water bottle with the cap off, place a few plain almonds, potato chips, or hot dogs inside, and set it in the orchard. Check the bottle 24-48 hours later and see if any damage has occurred. This easy scouting method, along with a discussion with your PCA, can provide insight on if treatment is needed. And don't forget to remove the bottle when you're done!

Carpophilus Beetle is the newest pest almond growers are facing. Much is still being learned about this pest, so control strategies are still developing. The critical timing for a chemical application for this pest will be at hull split. Timely and early harvest also shows promise because vulnerable nuts are exposed for a shorter time. If you believe you are experiencing damage from *Carpophilus Beetle* be sure to check your Reject Breakdown on your *Blue Diamond* statement. We have added "Beetle" as a new category to show if this pest is causing your rejects.

Weeds, a grower's never-ending nightmare. I know there must be some growers out there, like me, who feel like we don't control weeds, we just manage them. A pre-harvest herbicide application along with a close mowing of the orchard floor is one of the best options. This works well because healthy weeds die easier. I know it sounds backwards but if a weed is stressed it hardens off and weed spray materials tend to be less effective. Mowing after the weed spray also helps break down the dead weeds prior to harvest. This allows for a more efficient harvest.



After all the prework is done, it's finally time to harvest. But when should you harvest? This photo shows the different stages of **hull split**. In early shake situations, where a grower may be trying to avoid Navel orangeworm damage, they may look at shaking at 2c. Growers who may be delivering inshell, will look at 5 or 6. With Independence variety, growers might say, "I have all those stages on a tree at one time!" In the end, it depends on the orchard, and what works well for its unique situation.

Dust is another hot topic at harvest time. It is important for growers to help reduce dust. Controlling equipment speed, monitoring sweeper head height, and making sure to blow dust into the field rather than onto roadways are all helpful. The Almond Board of California has some great information on dust reduction that can be found here: [Reducing Harvest Dust | Almond Orchard Management \(almonds.com\)](https://www.almonds.com/almond-industry/orchard-management/harvest/dust-reduction).²

After the grower has shipped the harvested material to the huller, it will likely be **stockpiled**. This is quite common and has increased in recent years due to the sheer size of crops

being delivered. Again, the Almond Board of California has some Best Management Practices for Stockpiles that can be found here: [Managing Almond Stockpiles | Almond Orchard Management](https://www.almonds.com/almond-industry/orchard-management/harvest/stockpiling-harvest).³ The main takeaway is to be sure the almonds are dry before stockpiling. Best practices stipulate no more than 12% hull moisture AND no more than 6% kernel moisture. Another informal measurement is, "If you have to ask if they're too wet, chances are likely they are too wet." If dry weather is present, have stockpiles open so moisture can escape. In the event of wet weather, cover the stockpile and do not place it in a low spot where water could accumulate.

Once harvest is complete, it is time to start preparing for the next season. It is recommended to have tissue (leaf) samples taken in July to check the nutrition of the trees. A hull sample should also be done. This is separate from a tissue sample, because it will give accurate results for boron levels. If boron levels are low, post-harvest is an excellent window to improve the deficiency. Soil samples can be taken at this time, which will inform you if any post-season soil amendments are needed. It is best to review this information with your PCA/CCA to determine a plan.

Lastly, the field staff at *Blue Diamond Growers* is here to help during this busy time. If you have questions about delivery, concerns about wet deliveries, or just need some information, please contact your regional manager. Good luck and have a happy harvest! ♦



Trent Voss,
Regional Manager,
Blue Diamond Member Relations

1. <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/Details.aspx?itemNo=8515>

2. <https://www.almonds.com/almond-industry/orchard-management/harvest/dust-reduction>

3. <https://www.almonds.com/almond-industry/orchard-management/harvest/stockpiling-harvest>

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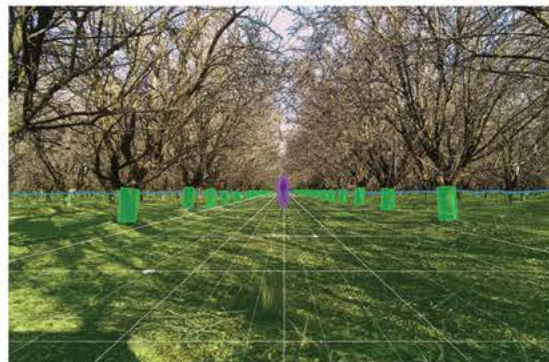
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- ▶ Scrub wet leaves with brushes
- ▶ Blow berms with high-powered adjustable blowers
- ▶ Spray cleaned berm with herbicides

Mowing:

- ▶ Improved performance and visibility with front mower
- ▶ Reduce tree damage with low profile platform
- ▶ 58 gpm @ 3200 psi hydraulic availability



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