



# almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS



**NEW!**  
Holiday  
Packaging &  
Flavors, and  
Mixed Nuts

114th Annual Meeting Recap

NEW! Almonds and More

BDG Salida Becomes Cal/VPP "Star Site"

Cover Cropping for Pollinators

**NEW**



# All Top Self-Fertile Varieties Now Available

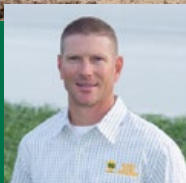
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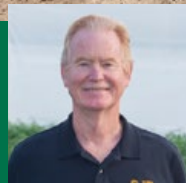
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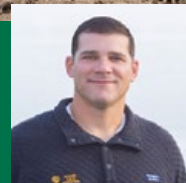
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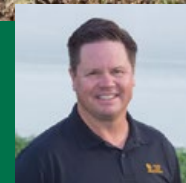
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#### ON THE COVER:

*Blue Diamond* brings on the flavor and spirit of the season with new holiday packaging and flavors. Also welcoming *Almonds and More!*



## ▶ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stephen Van Duyn, *Chairman of the Board* | Modesto

Kent Stenderup, *Vice Chairman* | Arvin

Kelli Evans | Live Oak

Dale Van Groningen | Ripon

John Monroe | Arbuttle

George A. te Velde | Escalon

Nick Blom | Modesto

Dan Mendenhall | Winton

Matthew Efird | Fresno

Chris O'Leary | Minneapolis, MN & Scottsdale, AZ

Kristin Daley | San Francisco

Kai Bockmann, *President and CEO*

## ▶ ALMOND FACTS STAFF

Blue Diamond Growers Communications Department,  
[communications@bdgrowers.com](mailto:communications@bdgrowers.com)

Jillian Luna, *Managing Editor*

Mel Machado, *Contributing Photographer*

Gray Allen, *Advertising Sales*

916.783.4334 & 916.765.3234

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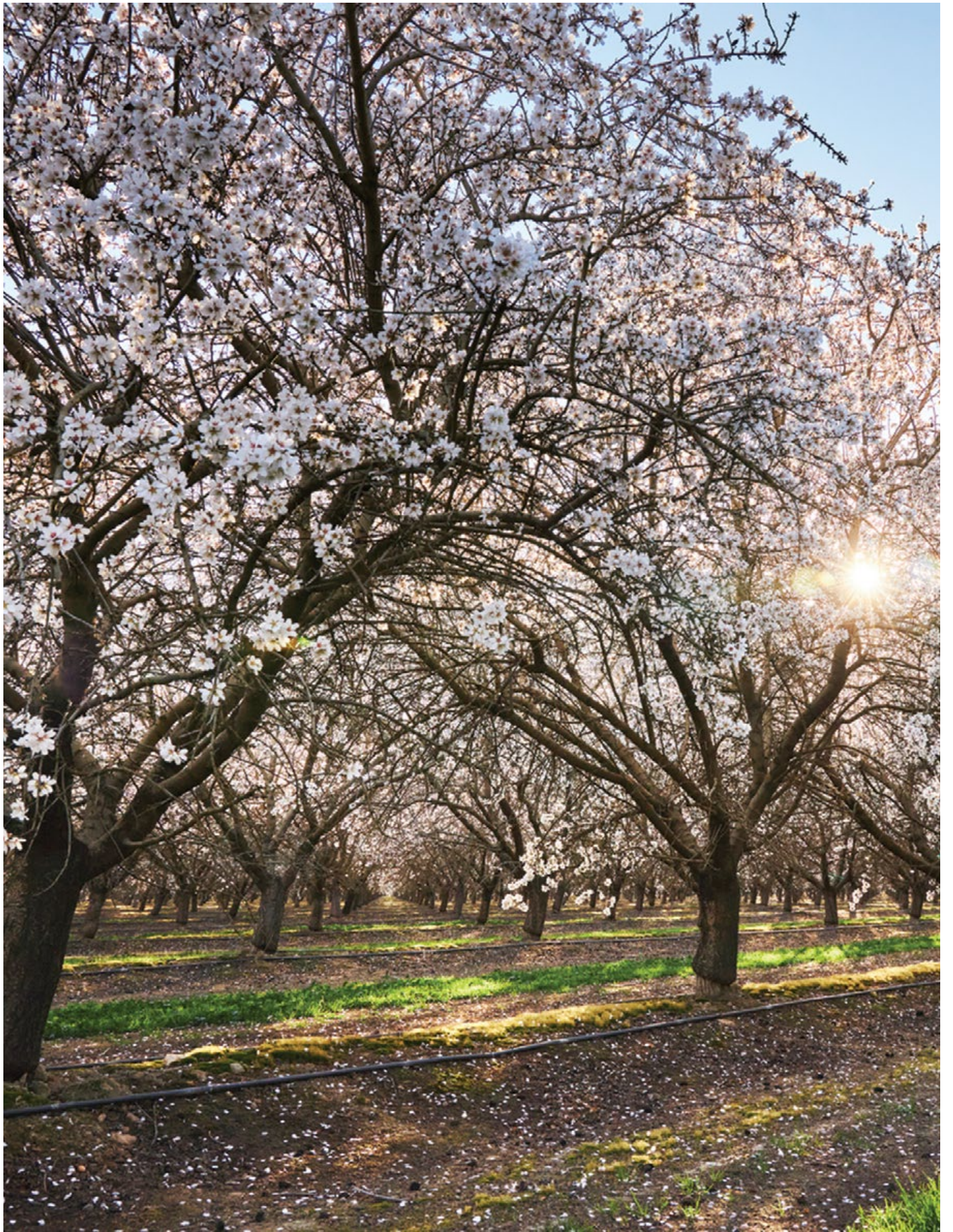
Blue Diamond, the world's largest processor and marketer of almonds, exports to over 100 countries.

Almond Facts, established in 1922, is published bimonthly by Blue Diamond Growers, 1802 C Street, Sacramento, California 95811. Address all correspondence to the Editor, Almond Facts, P.O. Box 1768, Sacramento, California 95812. Advertising subscription rates provided upon request.

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Kai Bockmann  
President & CEO



## “GROWING TOGETHER” ANNUAL MEETING 2024

### CEO's Speech

*It was a pleasure to talk with so many of you at our recent Annual Meeting in Modesto. As I approach the end of my second year as Blue Diamond's CEO, I reflect on how much we have achieved together, and also how much success and growth still lies ahead of us. For those of you who didn't manage to attend the meeting, I would like to recap what we discussed together.*

Firstly, I would be remiss if I didn't give a huge thank you to Steve Van Duyn and all our board members for their support over the last year. They really could not be a better group to work with, and they are working hard for you all year round.

What I've enjoyed most over the last year is getting out there and meeting with you, our growers. I met with many of you while I was out on the road at district meetings, in your homes, and coffee shops. At the end of the day, it's all about **Growing Together**, and this happens best when we engage and have meaningful conversations.

Ultimately, what drives us every day is to deliver the highest return for your almonds. It's been a tough year, and we've faced weather challenges, pest issues, and rising production costs. Like I've said before, volatility is the new normal, but we remain steadfast on our plans for growth.

At the Annual Meeting, I was joined onstage by Carmen Bourgaize, Chief Commercial Officer, Tony Laurenzana, SVP Ingredients and International Branded Sales, and Steve Schult, VP Global Supply. We shared some of the positive returns from our strategic plan. This plan was developed to diversify our portfolio, and to reduce our dependence on our two product categories.

#### **Strengthening our Value-Added Business:**

This is essentially our core business — *Almond Breeze*® and snack nuts.

#### **Accelerating our International Footprint:**

We have some great early success stories to share here, particularly around Japan and Canada.

#### **Food Service Expansion:**

The food service market is huge, globally, at \$3.5 trillion. There's a lot of runway to grow in this space.

#### **Drive Innovation:**

We can't tell you everything just yet because we don't want our competitors to know, but we have new products, new flavors, new customers, and new segments. This is an exciting space for us!

#### **Creating Enablers and Efficiencies:**

This one is all about doing more with less and being cost effective.



It was great to talk through some of the early wins we have had in these areas and the distinct competitive advantage we have as *Blue Diamond Growers*. I shared that while everyone has access to the same raw material — the almonds, the same stainless steel — the equipment, they don't have our history, our brands, our state-of-the-art technologies or our world class facilities.

Most importantly, however, it's our amazing people, culture and legacy that you've helped create that really set us apart. I am incredibly proud to lead this amazing team. They are firing on all cylinders, for you, every single day. Between our growers and our employees, we are responsible for around 4,400 families. We take that

responsibility very seriously. We take your almonds very seriously.

Anyone who was at the Annual Meeting would have felt the excitement in the room. We are well on our way to building a bigger, better and stronger *Blue Diamond*. In the coming weeks and months, I hope to talk to more of you about our plans for **Growing Together**.

*Thank you and Happy Holidays to you and your families. ♦*

*Kai*  
 Kai Bockmann  
 President & CEO



Steve Van Duyn  
Chairman of the Board



## "GROWING TOGETHER" ANNUAL MEETING 2024

### Chairman's Speech

*It's a pleasure to address you as Chairman of the Board for the first time. Thank you to all our special guests and partners for joining us today.*

I'd like to take a moment to remember Aldo Sansoni, a former Board Director who served for 18 years and who was a veteran of the U.S. Navy passed away this year at age 92. Some kind words shared by friends and family are "Aldo's accomplishments changed agriculture; he was a pioneer with a rich legacy. His love for his family and his devotion to agriculture set a high bar. He was a jack of all trades and master of many. He was a living history book, and he lived what he loved." Aldo's lifelong motto



Aldo Sansoni

was "Conserve the land for it will feed you forever." I had the pleasure of serving with Aldo on the Board and I can say that he was a great Board member. His legacy will not be forgotten.

Let's take a moment to recognize those who are military veterans. My own father served in the army after the Korean War, and I'm grateful for his service. This has increased my appreciation for all our veterans. Thank you, veterans, for your sacrifice and service to our wonderful country. We are honored that you are part of our *Blue Diamond Growers* family.

In recognition of Veterans Day, our *Blue Diamond* facilities host annual flag raising ceremonies followed by breakfast for our team members and retirees who are veterans.

The team also created a veterans display in the main hallway to recognize *Blue Diamond* member-growers and/or their immediate family members who have served in our military. Thank you to all our growers who participated by sending in your photos and sharing your stories detailing your time in service to our country. We appreciate you and we thank you.

Dan Cummings, a proud third generation *Blue Diamond* grower who served as District 1 Director beginning in 2006, and served as Board Chairman from 2014 to 2023 has completed his service. I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude for Dan's leadership all these years and for being an integral player in preparing me to step into this role. Dan has long held positions of leadership, serving for the Almond Board of California prior to joining the Board here at *Blue Diamond*, as well as helping start Project *Apis m*.

I'd also like to extend my gratitude to Joe Huston for his service on the Board. He has also completed his service this year and had brought his many years of experience in Consumer-Packaged Goods both domestically and internationally. Joe has been of great value to our Board.





Steve Van Duyn and Dan Cummings



Steve Van Duyn and Joe Huston

The theme of our annual meeting that will remain for the duration of our three-year growth plan is *Growing Together*. This poignant message speaks to the heart of our strategic plan and our commitment to the unity of our co-op. And, since our co-op's inception in 1910, we have witnessed that we are stronger, and we grow best when we're united.

My family has been *Blue Diamond* members for 72 years. Through the various ups and downs, we've remained committed to our Cooperative not because it's what we've always done, but because *Blue Diamond* fights for us and works diligently to get us the best returns possible in this ever-changing market. While the multifaceted challenges we've faced these past few years have made it some of the toughest all of us have been through, I'm confident that good times are coming again, and *Blue Diamond* is in it for the long haul.



Steve Van Duyn and Kai Bockmann

The core of *Blue Diamond's* strength lies in excellent leadership from our Board of Directors and our leadership team. This past year, Kai and the leadership team have worked hard to dive deep into new markets and opportunities to strengthen *Blue Diamond's* portfolio and increase the demand for our almonds around the world. They are tapping into every option to determine viability and longevity.

So, when I think of "*Growing Together*," I think about how our cooperative and how we, as growers, must adapt and grow to evolve with the changing times. As farmers, we are *Growing Together* alongside our cooperative through dedication to the next generation of farmers and industry leaders. *Blue Diamond* has done an exemplary job of fostering leadership through several programs that support current and future *Blue Diamond* members and industry professionals.

Since 1994, the *Blue Diamond* Leadership Program has had over 550 members graduate to become voices and advocates for *Blue Diamond* and for the ag industry. This summer, the 2024 Leadership Program class enjoyed a graduation barbecue at George te Velde's home. Congratulations to all in attendance. I'd also like to thank Nick Blom for serving as Chair of this important program.

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

*Blue Diamond* also supports the next generation of ag leaders by providing college scholarships to local high school students through the *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation. Over 200 scholarships have been awarded by the Foundation since 2011. The awards provide students with a greater chance for success in achieving their goals of becoming ag professionals. Thank you to the Foundation's president, John Monroe, for his infectious passion and hard work on behalf of the next generation of farmers.

We've also had an amazing partnership with Future Farmers of America (FFA) since 2017. (Please read more about this on page 32.)

I'm very excited to present my first *Grower Ambassador of the Year* award. The *Blue Diamond* grower I've selected has been a *Blue Diamond* member for over 40 years and is a constant realistic advocate for the almond industry. He has adapted the Neal Kinsey methodology of soil health for California almonds.

The Chairman's Ambassador of the Year award was Bill Brush, a well-respected agronomist, water expert, and plant nutritionist. In 2005, Bill established B&B Ag Consulting to assist farmers with soil fertility and water treatments. Bill knows soil better than anyone else and has served as a soil consultant for many of our growers spanning from Chico to Bakersfield. He even consults around the world in countries like the Philippines, Japan, Spain, Portugal, South Africa and Australia to name a few.



Steve Van Duyn and Bill Brush

Bill spent 18 years serving as either an alternate or a board member for the Almond Board of California. During that time, he also served on their PR & Advertising and Finance & Audit Committees. Bill and his grandson created a podcast called "Agriculture in a Nutshell" which helps farmers and gardeners produce higher quality, more nutritious, sustainable solutions to feed the growing population. Bill has dedicated his life to the farming community and considers it a privilege to share his knowledge with farmers and represent *Blue Diamond* in a positive way.

Thank you, all, for making my first year as Chairman of the Board so meaningful and such a pleasure. It's an honor to serve and I look forward to what this next year holds for all of us as *Blue Diamond* members. ♦

Steve Van Duyn  
Chairman of the Board

## CLIMATE-SMART GRANT

# WHOLE ORCHARD RECYCLING (WOR) LAUNCH

## Up to \$900/acre for WOR

Funding is first come, first served. Apply beginning October 15



### Pulling out an orchard soon?

Starting October 15, you can apply to receive up to \$900/acre for recycling it. Mark your calendar to apply!

- To qualify for the grant, orchard(s) must remain standing until final approval (2-4 months after initial application submission). No exceptions.
- This funding is provided on a first come, first served basis. Enroll while funds last!
- Be sure to have all the requirements completed before applying.
- Find more information using the link or QR code below.

**LINK: [bit.ly/csg-bdg](https://bit.ly/csg-bdg)**

Questions? Email [jbains@bdgrowers.com](mailto:jbains@bdgrowers.com)



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# Regional Managers



**Vice President, Member Relations**

Mel Machado  
 (209) 545-6222 – Salida  
 (209) 531-6352 – Cellular

**Director, Member Relations**

Ben Goudie  
 (209) 225-0413

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

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

**Sacramento County, San Joaquin County, North of Hwy 205 & East of San Joaquin River**  
 KC Clendenin, (209) 596-5375

**San Joaquin County, West of San Joaquin River & South of Hwy 205 Stanislaus County, North of Tuolumne River & Hwy 132**  
 Justin Elam, (209) 303-7306

**Stanislaus County, East of Hwy 99, South of Tuolumne River**  
 Austin Jackson, (209) 417-2010

**Stanislaus County, West of Hwy 99, South of Tuolumne River, South of Grayson & Howard Road’s West of San Joaquin River Merced County, North of Merced River & Hills Ferry & Stuhr Roads**  
 Trent Voss, (209) 470-5981

**Merced County, South of Merced River & Hills Ferry & Stuhr Roads, North of Hwy 140**  
 Kenny Miyamoto, (209) 323-8454

**Merced County, South of Hwy 140 Madera County, North of Avenue 12, Firebaugh Blvd, Avenue 7½, & W. Nees Avenue**  
 Carla Youngblood, (559) 240-0906

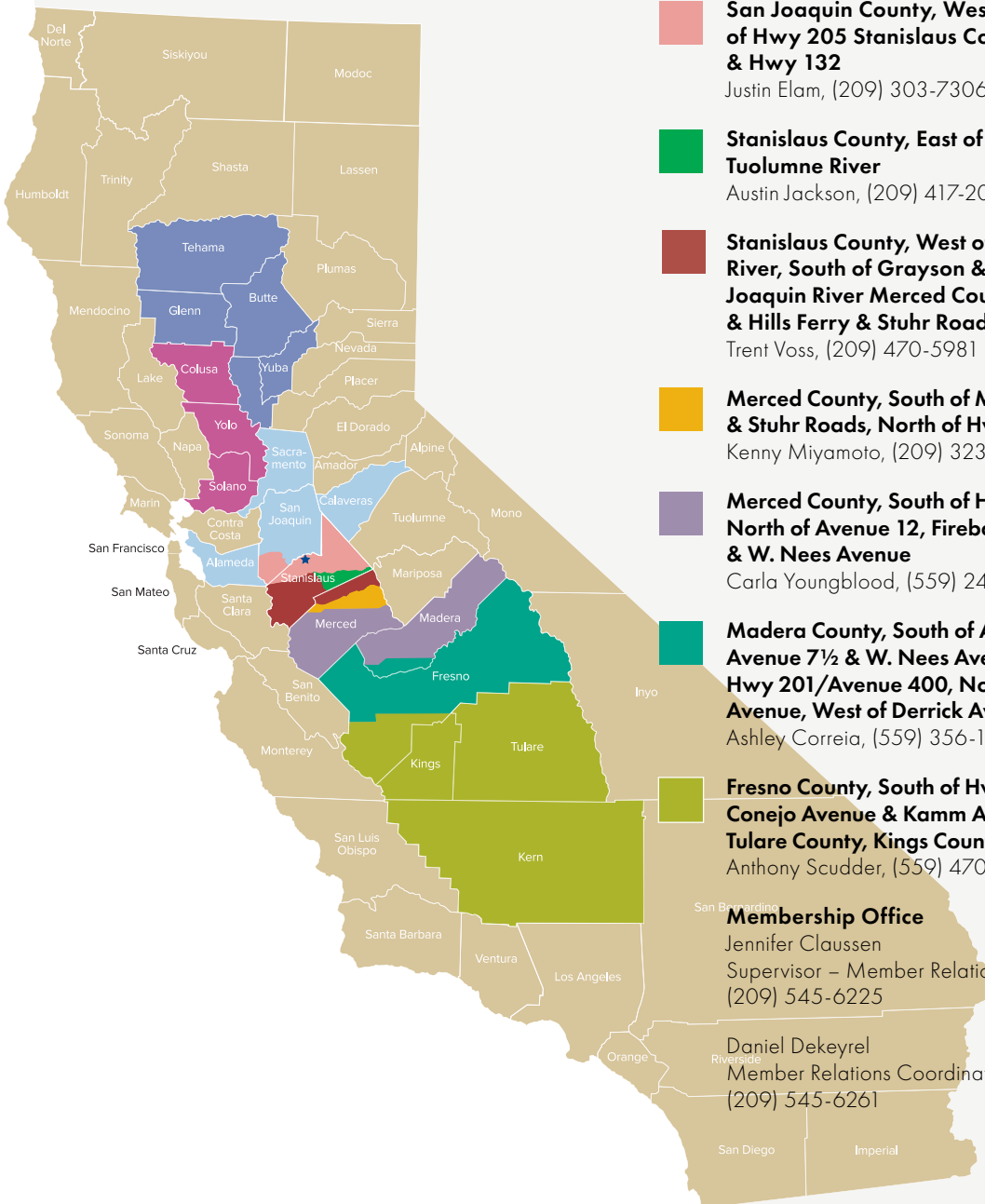
**Madera County, South of Avenue 12, Firebaugh Blvd, Avenue 7½ & W. Nees Avenue, Fresno County, North of Hwy 201/Avenue 400, North of Conejo Avenue & Kamm Avenue, West of Derrick Avenue**  
 Ashley Correia, (559) 356-1584

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 Anthony Scudder, (559) 470-9731

**Membership Office**

Jennifer Claussen  
 Supervisor – Member Relations Administration  
 (209) 545-6225

Daniel Dekeyrel  
 Member Relations Coordinator (Delivery Tags)  
 (209) 545-6261



# 2024 Grower Liaison Committee Members

## DISTRICT 1

- Dan Cummings **\*\***
- Fred Montgomery
- Daniel Varner **VC**
- Greg Overton
- Darcy Jones
- Kevin Davies
- Timothy Perraié
- John Nock **C**
- Meredith Christopher
- P. Samantha Lewis
- Larry Bradley
- Luke Konyon
- Tom Knowles **!**

## DISTRICT 2

- John Monroe **\*\***
- Elaine Rominger **\***
- Gerald Rominger **\***
- Jake Driver
- Ron Tadlock
- Jake Spooner **C**
- Amy Abele
- Carole M. Cain
- Catherine Cain
- Josh Pippit **VC**
- Catherine Marsh
- Michael Samra
- Jacob Amsler
- Dustin Timothy **!**

## DISTRICT 3

- Dale Van Groningen **\*\***
- Allen Sipma
- Bert Van Ryn
- Rudy Mussi
- Zack Reinstein
- Bruce Oosterkamp **C**
- Donald Drake **VC**
- Noah Andersen
- Dirk Van Laar
- Tim Mohler
- Jeff Stuit
- Jack Dalton
- Clayton Bogetti **!**

## DISTRICT 4

- George te Velde **\*\***
- Kevin Fondse **\***
- Kenneth Roos **\***
- Tim Roos
- Mike Ballatore
- Dawn Price
- Ian Koetsier **C**
- Lance Ioppini
- Wesley Eisenga **VC**
- Matt Visser
- Rick Van Vliet
- Spencer Franceschetti
- Martin Adrian
- Lukas Doornenbal
- Ed Tilma **!**

## DISTRICT 5

- Stephen Van Duyn **\*\***
- Neil Van Duyn **\***
- Brandon Riddle **VC**
- Mark Giannini
- Dennis Bowers
- Arthur Bowman
- Matt Fredriks
- Harry (Sonny) Johns
- Danielle Higby LeBeouf
- Tim Baker
- James Kinzie
- Gordon Heinrich **C**
- Chris Vanderstoel
- Jon Beck **!**

## DISTRICT 6

- Nick Blom **\*\***
- Charles Crivelli III **\***
- Steve Vilas **\***
- Eric Genzoli
- Rod Vilas
- Rick Alvernaz
- Gary Marchy
- Dirk Van Konyenburg **VC**
- Justin Romero **C**
- Derek Coelho
- Robert Mailloux
- Steve Scheuber
- Allen Peterson
- Jeff Lee
- Matt Romero **!**

## DISTRICT 7

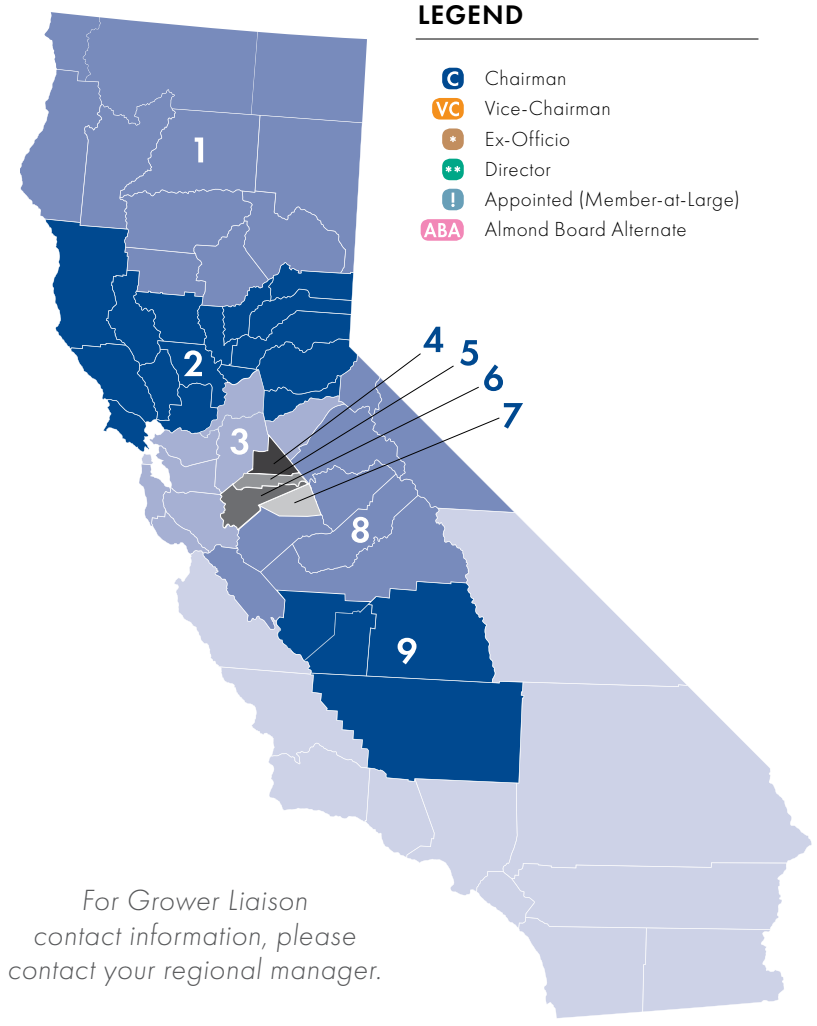
- Dan Mendenhall **\*\***
- Robert J. Weimer **\***
- David P. Souza
- James Ohki
- Jason Chandler **C**
- Dan Smith
- Dan Clendenin **VC**
- Rodney L. Voumard
- Michael Temnyk
- Rodney E. Ratzlaff Jr.
- Steve Moeller
- John Pereira
- Bryan Jacobs
- Rick Scoto **!**

## DISTRICT 8

- Matt Efirid **\*\***
- George Goshgarian **\***
- Aldo Sansoni **\***
- Mike Yager
- Neil Amaral
- Mason McKinney
- Blake Little
- Colin Unruh
- Daniel Babshoff **VC**
- Melvin Lubisich **C**
- Nayiri Saghdejian
- John Locker
- Andrew Cunha
- Ryan Metzler
- Michael Keith Smith

## DISTRICT 9

- Kent Stenderup **\*\* ABA**
- Clinton Shick **\***
- Mark Tos
- Benjamin Wilson
- Paramjit Dosanjh
- Lisa Marroquin
- Shaminder S. Brar
- Gerard A. Loaiza **C**
- Chris Couture
- Pete Romanini
- Ankit Behl **VC**
- Sam Ghilarducci
- Garrett Gilcrease
- John Allen **!**



*For Grower Liaison contact information, please contact your regional manager.*

## 2024 ANNUAL MEETING SESSION SYNOPSES

## Grower Sessions:

**Almond IPM: Revelations from 2024**

After a year of difficult in-orchard pest management, industry experts came together to give an overview of the ecology, monitoring and management of carpophilus beetle, a newly invasive pest for almonds. The presentation included information about the global distribution and systematics of this pest, its arrival and spread in California, as well as seasonal phenology in orchards. The panelists also discussed current research and extension efforts to explore strategies for cultural, biological and chemical control.

**Panelists:**

- **Ben Goudie**, Director, Member Relations, *Blue Diamond Growers* (moderator)
- **Dr. Jhalendra Rijal**, UCCE Farm Advisor, Stanislaus County
- **Dr. Houston Wilson**, Director, UC Organic Ag Institute, Kearny Ag Research & Extension, Dept. of Entomology, UC Riverside



Ben Goudie with Dr. Jhalendra Rijal and Dr. Houston Wilson

**Preparing for 2025: How Almonds Win**

With the majority of the 2024 election results known, *Blue Diamond's* government affairs team provided an outlook on how the results might impact the Cooperative and its advocacy priorities. Many newly elected officials will take their seats come January including a new presidential administration and 34 new California legislators. These changes provide *Blue Diamond* and the almond industry with new challenges and opportunities. Building relationships with the newly elected officials will be a primary goal of the Cooperative's advocacy strategy heading into 2025. *Blue Diamond's* Alicia Rockwell, Chief Government Affairs Officer, discussed *Blue Diamond's* legislative priorities for 2025 and how the Cooperative will be advocating for almonds in the coming year.

**Panelists:**

- **Alicia Rockwell**, Chief Government Affairs Officer, *Blue Diamond Growers* (moderator)
- **Emily Rooney**, President, Agricultural Council of California
- *Blue Diamond's* state and federal representatives
- **Stacy McBride**, Executive Vice President, Federal Government Affairs, Husch Blackwell Strategies
- **Emily Pappas**, Partner, Niemela Pappas & Associates



Alicia Rockwell with Emily Pappas, Stacy McBride and Emily Rooney

Meet our Nutty Cruiser, a giant almond on wheels packed with creativity and innovation that delighted attendees with its debut at the 114th Annual Meeting.

To the upper right of the *Blue Diamond* logo, there's an air-powered cannon that shoots bags of *Blue Diamond* Almonds and runs on a compressed air tank that recharges while driving!

**Fun Facts About the Nutty Cruiser:**

- The almond exterior is handcrafted from fiberglass and foam.
- It took over 2,000 hours of skilled craftsmanship to carve and assemble.
- Every detail is fully custom-built.



It's a testament to the incredible teamwork and dedication of Jennifer Roover, Ralph Failla, and Lorena Nuñez, who made this vision a reality. And if you happen to spot the Nutty Cruiser on the road, snap a pic and share it with us. ♦



*Blue Diamond leaders panel: Mel Machado, Kai Bockmann, Carmen Bourgaize, Tony Laurenzana, and Steve Schult*

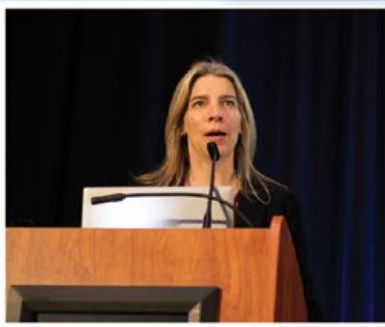
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# GROWING TOGETHER







## ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



### *Blue Diamond Almond Market Update – November 15, 2024*

#### OVERVIEW

Shipments for October reached 258 million pounds, reflecting a 21% increase from last month and a 4.5% rise compared to last year. Export shipments totaled 191 million pounds, slightly surpassing last year's figures. Domestic shipments rebounded to 67 million pounds, marking an 18% increase over last year and the highest shipment volume since March 2022 (31 months). As expected, shipments are gaining momentum following a slow start due to limited supplies. This trend is expected to continue through November as the market focuses on fulfilling orders to various export markets for the upcoming holiday season.

#### SHIPMENTS

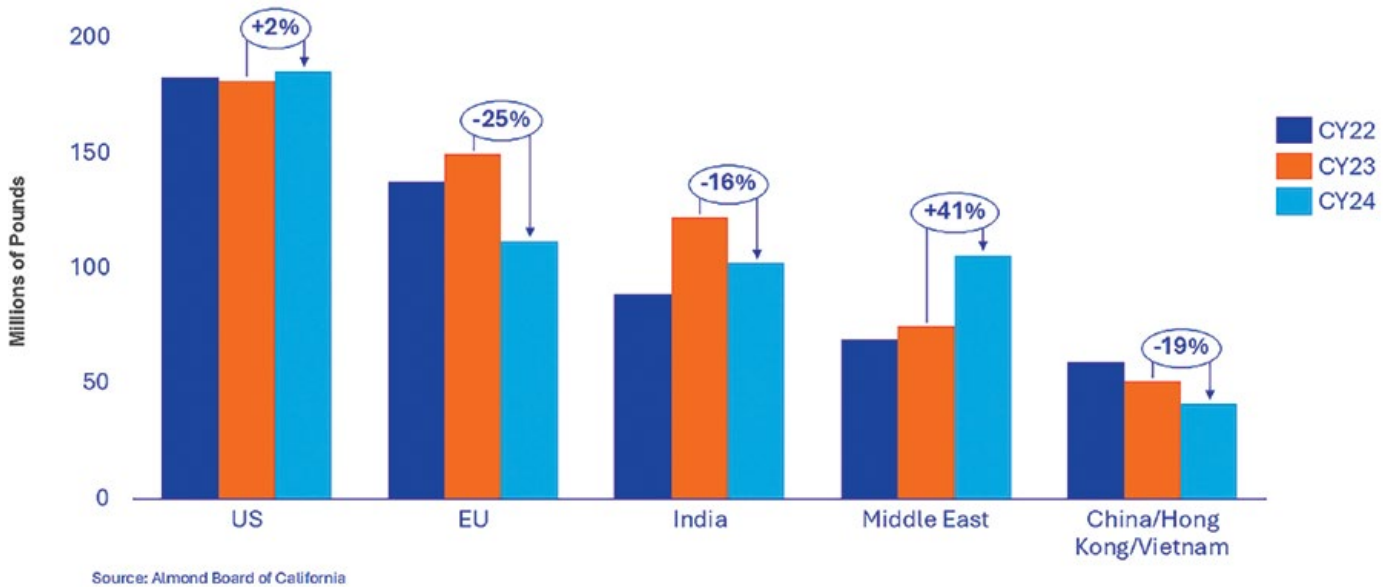
##### **India:**

October shipments to India totaled 29.4 million pounds, down 39% compared to last year. Year-to-date shipments, after three months, are trailing last season by 16%, totaling 102.1 million pounds. Strong and profitable Diwali sales left the market with minimal inventories heading into the festival. In the days leading up to Diwali, buyers returned to the market, keeping inshell prices supported as they resumed purchasing at similar price levels to where they had previously left off. Container arrivals to Nhava Sheva are still experiencing delays, ensuring a steady and consistent flow of product to the market while preventing inventory buildup. Since the holiday's conclusion, Indian buyers have remained engaged, actively purchasing to replenish stocks and sustain momentum in the post-Diwali market.

##### **China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:**

Shipments to the region totaled 20.8 million pounds for the month, a 28% decrease compared to last year. Year-to-date shipments are 19% behind last year. As the Chinese New Year (CNY) festival approaches, both buyers and sellers in the almond market are focused on executing orders within the limited timeframe to ensure timely arrivals. Consumer demand

## Year-Over-Year Shipments October



showed strong performance during the recent Mid-Autumn Festival, and similar expectations are set for the CNY festival starting on January 29. In-market inventories are reported to be minimal, with buyers proceeding cautiously while still hoping for price softening. However, some buyers have opted to cover small volumes for post-CNY demand at current price levels as inshell prices remain supported by current demand. Following the re-election of President Donald Trump, buyers are expected to maintain their cautious approach until his administration’s stance on tariffs becomes clearer.

### Europe:

Shipments to Europe totaled 42.1 million pounds, down just over 4% from last year, bringing year-to-date shipments to 111.7 million pounds, a 25% decline compared to the previous year. European buyers remain skeptical about higher California prices, turning to limited local supplies where available. Additionally, buyers continue to face challenges in finding sufficient offers of STD5 from California. As a result, it is likely that European buyers will maintain a hand-to-mouth purchasing approach for the foreseeable future.

### Middle East:

The Middle East continues to stand out for exports, with impressive shipments totaling 57.2 million pounds, a 46% increase over last year. Year-to-date shipments have surpassed 105 million pounds, reflecting a 41% increase. Many buyers are adjusting to the ongoing firmness in prices, and those who had been waiting are now moving quickly to meet remaining Ramadan needs. The UAE, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have shown notable growth this year, with the UAE now ranking as the second-largest export market after India, followed by Turkey in third.

### Domestic:

October shipments reached 67.4 million pounds, 18% ahead of last year, marking the strongest month for domestic shipments since the record set in the 2020/21 crop year. This resulted in a year-over-year increase of 2%, a strong rebound from the 5% deficit following September’s results. Buyers have adopted a hand-to-mouth purchasing approach due to recent price firming, leading to domestic commitments being down 20.8% year-over-year. Despite this cautious buying strategy, new sales for the month are up 4%.

## COMMITMENTS

Total commitments have improved to 673.7 million pounds, slightly below last year's level. However, export commitments are 13% higher than last year, totaling 458.5 million pounds. This performance positions the industry well for strong shipments over the next two months as sellers work to fulfill orders. Uncommitted inventories now total 997 million pounds, up 32% from last year due to an earlier harvest. Exports continue to drive new sales, reaching 264.7 million pounds, a 6% increase over last year. Assuming a 2.8-billion-pound crop, current shipments and commitments account for 41% of total supply, compared to 42% last year.

## CROP

This year's harvest is essentially complete, with crop receipts totaling 1.85 billion pounds. By January, the industry is expected to have a clearer picture of the final crop size. Due to lower moisture levels this year, almonds moved quickly through the huller and sheller, with many facilities having already completed their work for the season. Growers are now shifting their focus to post-harvest orchard activities. Rainfall over the next two months will be crucial for replenishing orchard soils and storing water for the upcoming growing season. ◆

### Market Perspective

Overall, the October position report presents a favorable outlook. Although results were slightly below forecasts, they were strong enough to support prices. Sellers are becoming more comfortable as the crop is delivered and prices show an upward trend. Likewise, buyers are adjusting to firmer pricing and gaining confidence that they can purchase without fear of an immediate price drop. Destination inventories remain tight, with incoming products moving directly to market rather than to storage, signaling strong demand that should continue to support prices into the new year.

With the harvest now complete, the industry is closely monitoring receipts to assess the final crop size. Many believe the 2024 crop may fall short of the forecasted 2.8 billion pounds. While it's still too early for a definitive assessment, a clearer picture should emerge by January. Additionally, many in the industry are speculating on the impact of a potential President Trump victory on tariffs and future demand.



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

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## Blue Diamond's Salida Site Designated "Star Site" by Cal/OSHA

Blue Diamond Growers received the "Star Site" designation through Cal/OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) at our Salida, CA, facility. The designation recognizes employers who have voluntarily managed outstanding safety and health programs. Only 63 California worksites, including Blue Diamond, share the "Star Site" recognition.

"Blue Diamond's success as the world's largest almond company hinges on the safety of our operations and the wellbeing of our team members. I am proud that this milestone achievement validates our commitment to safety culture," said Jeff Hatfield, Senior Vice President of Manufacturing for Blue Diamond.

Blue Diamond hosted a Cal/OSHA flag-raising ceremony at the Blue Diamond, Salida site, with a luncheon celebrating the employee-driven safety scores. VIP guests included Sue Zwahlen (Mayor of Modesto), Terry Schulte (VPPPA National Chairperson), Katie Hagen (Director, Department of Industrial Relations), and Debra Lee (Chief, Cal/OSHA). The VIP guests joined Kai Bockmann (Blue Diamond President and CEO) and Victor Gomez Terres (Blue Diamond, Salida Site Director) in giving remarks congratulating the Cooperative on its high safety scores and its dedication to the wellbeing of grower-owners and employees alike.



Blue Diamond's President & CEO, Kai Bockmann, visits with team members

In 2023, Blue Diamond Growers began the rigorous application to demonstrate exceptional safety at the Blue Diamond, Salida facility. This included numerous audits, formal interviews and a comprehensive review of the facility's employee-driven safety program. As with all Star Site designees, the facility proved that their work-related injury and illness rates over the last three years were 90 percent below industry average.

"This [designation] is a great accomplishment," said Sue Zwahlen, Mayor of Modesto. "I'm an RN who served for 42 years in the ER, so I understand how important safety is... Blue Diamond has a strong and positive presence in our community. They have a rich history of being a responsible partner in our community."

Public recognitions like the Star Site designation not only establish Blue Diamond as a high-value member of the local Central Valley community: they also add value to the Cooperative in front of potential customers looking for ingredient suppliers who care about environmental stewardship and their employees' wellbeing.

Blue Diamond's Salida facility has received and processed its farmers' almonds since 1969. Today, it is the largest almond receiving center in the world. With eight warehouses and multiple processing lines, millions of pounds of almonds are either received or shipped out of the facility on any given day. The Cooperative's ability to bring delicious, healthy products to the world would not be possible without its strong commitment to the health and safety of its team members. ◆



Blue Diamond's President and CEO, Kai Bockmann, thanking the team for their hard work to maintain a safe facility




Mayor of Modesto, Sue Zwahlen giving Blue Diamond her thanks at the ceremony

## BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

### Current Investment Rates available as of December 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 provide *Blue Diamond Growers* with a steady source of funds. The interest rates effective December 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	5.50%	4.50%
	(Variable, subject to change)	(Fixed rate)

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

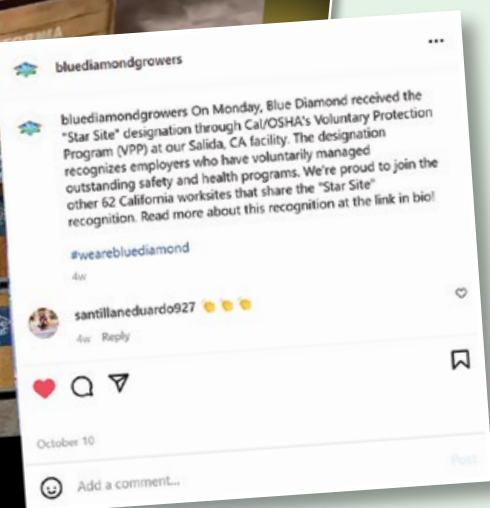
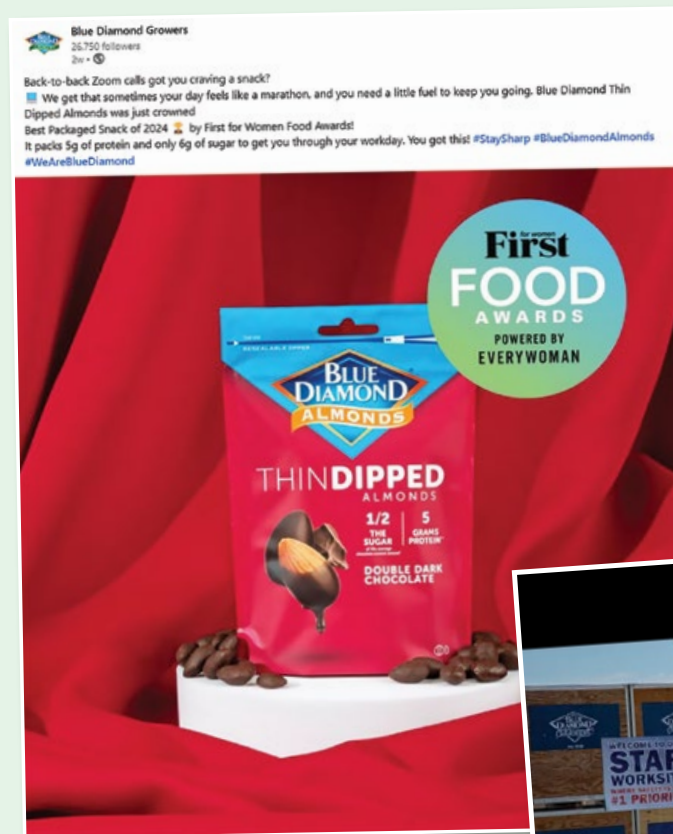
*This summary does not constitute an offer to sell or a solicitation to purchase investment certificates. We will provide a package of documents for the programs to those members who are California residents and who express an interest in participating in the program.*

## #WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



Blue Diamond wrapped up an eventful harvest season with some exciting recognitions and celebrations! In October, we marked National Nut Day by earning the prestigious title of “Best Snack of 2024” from the First for Women Food Awards. At the IFPA Global Show, our team showcased our latest Almonds and Fruit blends in partnership with Oppy, drawing strong interest from attendees. We also celebrated National Cooperative Month by spotlighting one of our dedicated farming families in the Central Valley, underscoring our roots and commitment to our growers.

October brought another proud moment as our Salida facility received Cal/OSHA’s “Star Site” designation for our industry-leading safety standards and exemplary safety records. And for sports fans, our Big Ten Conference partnership continues to gain visibility throughout the football season. To finish off, we got into the Halloween spirit with an Almond Breeze® campaign celebrating the high calcium content our almondmilk possesses; it’s a seasonal hit with spooky season skeletons everywhere! ♦







thenitrobar\_and almondbreeze  
Original audio

thenitrobar\_ Almond Breeze is a Bone-a-fide superstar  
Sponsored by @almondbreeze

\*One cup of dairy milk contains 300mg (25% DV) of calcium vs. one cup of Almond Breeze contains 450mg (35% DV) of calcium

Edited · 1w

alex\_soderholm Oooo that coffee is looking FIRE

greizbobe What is the other one you poured?

October 31

Add a comment...



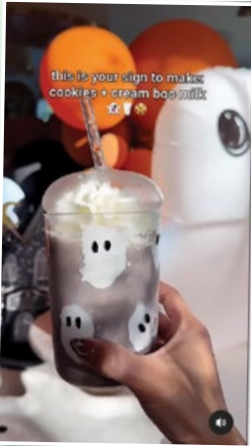
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bluediamond You heard it from @evan3stewart! That's the play. Enter the Hunger Defense Sweepstakes for a chance at winning \$10k from the official snack of the Big Ten.

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November 1

Add a comment...



almondbreeze

almondbreeze Happy Halloween! Comment boo to get this spooky good recipe

\*One cup of dairy milk contains 300mg (25% DV) of calcium vs. one cup of Almond Breeze contains 450mg (35% DV) of calcium.

tejeramagee

October 31

Add a comment...



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Original audio

bluediamond You heard it from @xaviermankpa, | Enter the Hunger Defense Sweepstakes at <http://bdsweeps.com> for a chance to win \$10k.

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November 1

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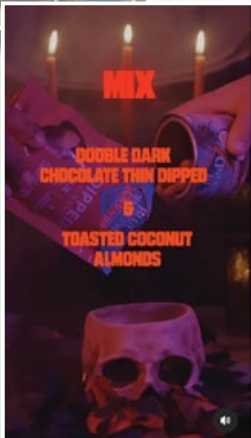
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bluediamond For us, it's #nationaloutday everyday.

thenixcreative Lets goooooo

October 22

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Original audio

bluediamond Flavor Hack, trick-or-treat edition: we're making a healthy dupe of an Almond-based candy bar that legal won't let us name

October 29

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Blue Diamond Growers Cooperative  
Published by Sprout Social  
October 25 at 12:06 PM

Happy National Cooperative month from your favorite almond cooperative!  
#wearebluediamond

Blue Diamond is so much more than your average almond company! We are a farmer-owned cooperative of almost 3,000 family farms.

HAPPY NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

As a Cooperative, we work towards a common goal: supporting our family farms by bringing a delicious, nutritious product to the world. We've done this for more than 110 years!

Happy National CO-OP Month from our families to yours!

## Peppermint Mocha

Prep Time: 15 minutes   Cook Time: 5 minutes   Difficulty: Easy   Servings: 2

### Ingredients

1½ cups *Almond Breeze*®  
Unsweetened Vanilla  
Almondmilk

¼ cup sugar

2 Tablespoons unsweetened  
cocoa powder

1¼ cups brewed espresso or  
strong coffee

½ teaspoon peppermint extract

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup non-dairy whipped topping

1 teaspoon shaved chocolate

½ teaspoon peppermint candies,  
crushed

### Directions

1. In a small saucepan over medium heat, add almondmilk, sugar and cocoa powder. Stir until warmed and sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat.

2. Stir in espresso or coffee, peppermint extract and vanilla extract.

3. Pour into two mugs and top each with whipped topping, shaved chocolate and crushed peppermint.



# Maple Pecan Skillet Cookies

Cook Time: 60 minutes    Difficulty: Medium    Servings: 8

## Ingredients

### Maple Pecans:

- ¾ cup chopped pecans
- 4 Tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- 1 stick plus 2 Tablespoons chilled unsalted butter, cut into pieces, plus more for pan

### Cookies:

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 6 Tablespoons light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 Tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 3 Tablespoons *Almond Breeze*® Original Almondmilk Nog
- Coarse white sanding sugar

## Directions

### Maple Pecans:

1. Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 350°F. Toss pecans, maple syrup, and ½ teaspoon of salt in a medium bowl.
2. Scrape onto a rimmed baking sheet lined with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper and spread nuts into a single layer.
3. Bake until pecans are slightly darkened and syrup is dark and bubbling, 15–20 minutes.
4. Remove from oven and carefully toss pecans in hot syrup to coat again. Let cool on baking sheet until caramel hardens, about 30 minutes.
5. Break up candied pecans into pieces; discard any burned bits. Reduce oven temperature to 325°F.

### Cookies:

1. Generously butter a 10" cast-iron or stainless-steel skillet and line bottom with a round of parchment paper and butter parchment.
2. Pulse flour, brown sugar, half of candied pecans, and 1¼ teaspoon salt in a food processor until nuts are finely chopped. Add egg, 1 Tablespoon vanilla, and remaining stick plus 2 Tablespoons of butter and process until a shaggy dough forms.
3. Transfer dough to a large bowl and knead a couple times just to bring it together. Using damp hands, pat dough evenly into skillet, extending all the way to the sides of the pan.
4. Bake cookie until edges are golden brown and center is slightly puffed, 30–35 minutes.
5. Let cool in skillet 1 hour. Invert cookie onto a cutting board and cut into 8 wedges. Turn right side up and transfer to a wire rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet.
6. Whisk powdered sugar and *Almond Breeze*® Almondmilk Nog together. Drizzle glaze over wedges and sprinkle with sanding sugar. Let sit until glaze is set.



## Blue Diamond Brings Fan-Favorite Flavors to the Mixed Nuts Category with Launch of Almonds and More

Pistachios and cashews join almonds in new line of flavored nut blends



Blue Diamond continues to innovate the snack aisle with the introduction of Almonds and More! This new product line fuses Blue Diamond's signature flavors with popular mixed nut blends, a first for the mixed nuts category.

"We've found that nearly half of consumers consider flavor to be the most important factor when purchasing snacks, but there was a lack of flavor choice in the mixed nuts category," said Maya Erwin, Vice President of Marketing and Innovation at Blue Diamond. "No one knows flavors like Blue Diamond, so we created Almonds and More to meet consumers' appetite for premium and protein packed flavor options so they can get the most from their favorite snack nuts."

**Almonds and More will be available in three signature flavors, each with over 50% of almonds complemented with a blend of cashews and pistachios:**

- **Blue Diamond Honey Roasted Almonds and More** offers the irresistible sweetness of a rich layer of honey toasted to golden perfection, making for a deliciously sweet and subtly toasted snack that creates a balanced blend of indulgence and wholesome, all with a satisfying crunch in every bite.
- **Blue Diamond Roasted Sea Salt Almonds and More** packs the perfect harmony of flavor and crunch, as the roasted nuttiness is balanced out by a crisp touch of sea salt, creating an elevated yet simple snack that celebrates pure ingredients.
- **Blue Diamond Smokehouse Almonds and More** embraces the bold, smoky and signature Blue Diamond flavor with rich and savory notes that pair effortlessly with the mixed nut blend to deliver a warm, lingering taste that satisfies savory snack cravings.

Almonds and More cans are now hitting all Kroger shelves nationwide in 14-ounce cans (MSRP: \$11.99) and will become available at major retailers nationwide in early 2025. ♦



## Limited Edition Frosted Brownie Almonds Available for the Holidays

**Snickerdoodle Almonds will also return to shelves for a third holiday season**

To kick off the holiday season, *Blue Diamond* announced the launch of a new seasonal flavor: Frosted Brownie Almonds. After exploring over 60 different holiday flavors and experimenting with 11 variations of frosted brownies, *Blue Diamond* has crafted a unique, festive treat that combines the flavors of rich chocolate and creamy frosting with the signature crunch of almonds in this irresistible holiday snack.

"We like to consistently test different flavor innovations, especially around the holidays, to expand our product portfolio based on what we know consumers are craving," said Maya Erwin, Vice President of Marketing and Innovation at *Blue Diamond*. "Chocolate and the holidays go hand in hand, so we created Frosted Brownie to lean into this seasonal flavor, allowing snackers to enjoy the rich and creamy indulgence of a brownie, all with the crunch and goodness of an almond."

This is the third year *Blue Diamond* has released limited-edition holiday flavors, following last year's soaring sales of *Blue Diamond's* returning flavor, Snickerdoodle, highlighting the strong consumer demand for seasonal flavor offerings. Consumers can, once again, enjoy the delicious cinnamon sugar cookie taste of *Blue Diamond* Snickerdoodle Almonds that they've come to love over the past two years.

*Blue Diamond's* lineup of 20+ flavors is enhanced by this latest holiday flavor expansion. From now through December 2024, you can find these holiday almond flavors in 6oz cans at major retailers nationwide and on Amazon.com (MSRP: \$4.29). ◆

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Blue Diamond's Thin Dipped Almonds were crowned **Best Packaged Snack of 2024** by First for Women Food Awards! Thin Dipped Almonds pack 5g of protein and contain only 6g of sugar per serving.



**BEST PACKAGED SNACK**

**Blue Diamond  
Thin Dipped Almonds**

When almonds meet chocolate good things happen. Each serving of these satisfying bites has 5 grams of protein and just 6 grams of sugar. Available in Double Dark Chocolate and Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Caramel. \$3.48 for a 4-oz. bag, Walmart



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### *Blue Diamond* Receives Distinguished Service Award from FFA



Since 2017, *Blue Diamond* Growers and the California Future Farmers of America (FFA), have partnered in the pursuit of investing in the next generation of farmers, food producers, and agricultural leaders. The Cooperative’s partnership for the Give the Gift of Blue initiative during Giving Tuesday provides deserving students with FFA jackets and uniforms. Through *Blue Diamond*’s and its growers’ support, FFA has provided 5,293 jackets to students across the state — an incredible achievement that we are very proud of.

Because of our impact and partnership, *Blue Diamond* received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Future Farmers of America at their Annual Conference in Indianapolis. *Blue Diamond* is one of only four companies to receive this award! Over 70,000 FFA students from around the nation cheered and celebrated our partnership as our cooperative received this wonderful recognition.

**For the eighth year in a row, *Blue Diamond* has matched donations to FFA on Giving Tuesday, December 3, up to \$25,000 to help raise funds for students to receive their iconic blue jackets. ♦**

#### About FFA:

Future Farmers of America (FFA) is a dynamic youth organization that prepares members for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. The organization develops members’ potential and helps them discover their talent through hands-on experiences, which give members the tools to achieve real-world success. FFA is for students who want to engage in agriculture and aspire to be farmers, teachers, doctors, scientists, business owners and more.





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## Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship available for 2025 - 2026 School Year



### Scholarship Requirements:

- Must currently live in Almond Growing Regions of California
- Must intend to pursue college major in Agriculture related field, with specific emphasis on plant and crop-related majors
- Must have 3.3 GPA or higher
- Enrollment verification to a college or university offering a four-year degree will be required for disbursement of award funds
- Application deadline: **March 31, 2025**

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



[apply.mykaleidoscope.com/scholarships/BlueDiamondGrowersScholarship2025](https://apply.mykaleidoscope.com/scholarships/BlueDiamondGrowersScholarship2025)

## In the Thick of Regulatory Efforts on Water, Air Quality & Packaging

Though the California Legislature has adjourned for 2024, it is by no means quiet in Sacramento. A brisk fall season has brought to bear a great deal of advocacy work within the regulatory agencies that affect *Blue Diamond Growers* and its farmers.

Among the activities, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) updated guidelines for the widely used FARMER program. The State Water Resources Control Board, unfortunately, took action to increase fees for water rights and water quality permits, and Ag Council continues to express concern about the skyrocketing fees.

Furthermore, the regulatory process is ongoing at CalRecycle to implement the Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act, SB 54 (Allen), and Ag Council is highly engaged in providing feedback.

### Air Resources Board Updates Guidelines to Popular FARMER Program

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) adopted updated guidelines in October to the Funding Agricultural Replacement Measures for Emission Reductions (FARMER) program to expand eligibility for farmers and provide flexibility for approving projects in a more streamlined manner.

FARMER provides grant funds through local air districts for farmers to replace older ag equipment with cleaner engines, including equipment such as tractors, heavy-duty trucks, harvesters, pumps and other equipment to lower emissions and improve air quality.

Ag Council's staff spoke during the October meeting, touting FARMER as one of the most cost-effective and efficient programs to help achieve the state's air quality standards with a proven track record of replacing over 10,000 pieces of equipment. FARMER has led to the reduction of 389,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions through the replacement of older farm equipment. In a related move, and given the broad support for the FARMER program, CARB declined to directly regulate on-farm equipment at this time.

Notable updates to the FARMER program guidelines include:

- Project funding up to the date of compliance.
- Expanded eligibility for used zero emission equipment for small farmers.
- Required purchase order for replacement equipment within one year of project approval.
- 90-day deadline to salvage/destroy replaced equipment.
- Added flexibility to allow for replacement equipment that varies from the baseline equipment type.

Since the creation of the FARMER program, Ag Council has received positive feedback from farmers. Our team will continue to support it in legislative and regulatory arenas, including advocating for additional funding in future state budgets.

### State Water Board Moves to Increase Fees

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) authorized increases to fees during its September board meeting that not only raises fees, but directly impacts the cost of groundwater recharge projects and wastewater management.

During the meeting, Ag Council's staff provided public comments regarding the impact of the fee increases on the agricultural community. The increases come at a time when California farmers are facing razor-thin margins and rising input costs.

### Water Rights Fees

The SWRCB initially proposed water rights fee increases that would have substantially increased fees by approximately 1,500 percent. Instead, Chair Joaquin Esquivel and Vice Chair DeeDee D'Adamo supported an alternative, phased-in approach to avoid disincentivizing groundwater recharge projects. Specifically, Chair Esquivel proposed a 50 percent reduction in the water rights fee increases, which was then adopted by the board.

### Longer-Term Permits

On a positive note, the SWRCB decided to allow some water rights holders and water managers the option to apply for five-year water diversion permits at the same cost as 180-day permits. We are optimistic that the longer-term permits will provide more opportunities for groundwater recharge projects to help better manage flood and drought events in the future.

### Water Quality Fees

Water quality fees were adopted in September. Both wastewater discharge and irrigated lands fees will increase between 5.3 and 5.5 percent. Ag Council previously attempted to offset SWRCB fees through the budget process. However, the current state budget deficit prevents such offsets. Ag Council will continue to engage on water fees and will participate in any stakeholder sessions with the SWRCB.

### Packaging Regulation Under Development

Ag Council is closely engaged in the rulemaking process and regulatory implementation of SB 54 (Allen), the Plastic Pollution Prevention and Producer Responsibility Act, to advocate on behalf of California's agricultural and food processing industries, including *Blue Diamond Growers* and its almond producers. The intent of SB 54 is to shift the responsibility of packaging from consumers to producers and reduce plastic material in the state. It requires all single-use packaging to be reusable, compostable or recyclable by 2032.

One area of concern is the law's potential impact on food safety through limitations on plastic seals and packaging adhesives, which are critical to prevent contamination, spoilage and foodborne illness. Plastic components, such as seals, are essential in safeguarding food quality by protecting against moisture and oxygen.

Ag Council and a broad coalition of other agricultural stakeholders submitted detailed public comments to CalRecycle urging careful consideration of food safety implications when making packaging decisions and requested that essential packaging components be exempted until safe and reliable alternatives are available.

In addition, Ag Council President Emily Rooney is a non-voting member of an advisory board providing guidance from the food and agricultural perspective to the Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO). Under SB 54, the following must occur by 2032: 100 percent of packaging in California is recyclable or compostable, 25 percent of plastic packaging is source reduced statewide, and 65 percent of all single-use plastic packaging is recycled.

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Although the law is well-intended, we continue to work with lawmakers and regulatory officials to protect our members and consumers from unintended consequences that could compromise food safety, escalate food waste, and increase producer costs.

## Blue Diamond Growers Hosts Legislators

Ag Council reached out to the Problem Solvers Caucus in the State Legislature to connect with our members recently, and – with help from *Blue Diamond's* team – they visited the Almond Innovation Center® prior to the State Legislature's adjournment.

The Problem Solvers Caucus is a bipartisan group of legislators focused on driving policy outcomes that place the public good above partisanship. There is significant value in having legislators visit our members' farms and food processing facilities; the experience often leaves an indelible mark that many elected officials remember for years to come, and *Blue Diamond Growers* is no exception. The Cooperative's Sacramento location is especially ideal for tours with legislators.

Alicia Rockwell, *Blue Diamond's* Chief Government Affairs Officer, and Mallorie Hayes, Government and Public Affairs Manager, led an educational conversation at the Almond Innovation Center®. Six bipartisan legislators and a few legislative staffers learned about *Blue Diamond's* sustainability and innovation efforts, and the *Blue Diamond* team discussed research and development and how the



(from left to right) Alicia Rockwell (BDG), Israel Landa, Eileen Ricker, Asm. David Alvarez (District 80), Asm. Tom Lackey (District 34), Asm. Josh Hoover (District 7), Asm. Juan Alanis (District 22), Asm. Marie Waldron (District 75), Mallorie Hayes (BDG)

Center operates as an incubator for new almond ingredients. Legislators had the opportunity to taste one of the products that resulted from that research – the new Ranch flavored almonds – which were a big hit with the group.

*Special thanks to Alicia and Mallorie for their work to help make the visit a success. ♦*



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



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### THE BEE BOX

## Cover Cropping for Pollinators

When farmers want to improve and protect soil, their most precious natural resource, cover cropping and composting are the two practices most often used. Composting is a great way to increase organic matter while amending the soil with non-synthetic sources of fertilizer. In this Pollinator Partnership article, we will focus on the in-orchard benefits of cover cropping.

Cover cropping involves planting combinations of grains, legumes, brassicas and wildflowers to cover the soil. Farmers then terminate the cover crop and incorporate the biological matter into the soil to improve soil health. Cover crops contribute a variety of agronomic benefits, including increasing water infiltration, decreasing compaction, suppressing weeds, reducing erosion, increasing nitrogen, supporting microbe activity, controlling pests and reducing dust. Cover crops can also significantly improve pollinator health if farmers select plant species that provide pollen and nectar during bloom.

A popular cover crop practice among farmers is using modified cover crop seed mixes to include bee forage, whether the farmers grow insect-pollinated crops or not. Both managed pollinators (e.g., honey bees) and unmanaged pollinators (e.g., native solitary bees) benefit from having access to abundant and diverse sources of nutrition in blooming cover crops. Farmers who amend their land with bee forage are doing more than simply helping sustain local pollinator populations. They are increasing the potential for those bees to pollinate crops and increase yield.

- Recent research conducted by the Almond Board of California and UC Davis showed almond orchards with cover crops had yields 100-225 pounds per acre higher than orchards with bare soil. <sup>1</sup>
- Cover crop species like brassicas stimulate bee colonies to increase their populations throughout the growing

season. More foraging bees collecting pollen and nectar results in more pollination of cash crops. <sup>2</sup>

- The vigor of individual bees is also improved when they are raised in resource-abundant versus resource-limited environments. Malnourished worker bees communicate less effectively, which reduces their potential. <sup>3</sup>
- The positive effect that cover cropping has on pollinators lasts beyond the lifespan of the cover crop. For example, colonies with access to diverse sources of nutrition during the growing season will have lower pathogen loads and higher rates of winter survivability. <sup>4</sup>



Photo credit: Billy Synk, Pollinator Partnership

Agricultural producers, beekeepers, and conservationists alike realize using cover crops to improve both soil and pollinator health is smart farming. Non-profit organizations like Project Apis m. have gone a step further and have developed programs like Seeds for Bees. This program awards free or discounted cover crop seeds to farmers seeking to increase sustainability by improving both pollinator and soil health. Learn more by visiting [projectapism.org/sfb-home](http://projectapism.org/sfb-home) or contacting Stetcyn Maldonado at [stetcyn@projectapism.org](mailto:stetcyn@projectapism.org). ◆



**Billy Synk,**  
**California Habitat Program Manager**  
**Pollinator Partnership**



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# Bee Friendly Farming Certification

## What it is



### Pollinator Partnership: BFF Certification

Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) is a certification program from Pollinator Partnership working with growers to help protect, preserve, and promote pollinator health. BFF provides guidelines for growers to promote pollinator health on their lands through helping growers incorporate affordable, simple, science-based guidelines, like offering nutrition and habitats for bees, and integrated pest management strategies. By becoming a Bee Friendly Farming member, you can help preserve and protect the pollinator populations by implementing positive, incremental changes on your property. Program members are an essential part of keeping our pollinators healthy and food supply abundant. To learn more, visit: [pollinator.org/bff/bff-us](https://pollinator.org/bff/bff-us)

## Why it's important



75% to 95% (Ollerton et al, 2011) of all flowering plants on the earth need help with pollination – they need pollinators. Pollinators provide pollination services to more than 180,000 different plant species and more than 1,200 crops. That means that one out of every three bites of food you eat is there because of pollinators (Klein et al, 2007; Buchmann and Nabhan 1996). If we want to talk dollars and cents, pollinators add 217 billion dollars to the global economy (Gallai et al, 2009; Losey and Vaughan, 2006), and honey bees alone are responsible for between 1.2 and 5.4 billion dollars in agricultural productivity in the United States (Southwick and Southwick, 1999). In addition to the food we eat, pollinators support healthy ecosystems that clean the air, stabilize soils, protect from severe weather, and support other wildlife (Costanza et al, 1997).

Pollinator populations are changing. Many pollinator populations are in decline and this decline is attributed most severely to a loss in feeding and nesting habitats (NRCNA, 2006; Kremen et al. 2002). Pollution, the misuse of chemicals, disease, and changes in climatic patterns all contribute to the shrinking

and shifting of pollinator populations. In some cases, there isn't enough data to gauge a response, and this is even more worrisome.

California produces 76% of the world's almonds, accounting for 100% of national production (Almond Board of California, 2023; CDFA, 2020). This production amounted to more than \$3.5 billion in 2022 (CDFA, 2023) from 1.35 million bearing acres (USDA, 2022). Almonds are mostly self-incompatible and traditionally rely on cross-pollination for crop production. Cross-pollination is reliant on pollinators to facilitate the transfer of pollen from flower to flower. However, pollinators are currently at risk. Bee declines have been attributed to anthropogenic factors such as climate change, pesticide use, habitat loss, pest and disease pressure, and their interactions (Potts et al., 2010; Vandbergen and IPI, 2013; Goulson et al., 2015; Hamblin et al., 2017; Stulligross and Williams, 2020). In intensive agricultural landscapes, habitat loss and exposure to pesticides are likely the main factors contributing to wild pollinator decline (Stulligross and Williams, 2020; Kremen et al., 2002; Sheffield et al.,

2008). Growers can implement best management practices to mitigate these issues and establish resilient and robust pollination systems that include managed and wild bees. These are critical to maximizing yield, crop quality, soil health, water retention, and long-term sustainability of most almond production. BFF standards, like offering nutrition and habitat for bees, and integrated pest management strategies, guide farmers towards enhanced pollination services. Program members are an essential part of keeping our pollinators healthy and our yields abundant.

## How to do it



### What are the criteria to obtain Pollinator Partnership's Bee Friendly Farming certification?

1. Offer nutritious forage for bees on at least 3% of cropped acreage. Forage can be temporary and can include cover crops if they are left to bloom.
2. Provide bloom of different flowering plants throughout the growing season, from early spring to late autumn. There is no minimum land coverage for seasonal bloom.



3. Provide permanent habitat for nesting through features such as hedgerows, natural brush, buffer strips, or bare ground. Attempt to have at least 1% perennial habitat.
  4. Offer clean water for bees if not inhibited by government mandated water restrictions.
  5. Utilize Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in effort to reduce or eliminate the use of chemicals.
  6. Pay the annual certification fee.
  7. Complete the compliance form every three years (audited by the Agriculture and Pollinators Task Force).
4. When asked for "Existing Certifications" select "California Almond Stewardship Platform." Upload the CASP Assessment Progress Report PDF for your orchard in "Existing Audit Files."
  5. Complete all questions within "Bee Forage and Habitat" regarding your forage, nesting, and water features provided for the bees. Photo uploads will be required for verification. Files can be uploaded by dragging files into the appropriate locations or by selecting multiple photos at one time. No application will be approved without:
    - a. Uploaded Pictures of your Bee Forage
    - b. Uploaded Pictures of your Water Sources
    - c. Uploaded Pictures of your Nesting Habitat
    - d. Permanent Habitat Acreage (includes habitat features such as nesting locations, hedgerows, permanent vegetation not including crops. This permanent habitat acreage does not include cover crops).
    - e. Total Habitat Acreage (includes all habitat features temporary or permanent. This does not include crops).
  6. Upload your Farm Maps. See best practices for photos and maps to submit for map requirements.
  7. Complete "Confirmation and Payment" section.

### Additional considerations:

1. Orchard Locations:
  - a. If orchards are within a two-mile radius of the habitat and are under the same management conditions, they will qualify under the same BFF certification. All land/habitat features within this radius must be owned/managed by the same entity.
  - b. If the orchards are outside a two-mile radius, then one must apply for a separate BFF certification (and pay a separate fee for each certification).
2. Pollinator Partnership requires six weeks to review BFF applications, so all materials must be submitted by March 12, 2025 for review to receive certification by April 30, 2025 (*Blue Diamond* submission deadline).
3. Monitor contact email. If there are questions regarding your applications, Bee Friendly Farming will reach out for clarification.
4. If no response is received within six weeks of submission, your application may be denied.

### Already submitted your CASP self-assessment and are Bee Friendly Farming eligible? Follow these steps...

1. Visit [pollinator.org/bff-cert/apply](https://pollinator.org/bff-cert/apply) to create an account to begin and apply. If you already have an account, select "Continue an Existing Application" and login.
2. Once an account has been made, select "Add A Farm" on your BFF Certified Profile for new farm applications.
3. Complete the "About Your Farm" section. Please provide the best phone number and email address where you can be reached. The Bee Friendly Farming Team will use this information to gather any additional information required to award certification.

Pollinator Partnership currently has funding support for Bee Friendly Farming practices through the California Ag-Land Network for Pollinators. This Regional Conservation Partnership Program, funded by the Natural Resource Conservation Services, and in partnership with *Blue Diamond Growers*, the Almond Board of California, and others, is available to farmers in ten counties in California. Growers can receive incentive payments for practices like cover crops, hedgerows, and IPM programs. To learn more about the program, please see here [pollinator.org/pollinator.org/assets/generalFiles/RCP-PP-Outreach-1.24.pdf](https://pollinator.org/pollinator.org/assets/generalFiles/RCP-PP-Outreach-1.24.pdf). ◆



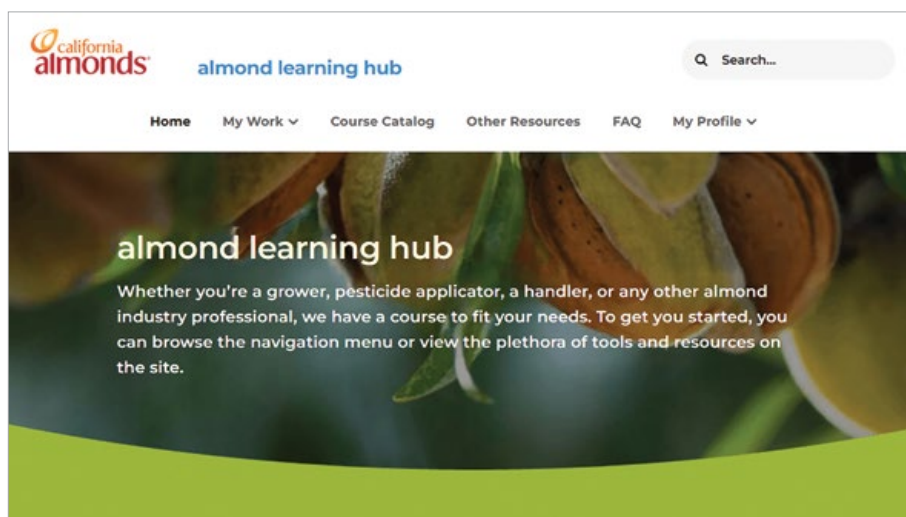
**Cody Wilson**  
**Agricultural Specialist**  
**Pollinator Partnership**

### THE ALMOND BOARD

## ABC Launches Free Online Learning Hub for Industry Professionals

To further serve the almond industry, the Almond Board of California (ABC) has announced the launch of the Almond Learning Hub, a free online platform tailored to meet the educational needs of growers, Pest Control Advisors (PCAs), Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs), and other industry professionals. The new resource was debuted at the California Association of Pest Control Advisors conference in October.

“Through the Almond Learning Hub, we are expanding how we serve the industry by providing free access to continuing education credits (CEUs) year-round,” said Jenny Nicolau, associate director of Industry Relations and Global Communications for ABC. “This platform ensures industry members can stay informed and maintain required certifications conveniently, without waiting for in-person events.”



### Comprehensive Course Offerings

The Almond Learning Hub launched with nearly 90 hours of continuing education content spanning diverse topics like:

- Pest management
- Irrigation strategies and soil health
- Whole orchard recycling
- Food safety and biomass use

Courses on the platform cater to various needs, from short overview videos to in-depth sessions that fulfill credit requirements. Continuing education credits are available for three key license types:

- DPR (California Department of Pesticide Regulation)
- CCA (Certified Crop Advisor)
- CDFA-INMP (California Department of Food and Agriculture — Irrigated Nutrient Management Program)

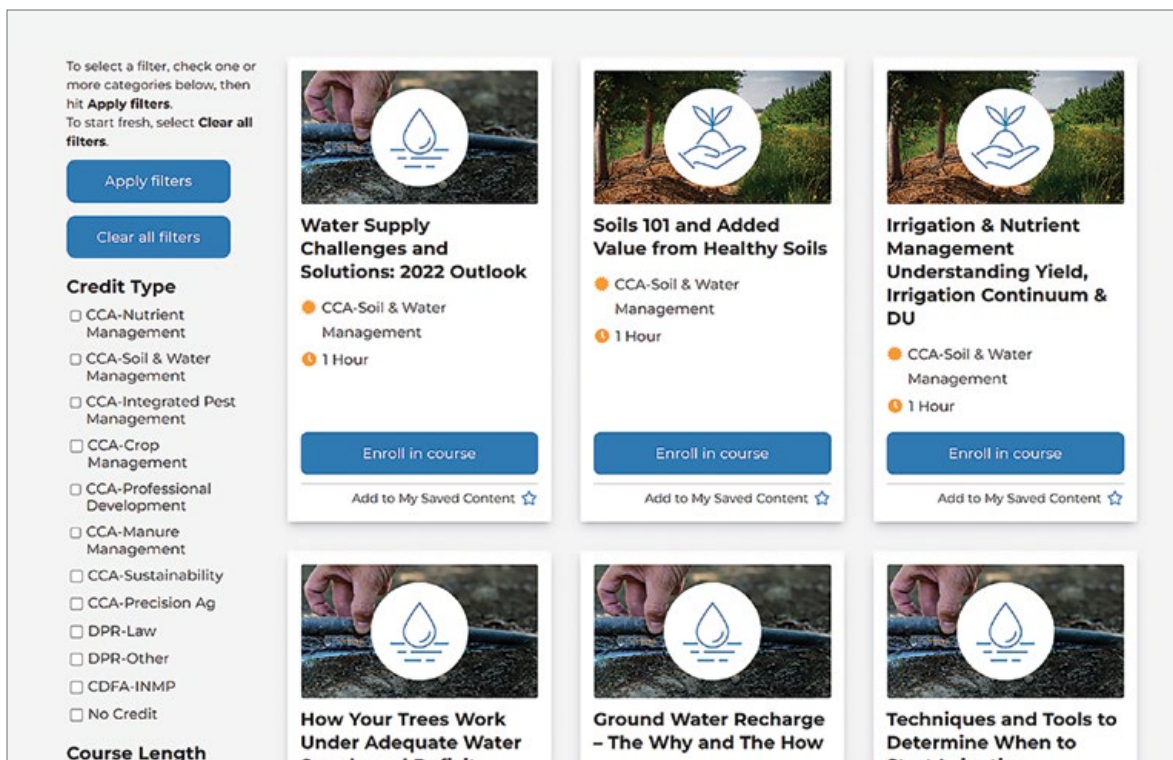
Beyond CEUs, the platform also connects users with ABC resources such as the Salinity Guide, nitrogen management materials and cover crop insights, giving users a one-stop hub for practical knowledge.

### Easy Navigation and Customization

One of the standout features of the Almond Learning Hub is its robust filtering options. Users can customize their learning experience by sorting courses by:

- Credit type
- Video length
- Orchard stage (e.g., dormancy, harvest)
- Industry role (grower, PCA, etc.)

Additionally, archived sessions from past Almond Conferences and ABC Summits are available, ensuring access to materials and credits even if users miss events.



“This tool allows us to extend the impact of our education programs. Users can access sessions and credits any time throughout the year, not just during conferences,” Nicolau emphasized.

### Streamlined Registration and Security

While the platform prioritizes usability, ABC has also implemented strong security protocols to protect user data. Registrants can sign up using Microsoft credentials to ensure a secure experience. For those without Microsoft accounts, the site offers a simple process to create one. This step protects sensitive information like license numbers for PCAs and CCAs.

### How It Works

The Almond Learning Hub is designed with the end user in mind, based on input from growers, PCAs and CCAs. Once logged in, users can browse the course catalog, save courses for future sessions, and monitor their progress through in-course activities. Most credit-based courses conclude with a short multiple-choice quiz to confirm comprehension, followed by instant access to certificates of completion.

### Accessing the Hub

The Almond Learning Hub is available at [AlmondLearningHub.com](http://AlmondLearningHub.com). Industry members can create an account or log in and immediately start exploring the catalog. “We’ve designed this tool to be free, secure and easy to use,” Nicolau said. “This is one more way we’re supporting the almond industry with continuous learning opportunities.”

The Almond Learning Hub promises to be a game-changer, enabling professionals to stay on top of the latest industry practices and maintain their certifications efficiently — at no cost.

**For more information or to get started, visit [AlmondLearningHub.com](http://AlmondLearningHub.com).**

*Article contributed by the Almond Board of California* ◆

## TIME TO CONSIDER

As I've said many times before, next year's crop starts when the last almond leaves the field this year. In almond farming there is never really a "down time" as growers go from orchard task to orchard task. The only change is what those tasks consist of and when you do them. Now that the final almond has left the field, growers will begin working on post-harvest and dormant tasks. In this article, I will cover some important tasks that, when done right, can lead to a successful year.

**Water** is the most important task post-harvest. I know that this article will be coming out when a lot of district water is out of canals, but I want to reiterate the importance of post-harvest watering. After harvest, it is vital to return to watering at the full rate of Evapotranspiration (ET). ET is the amount of water being used by the crop in a given time period. Reduced water post-harvest may result in reduced bloom and crop the following year. The latter half of summer and fall is when the trees are going through bud differentiation, which means they are deciding how many buds will become fruiting or develop into vegetative buds. If the tree does not have enough energy stored or is not strong enough to support an abundance of fruiting buds, the result will be more vegetative growth, which leads to lower crop potential the following year. While most orchards these days employ drip or micro-sprinkler irrigation, some growers have retained existing flood irrigation systems and may opt to use flood irrigation to fully refill the rootzone. As we all know, water availability is different for each grower — but if you have it, use it!

When water is applied **weeds** will follow. Benjamin Franklin said, "Nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." I think almond farmers would add weeds to that statement! The UC Davis IPM website Introduction to Weeds photo gallery — UC Statewide IPM Program ([ucanr.edu](http://ucanr.edu)) has an excellent photo gallery to help you identify which weeds you have. If weeds are something

you have struggled with in the past, remember that taking care of them early is key. If there is a big flush of winter weeds, a "clean-up" application may be needed. This will create clean strips for a pre-emergent application later in the dormant season, leading to reduced weed pressure into the summer months.



*Postharvest Irrigation*

**Orchard Sanitation!** Enough said, right? Removing nuts that did not fall during shaking at harvest, also known as **mummies**, greatly reduces the pest population. It is an accepted industry standard to have no more than two mummies per tree, though some in the southern San Joaquin Valley target one mummy per tree. Winter shaking can be done throughout the dormant season and is most successful when conditions are right. Foggy conditions are usually considered the best when removing mummy nuts. The moisture from the fog and dew is absorbed by the hull of the nut, making it heavier thus softening the connection. So, when shaking is done, they easily detach from the tree. Moisture is the key to success but can also be an issue. The lack of moisture can lead to postponing the shake, while too much can make it difficult to get back in the field.

Growers typically aim to remove mummies from November to early January. The mummy nuts still need to be destroyed after shaking, which is done by **mowing**. Mowing exposes the overwintering larvae to the environment, which aids in the mortality of the pest. Breaking up the mummy nuts exposes the larvae to predators like birds, and the cold winter weather. Without the warmth of a fully intact almond, the larvae cannot survive. Thoroughly destroying mummy nuts not only eliminates overwintering navel orangeworm larvae, but it is also the best approach to control the newly emerging threat from the carpophilus beetle. How do you prepare for the successful destruction of mummy nuts? It starts with **sweeping** or **blowing** the mummy nuts to the center of the row. Winter sweeping also cleans and prepares the orchard floor for a successful application of pre-emergent herbicides, two benefits from one action. Speed is the most important factor when it comes to mowing mummy nuts. If you are traveling too fast, the flail mower will just spread the mummies back to where they were swept from. You must travel at a slow enough speed that allows the nuts to fully break apart. The more you can break down each nut into small pieces, the better the control will be. By accomplishing winter sanitation, you are reducing the population that is in the field and starting off your pest management on the right foot.



Mowing mummies. Photo Credit: Mel Machado

**Budgets** are critical for a successful farming operation. A budget can take away that unwanted surprise of costs and the best part is they are not difficult to develop. I have created an example budget that I would be happy to send to anyone who would like one. If you email me at [tvoss@bdgrowers.com](mailto:tvoss@bdgrowers.com), I will email you a copy of this budget. I have shown this budget in previous articles and have had multiple growers reach out for a copy. This example budget lists multiple costs such as bees, insurance, electricity, and labor. It also contains areas for multiple spray applications, so you can tailor it to your specific operation. All the costs you enter will be the estimated costs, and as you go through the year you can enter the actual costs to make sure you are on track. At the bottom of the budget you can enter your estimated production, total acres, and estimated price per pound. The spreadsheet will do the math for you and provide you an estimated total revenue, which you can compare against your estimated total cost. Comparing these costs allows you to adjust your budget by adding or subtracting from it.

All the topics listed in this article are the starting points for a successful year. Water for crop development, early management of weeds and NOW for pest management, and finally, budgeting to provide a roadmap of costs. The foundation for a successful year should be laid now. A solid foundation ensures the strength of a structure; without it the structure would be compromised. I'll end this article with a question. Is your foundation strong?



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