



almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

MARCH-APRIL 2025



*The Nutty Cruiser
is a Big Hit!*



Advocacy Report
with Alexi Rodriguez

A Discussion with
the Almond Board's
Clarice Turner

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Leaf-footed bug damage.
Photo credit: Mel Machado
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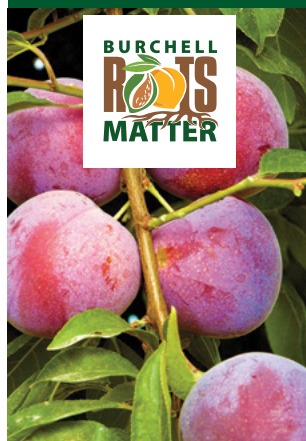


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Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



2025 has brought us face to face with new complexities and we are navigating the shifting dynamics of the current trade environment. This evolving landscape is being shaped by federal administration policies, where market volatility has become the new normal. While this can present challenges, we remain focused on staying ahead of the changes that may impact our business. Even amid these obstacles, we are dedicated to adapting and finding new opportunities to execute our strategic plan. We are seeing some promising results, and there is much more to come.

Recently, we have embarked on a range of exciting business opportunities. I'm thrilled to share that we've launched our new Produce Snack Almonds line—a bold step forward in bringing our snacks to new consumers, right where they shop for fresh, healthy options.

We've now secured dual placement in the produce section of over **400 stores nationwide**, and that number continues to grow. Key retail partners include Roundy's (Kroger), Jewel (Albertsons), Giant Eagle, HyVee, AWG, Sendik's, Lunds, and Gelson's. Most of these accounts have embraced all six SKUs, a strong vote of confidence in both the product and the strategy behind it!

We're also expanding our digital and specialty retail footprint. We've started shipping to **Amazon**, with a new item program launching soon to drive consumer reviews. **OTG**, a premium airport retailer, will begin carrying *Blue Diamond* product in April, and we're actively engaged in conversations with **Costco and Sam's Club**.

Additionally, as I have mentioned before, Europe is a target market for us and a few weeks into March we received our first of many orders of branded snack nuts to be shipped out over the Atlantic! It's still early days for European business, but we are beginning to see our hard work pay off.

Europe is not the only new market with exciting growth opportunities. We are building on our approach to doing business in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and we have partnered with a new distributor, further expanding our reach in

this growing market. Our new partnership is a significant step toward strengthening our global presence and ensuring that *Blue Diamond* products are accessible to even more consumers worldwide. We are bringing the goodness of almonds to new places in a way we never have before.

In addition to expanding in Europe and the UAE, our continued efforts to expand internationally are paying off, with new opportunities for Snack Nuts opening in places like South Africa. Our almonds are making their way onto more shelves, and we are confident that these markets will be pivotal to our growth over the coming years.

Our marketing team has already had a very full year, and I cannot wait for you all to see what we have in store. We have rolled out several new campaigns that have already seen lots of success, driving both brand awareness and customer engagement. Our recent digital marketing initiatives have obtained impressive results, particularly with targeted social media campaigns that speak directly to our core consumers and new audiences. We have made it a point to expand our presence across major platforms to reach customers in new and exciting ways.

Closer to home, we partnered with Urban Roots® Brewery & Smokehouse in Sacramento, to celebrate National Almond Day in Sacramento on February 16. With more people than we anticipated in attendance and local news media coverage, the event was a success from start to finish. Several members from our local community organizations joined in the fun and the Nutty Cruiser was a huge hit!



We also celebrated Employee Appreciation Day in early March and took some time throughout the day to recognize and appreciate all that our team members do for *Blue Diamond*. We appreciate our growers too, and Mel keeps me well informed of the challenges you are all dealing with to maintain the health of your orchards and the quality of your crops. Together, we are all making *Blue Diamond* successful!

Thank you to everyone for your continued dedication and hard work. Together, we are making 2025 a year to remember. I am excited to share even more progress with you as we continue to grow, and I look forward to seeing all the great things we will achieve in the months ahead. ◆

Kai

Kai Bockmann
President & CEO

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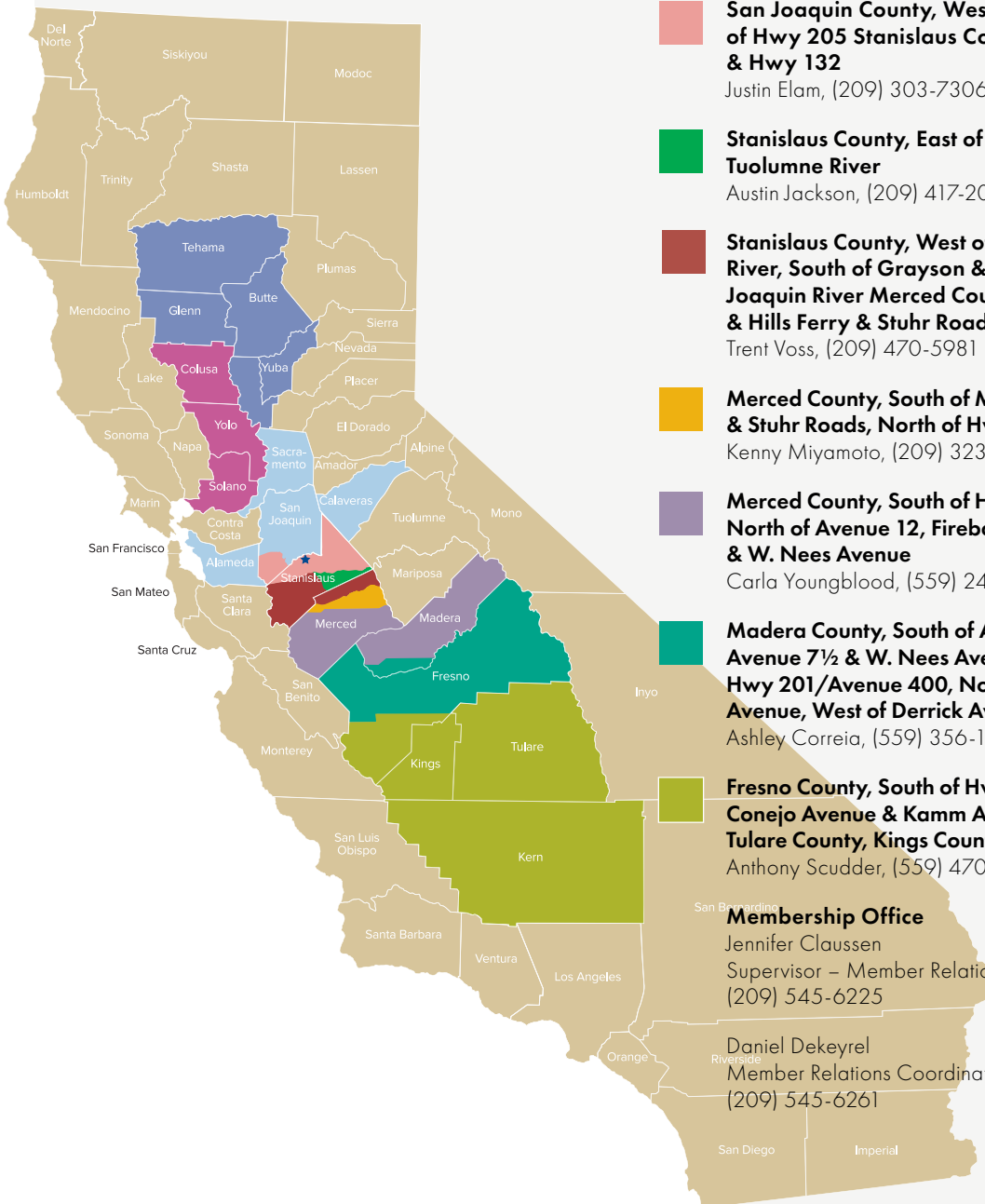
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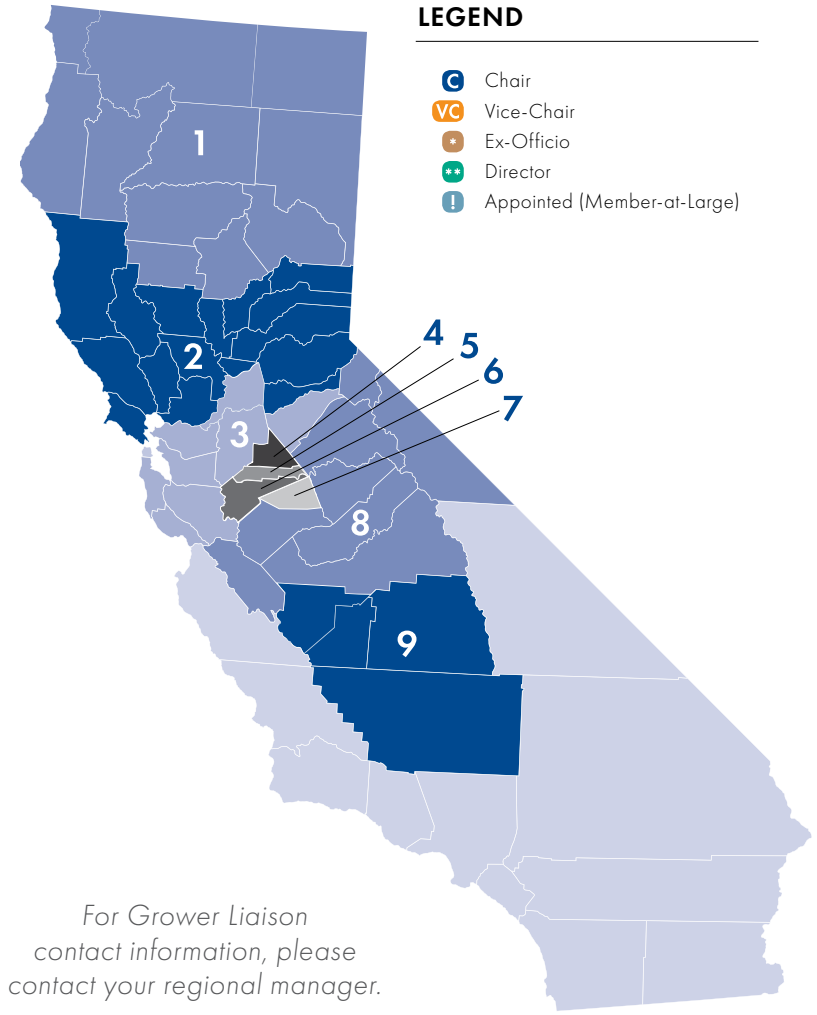
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ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



Blue Diamond Almond Market Update — March 14, 2025

OVERVIEW

February shipments met market expectations, totaling 214.9 million pounds. Export shipments were slightly lower at 158.7 million pounds, reflecting a 2% decrease year-over-year, while domestic shipments saw a 4% decrease for the month. Despite these declines, strong performance in February has kept year-to-date shipments only slightly lower at -0.8%.

SHIPMENTS

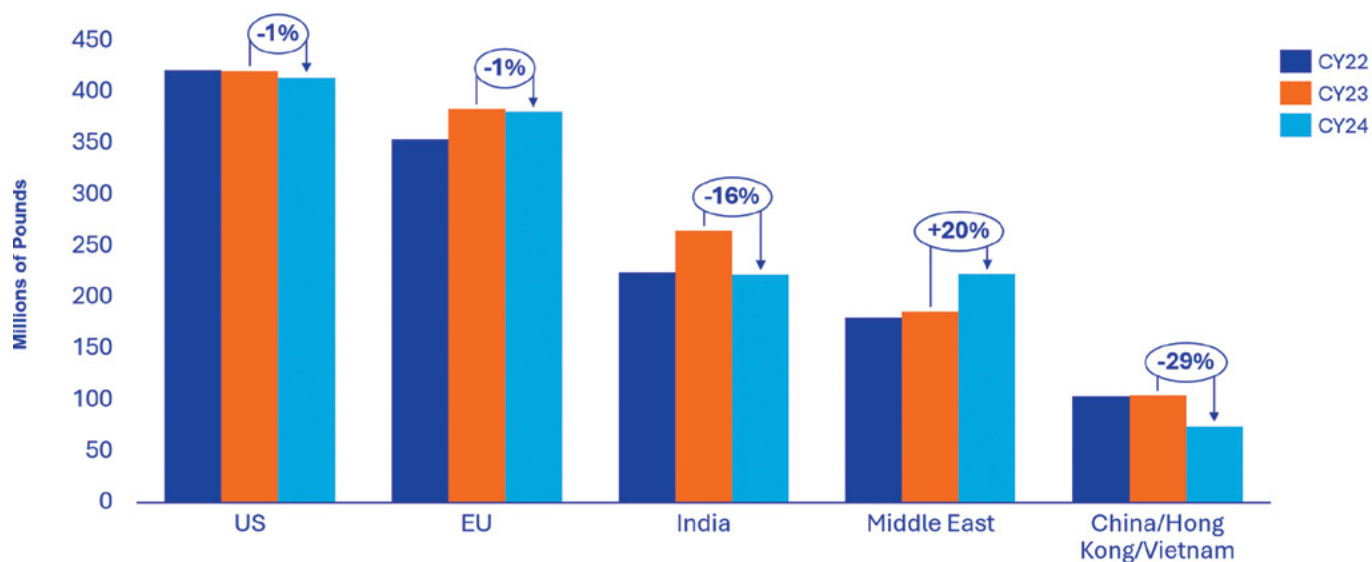
India:

February shipments totaled 25.6 million pounds, down 34% from the prior month and 6% from the previous year. Year-to-date shipments trail last year by 16%, totaling 221.4 million pounds, compared to 264.6 million pounds at this time last year. With over 800 loads shipped during the month, there is still significant buying expected to cover the second half needs to have ample supply for an early Diwali.

China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:

Shipments to the region totaled 3.8 million pounds in February, a 62% decrease compared to last year. Year-to-date shipments trail last year by 29%, largely due to ongoing tariff challenges. Chinese buyers continue to look to Australia for most of their needs, while Hong Kong traders continue to move volumes into Southeast Asia, supporting a 28% year-over-year increase in shipments to Vietnam. With geopolitical uncertainty, traders are exploring alternative avenues to keep buyers supplied through the rest of the year.

Year-Over-Year Shipments February



Source: Almond Board of California

Europe:

European shipments in February totaled 60.7 million pounds, down 1% from the same period last year. Year-to-date shipments are behind by just 1%. Demand for processor-grade almonds remains strong, with offers being difficult to come by, which has led to price increases for standard almonds. The recent announcement of retaliatory tariffs may cause some buyers to pause as they await developments. With many Spanish processors well-sold in the area, coverage will be needed from California, placing buyers in a precarious position as the uncertainty continues to build.

Middle East:

Shipments totaled 24.4 million pounds in February, a 10% decrease compared to last year. Year-to-date shipments remain up by 20%. The decrease was expected and should help reduce high stock levels in Mersin and Dubai. Pricing in-country has been lower than California origin for the past several weeks, but it is expected to rise as higher-priced cargoes arrive. Despite Ramadan starting in late February, buyers have remained active, with some making purchases to cover needs for April/May. Overall, the region is showing continued strength, with demand for California almonds still on the rise.

Domestic:

February shipments reached 56.18 million pounds, 4.4% behind last year. Year-to-date shipments are now at 414 million pounds, down 1.5% from the prior year. After a record January, buyers took a step back in February, contracting 29.38 million pounds, resulting in commitments lagging last year by 16.55%. Despite this, there is still strong demand, and buyers still need to book coverage for the balance of the crop year.

COMMITMENTS

Total commitments reached 577.4 million pounds, the highest level in the last three months, though still reflecting an 8.5% decrease compared to last year. Both domestic and export commitments are lower. Buyers continue to adopt a short-term purchasing approach, yet still need to secure additional coverage, as current sales barely cover the upcoming months. New sales are strong, totaling 221 million pounds, marking a 3% increase over last year and setting a record for February. Assuming a 2.7-billion-pound crop, current shipments and commitments now account for 69% of total supply compared to 70% last year. The industry is on track to achieve a similar tight carryout as last year.

CROP

Crop receipts have now reached 2.68 billion pounds, indicating a final crop size of approximately 2.7 billion pounds, a 1% decrease compared to last year. With shipments maintaining a steady pace, it is anticipated that product shortages will occur even sooner than last year, particularly as the transition to the new crop begins. This is already being reflected in the pricing of certain products.

Looking ahead to the 2025 crop, concerns are mounting about the ability to produce a crop larger than the previous year. Last summer's heat caused significant stress in orchards, and ongoing water shortages and inadequate grower inputs continue to have a lasting impact. While it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions, the industry will closely monitor these factors in the coming months. ◆

Market Perspective

In February, the almond market displayed mixed trends across regions, with total shipments aligning with market expectations. Steady demand and a tighter crop supply are leading to earlier product shortages, causing pricing to firm. Buyers continue to adopt a short-term purchasing approach, influenced by uncertainty around potential tariff impacts. Securing coverage sooner rather than later would be prudent to ensure a continuous supply.

The outlook for the 2025 crop remains uncertain, with concerns about producing a crop larger than the previous year due to stress in orchards caused by last summer's heat and ongoing water-related challenges. As the year progresses, the industry will continue to closely monitor these factors, and the impact on future supply will become clearer in the coming months. The next major milestone will be in May, when the USDA releases its Subjective Estimate.



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



The Almond Industry is in Good Hands



An Interview with Clarice Turner, president & CEO of the Almond Board of California

Almond Facts hosted the Almond Board of California's, president and CEO, Clarice Turner, for an interview to get to know her unique leadership style with a strong food industry background, her vision for the almond industry, plans for market growth, and wins for almonds.

Almond Facts (AF): Clarice, it's been a year and a half since you came on as president and CEO at the Almond Board. Could you share a little bit about your vision for the future of the almond industry?

Clarice Turner (CT): The ABC team got together to talk about the purpose and higher calling behind our work. We aligned on: **"Cultivating a healthier future."** This speaks to the health of growers in the industry and to human health. We care for both. Human health is important to everyone: you, me, people we know, governments. It's a massive scale to think about. Almonds collectively are remarkable because we can truly impact improvements in human health. We know this because of our scientific, fact and data-based research. There's no

greenwashing in what we know, which is powerful. And for growers, farming is not getting easier and it's not going to get any easier. Our top priority is to keep our growers growing.

AF: What are some of the biggest challenges the industry needs to address and what is the Almond Board doing to support our California almond farmers?

CT: In farming, the regulatory environment remains uncertain, especially now. A part of ABC's research focuses on dealing with pests like navel orangeworm. We also work with agencies like CDFA to stop pests from arriving in the state. We are regularly looking for ways to save farmers money and vetting practices that provide options for efficiency, such as using cover crops and promoting biodiversity. For example, using cover crops has been shown to improve soil health and help water soak into the ground better, and in-orchard plant diversity supports pollinators and the trees.

Almonds are among the most researched foods because of their diversity, the strength of our federal marketing order and the challenges that have existed for over 50 years. A few decades ago, people thought almonds were unhealthy and caused weight gain due to their high fat content. However, Almond Board nutrition research has shown that almonds are an incredibly healthy food filled with healthy unsaturated fats, and that they can be a helpful tool for weight management. In fact, more recent research has shown that our bodies absorb about 25% fewer calories than what is on the nutritional facts label for whole almonds. Almonds are very versatile and are available in many forms, all of which contain important nutrients.

Research also shows that almonds have a very high nutritional value for the inputs needed to grow them. We are working on research that shows the benefits of environmental investments tied to the nutritional value of the food and the resources used to grow that food. There is not much clarity in this space. It would be powerful to create a fact-based reference that can be made available to the public. We are sharing our findings about the nutrition of almonds and their environmental

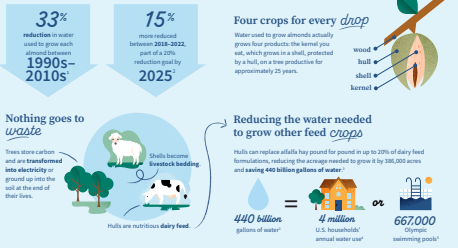


Everything you get with a handful of Almonds

Almonds offer many benefits—from health and nutrition to contributing to climate solutions, zero waste and a range of regenerative agriculture practices. Almonds fit into simple, sustainable lifestyles as a responsibly grown food and ingredient.

Getting the most out of every drop

California almond farmers conserve water on their farms by adopting water-efficient, technology like microirrigation and putting everything the orchard grows to good use.



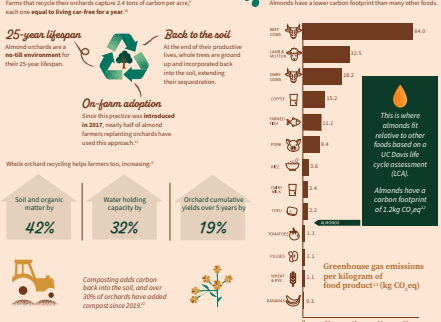
Climate smart farming

Almond trees capture and store carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, in their wood and roots. This storage accumulates as the trees grow, reducing emissions and environmental impact.

Almond trees store a lot of carbon



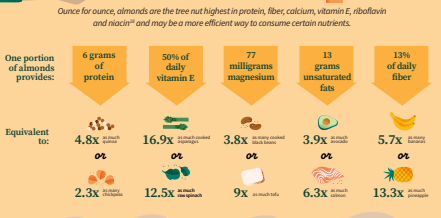
Whole orchard recycling



Building biodiversity



Health and nutrition



No food waste here



Why California?



benefits together. We have new infographics (left and above) showing the relationship between water use (four crops per drop), carbon footprint and nutrition, which will further support our message. Water has always been a topic of concern, so we want to ground it in fact and highlight the nutritional density and protein content in almonds. We have a great story to tell, and we need to ensure people have the full picture.

ABC also hosts and sponsors a wide variety of educational tools like in field workshops, and our new Almond Learning Hub, a free resource for information and continuing education units. We bring experts together and facilitate sharing and learning.

AF: Wow! The learnings from that research will be fascinating.

CT: That's right. So, then you take the demand side of the equation. All those things indirectly drive demand because they provide positive information in areas people care about, like nutrition and the environment. Look at the business side of driving demand and you discover that so much more can be done with almonds and food innovation. Almonds are well positioned to be a solution as people are looking for plant-based proteins and nutritionally dense foods. Diets like Keto, gluten free, GLP-1 and others are becoming mainstream. We're doing a lot of work to be a catalyst in moving innovation forward. Almonds are currently available in 14 different forms, yet chefs are taught in culinary school how to formulate with only three or four of them. We're helping them ask, "What do you do with almond oil? With almond flour? With defatted almond powder? With almond butter? How do you incorporate those into recipes easily?" We're developing a resource library to make it easy for food scientists and chefs alike to get creative with almond recipes. But we must make it easy to incorporate almonds no matter where you're at with your culinary skills. We want to make almonds the ingredient of choice!



This work may also lead to inventing new things too. We spent two days in meeting rooms where nine PhDs and various R&D experts produced 100 almond ideas. We're now vetting those to see what has the most value for the industry.

AF: Wonderful! Now, could you talk about who you are as a leader, some of your background and your leadership style? And, more specifically, how you collaborate with farmers, researchers and other stakeholders in the almond industry?

CT: My overall leadership style is collaborative. I'm a very curious person. In fact, my mom used to limit the number of questions I was allowed to ask. I did the same thing with my daughter. I decided that after five questions on the same topic, we were done.

I genuinely enjoy people and try to get the best out of them. In the last year and a half, I did 13 listening sessions up and down the Valley, where I discussed the state of the industry and opened it up for dialogue and questions. There is such an incredible level of knowledge and experience coming from the generations that have been engaged in almonds. I learned so much by visiting growers in their orchards to hear what's on their minds, what they are struggling with, and what they're excited about. In the first year, that gave me so much perspective.

I try to learn as much as I can and listen to what's going on. My gift is vision and strategy. I create an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and then look for the opportunities and the emerging threats and risks that we need to work to leverage and mitigate. Establishing relationships is very important to me and I've done that my entire career. I'm always connecting the dots on how ABC can add value. And then working closely with our team, the board and our committees. The answers are out there, we just need to ask the right questions and listen.

AF: Now let's hear about your leadership background in the food industry. You have so much experience in leadership positions with Boudin, Starbuck's, Papa Murphy's, Yum! Brands, and PepsiCo. You've done excellent work for those companies and your experience makes you a uniquely valuable leader for almonds. Can

you tell us how your depth of experience is aiding you in your new leadership position with the almond industry?

CT: When I started my career in franchising, I had to learn how to lead without having power. Franchisees would only do what the company wanted if it made sense to them. My job was to communicate between the franchisees and the company, telling the company what would and wouldn't work for the franchisees and how to improve their initiatives. It was important to find a good middle ground. Many organizations don't understand that it's about creating value (pull) instead of forcing people (push). Building good relationships and credibility with franchisees helped establish trust. When I asked them to open more restaurants or remodel them, I came prepared with data showing how it would improve their profits over time. Importantly, I learned effective collaboration early on. I also serve on the board of the Culinary Institute of America and the National Restaurant Association, which gives me unique and valuable insight into the food industry. I understand how food goes mainstream in America and around the world. With my background, I know for a fact that chefs have limited exposure to the various forms of almonds, using just three or four of the 14 forms. Getting them excited and challenged is crucial.

We are working to improve culinary training from kindergarten to high school, to colleges and universities, and for military, professional and pastry chefs. We want to teach students about nutrition, flexibility in cooking and environmental impact. We aim to reach all age groups to expand their knowledge and awareness of almonds. Thanks to my connections, we are actively developing these programs with the Culinary Institute and the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, and we are expanding this work around the world.

AF: How does your collaborative mindset and leadership experience in the food industry transfer over into the almond industry?

CT: My family has a small farm, so I've come to know it's important to be curious and understand what matters to the growers, the supply chain, and to buyers. This means

asking the right questions to find out what is most important so we can invest in what helps our growers the most. There are many factors to consider. We aim to focus on what adds value. Everyone in the supply chain has needs, from growers to companies making products like nutrition bars in China. It's complex, but we are developing that roadmap. We hired Deloitte Consulting, one of the best in the global ag and food industries, to analyze what we were doing, and where future opportunities in different markets might be. My experience at Starbuck's taught me that to make an impact, you need to break things down into smaller parts and lay out a clear plan. When I first started working on food at Starbuck's, no one knew the steps or timeline for moving from testing a product to launching it to customers. I had come from PepsiCo where product development was a well-oiled machine. At Starbuck's, it was much more complicated and took a great deal of discovery, planning and collaboration to create the food offerings and supply chain of today's Starbuck's.

AF: Did that come as a surprise to you that they didn't have a streamlined process?

CT: Yes, it was a shock. It helped me realize why we couldn't execute food well across the U.S. I brought in the best people I knew in the supply chain to figure out who owned which parts. Then we mapped it out to find the intersections and create a timeline and process. When you go through experiences like that on that large a scale, you recognize that no matter what the project consists of, it helps to break down the parts, map it out and decide what's most important, because resources are limited. You must focus on what's important and eliminate what isn't.

AF: With that in mind, what have you found to be most important and impactful to our growers? Of all the questions you're asking, what is the number one thing for almond growers?

CT: In general, it's to continue to drive consistent demand around the world because everything we do is to improve growers' economics. Josette Lewis, ABC's chief scientific officer, her team and our committees are very tuned in to what is realistic in terms of options or what may help grower operations. But the single biggest thing we can do is drive

consistent global demand. That will continue to keep global demand and supply moving smoothly.

AF: Let's talk about the market. What market trends are you currently monitoring and how are almonds positioned to capitalize on the trends?

CT: We're monitoring a lot. High priority topics include environmental consciousness and carbon footprint. We're looking at how to measure it all so we can support everything we say with facts, and get growers the recognition they deserve for practices they are already doing in their orchards. Generally, almonds show up well when you put them on an environmental comparison scale. The other thing is dietary trends. Many trends, like plant-based foods, are mainstream. People understand that eating more plant-based food is good for you and research supports that. Again, almonds align well here.

New cardiometabolic research indicates the same thing. We just brought in experts from around the world who are highly respected in their fields to produce a white paper on cardiometabolic health. These experts critically analyzed 30 years of almond research and came to a consensus on the health areas where science strongly shows almonds' benefits. Their white paper concluded that eating almonds daily is proven to support overall heart health, weight management and the gut microbiome. The paper has already been published by a prestigious peer-reviewed scientific journal. We will ensure it gets significant publicity in the healthy, scientific and consumer channels. We're continuing to understand more about the human body and how almonds improve health, which informs us about what to research next.

AF: What strategies are you currently employing to help almonds compete in the global market?

CT: There are a few important points. First, we want to move from just being a snack to also being seen as an ingredient. We aim to be the top choice for ingredients in countries where almonds can be used in products like snacks, baked goods, breakfast items, or bars. If a country doesn't have the right infrastructure but has potential, we are working

to help grow our opportunities there. We believe we can grow the almond market significantly if we do things in the right order. Governments want their people to be healthier and they want to create jobs, so we can help do both. Countries like China and India are interested in this. We are continuing to build those relationships and learning how to work with different government authorities and stakeholders to make mutually beneficial progress. We are focusing on relationships to make it easier to export almonds.

Recently, the UK reduced their import duties, and we are hoping for improvements in Japan as well. There are many factors involved, not just duties and technical issues, but also competition from other nuts and plant-based ingredients. However, we still provide about 80% of the world's almonds and expect to maintain by far the largest share of the market by 2030. Australia and Spain can't expand much because of their land and water restrictions, so California almonds will remain the top supplier. Even if other countries have better trade terms, as consumer demand grows there will continue to be strong demand for California almonds. We are known throughout the world for having the best quality and a consistent supply.

AF: What are ABC's strengths that continue pushing the industry forward?

CT: The research piece is vital. The depth and breadth of knowledge amassed is incredible. We have amazing people working with us including some of the world's top experts in almonds and market development. Our relationships are key in helping us understand the broader network around the world. Many of our trade and regulatory team members have worked for our embassies and consulates and the foreign ag service. They understand longstanding and solid relationships that help us prioritize the issues. Above all, they are trusted, so the relationships and perspectives that we foster allow us to understand things more deeply as opposed to what you might read in the media.

The other piece is driving global demand and ABC's strength in developing a market. In the more developed markets, like the U.S. and Europe, the overall volume is

significant — 728M and 642M pounds, respectively. However, those are our more mature markets with smaller growth rates. In that situation, it's easy for organizations to jump into costly market share battles. But instead of trying to increase one's slice of the pie, it can be more fruitful to focus on making the pie bigger — and remembering that a 1% growth rate in the U.S. equals 70M pounds. That's bigger than the total consumption of many of the markets where we do business today. Getting that 1% isn't easy. This is where innovation and creativity come in to expand demand on behalf of our growers and identify global opportunities. We also need to plan for the future, looking for the 5-to-10-year growth opportunities and expanding market diversity. It is never a good idea to be overly reliant on one market or region — we ship to more than 100 countries and are seeing growth in virtually every region where we are engaged.

From a strategy standpoint, we often tap local resources and bring in expertise. As we explore new markets to develop, this plays a key role. Turkey and Morocco are two markets that have greater potential and we're exploring but we have also identified several longer-term markets where we are building relationships and knowledge. There are teams of people who know those markets deeply, so we pull in their insights to inform the best path forward. This helps us to utilize our resources wisely and get the best return for the growers.

AF: Could you share some wins the Almond Board has collectively achieved recently?

CT: The Almond Board's committees and industry members have done a lot! There are also some significant things in conjunction with the Almond Alliance. **Almonds were just deemed a healthy food by the FDA, which is a huge win.** And with collective industry efforts, almonds (almond milk, almond butter, and whole kernel) were included in the WIC program — the nutrition program for women, infants and children — that many people take advantage of.

One of our barriers is allergens, so we are embarking on research with top allergy experts to examine novel treatment and prevention strategies for almond allergy. While almond allergy is extremely rare, there is emerging

data showing it is treatable and preventable, so we are working to do more almond allergen studies to reduce the barrier of almond allergy over the long term. That's a big win because it's been a long time with no research at all on that. Soon we anticipate having more information to help customers and consumers assess their allergen risks.

The environmental stewardship and nutrition infographics are also big wins for the industry. The Almond Board's California Almond Stewardship Platform (CASP) leverages our research and creates tools to help growers. The self-assessment collects information on farm practices across our orchards and aggregates the data, supporting our communications in this space. These are important wins because we need to make it easy for people to see almonds as the ingredient of choice. And we need them to understand what growers are already doing to deliver a healthy, safe product, while being excellent stewards of their land.

AF: Congratulations on those huge wins. That's amazing. We're curious to know, what is your favorite *Blue Diamond* product?

CT: Smokehouse. The ones I've eaten since I was a little girl.

AF: Good choice! Finally, do you have any closing thoughts for our member-growers?

CT: For the growers, we are so grateful for their trust and support. We welcome their involvement in Board activities. We're trying to do the best we can every single day to make sure that we are maximizing the investment of their three cents per pound. ♦



Jillian Luna,
Communications
Manager,
Blue Diamond
Growers



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Federal Maritime Commission — National Shipper Advisory Committee Transition to Selwyn Moore

As Steve Schult transitions out of his role on the National Shipper Advisory Committee (NSAC) under the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC), Selwyn Moore, director of global logistics at Blue Diamond Growers, has been appointed to take his place. This transition ensures that Blue Diamond Growers will continue to have a strong voice in shaping national freight and maritime policies that affect agricultural exporters and the broader supply chain industry. Moore will serve on NSAC's Port Committee, focusing on port operations, congestion, and infrastructure improvements, all critical areas for supporting efficiency and reliability in global trade.

Steve Schult's Contributions to NSAC

During his tenure at NSAC from April 2022 to February 2025, Schult played a critical role in stabilizing supply chains and shaping national freight policies, mainly as global shipping recovered from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. As an advocate for agricultural exporters, he worked closely with industry stakeholders, regulators, and policymakers to ensure that challenges in ocean freight, port congestion, and equipment availability were addressed with practical and sustainable solutions.

One of Schult's most significant contributions was his leadership in stabilizing *Blue Diamond Growers'* freight system during a historic supply chain disruption period. As global trade lanes struggled with bottlenecks, rising costs, and unpredictable transit times, he implemented strategic partnerships with carriers, logistics providers, and port authorities to secure reliable transportation capacity. His ability to strengthen relationships with ocean carriers and optimize logistics operations positioned *Blue Diamond Growers* as a shipper of choice, resulting in industry leading, on time delivery and fill rates.

Beyond his work in stabilizing supply chains, Schult played a pivotal role as chair of the Chassis Subcommittee at NSAC. Under his leadership, this committee successfully led efforts to improve chassis choice and availability across the U.S., influencing regulatory changes that enhanced chassis interoperability and reduced port congestion. By addressing inefficiencies in chassis management, Steve helped create greater flexibility within the supply chain, ensuring cargo moved more efficiently through ports and distribution centers.

In addition to his work on chassis issues, Schult served as a member of the Data Subcommittee, contributing to the standardization of Maritime Data Transfer and Integration (MDTI). His efforts improved data transparency and communication between shippers, carriers, and regulators, ensuring that critical shipping data was more accessible and actionable. His work in data standardization laid the foundation for California's future port systems, driving forward initiatives aimed at digital transformation and increased efficiency in maritime logistics.

Schult was also a key contributor to a National Academies study on chassis best practices, where he helped develop best practice recommendations for chassis management. These recommendations have been widely recognized for enhancing freight movement across the country and improving agricultural export logistics.

Blue Diamond is very grateful for Schult's excellent leadership as part of NSAC and for his stellar contributions on behalf of the Cooperative.

Selwyn Moore's Transition into NSAC

With over 25 years of global logistics experience, Selwyn Moore, global logistics director for *Blue Diamond Growers*, is well-equipped to step into the NSAC role and ensure that *Blue Diamond* remains a strong advocate for agricultural exporters and supply chain optimization. His expertise spans international freight management, port operations, supply chain efficiency, and logistics leadership, making him a valuable addition to NSAC's efforts to enhance global trade infrastructure.

Since joining *Blue Diamond Growers* in 2022, Moore has been key in managing and optimizing global logistics operations and ensuring efficient and reliable exports. Additionally, he has been instrumental in optimizing *Blue Diamond's* forward warehouse strategy and strengthening its domestic supply chain operations. His leadership in these areas has improved inventory positioning, reduced transit times, and enhanced service reliability for customers across North America.

Before joining *Blue Diamond*, Moore served as senior director of global logistics at Funko where he was responsible for managing global freight operations and optimizing supply chain efficiencies. Prior to Funko, he spent 22 years at Mattel, holding senior roles in global ocean freight, inbound logistics, and U.S. customs compliance. His extensive experience managing complex international supply chains, negotiating freight contracts, and optimizing logistics operations positioned him as a leader in global trade and supply chain management.

Selwyn Moore's Impact on Blue Diamond's Domestic Supply Chain

Beyond his expertise in global logistics, Moore has played a key role in optimizing *Blue Diamond's* domestic supply chain operations. He has led efforts to enhance warehouse efficiencies, improve transportation strategies, and strengthen logistics partnerships, ensuring that *Blue Diamond* maintains best-in-class, on time service and inventory reliability. His work has been critical in reducing costs, improving operational flexibility, and ensuring that *Blue Diamond's* products reach customers faster and more efficiently.

Looking Ahead: Selwyn Moore's Leadership in NSAC

Moore's expertise in global shipping, supply chain management, and logistics strategy positions him to continue *Blue Diamond Growers'* leadership within NSAC. His appointment ensures that the company remains actively engaged in shaping maritime and freight policies that impact agricultural exporters and global trade operations.

As a member of the NSAC's Port Committee, Moore will focus on port congestion challenges, infrastructure development, and policy recommendations that support



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efficient trade flows. His background in port operations, carrier relationships, and supply chain strategy will be invaluable in driving improvements that benefit *Blue Diamond Growers* and the broader shipping community.

Moore's strategic vision, operational expertise, and commitment to supply chain excellence will build upon Steve Schult's strong foundation. He will continue to advocate for data standardization, improved chassis access, and supply chain resilience, ensuring that *Blue Diamond* remains at the forefront of global trade efficiency. ♦

#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



Blue Diamond celebrated National Almond Day in style with a great event at Urban Roots® in Sacramento where the Nutty Cruiser™ made the first of many stops on its national tour. The Cruiser was even featured in Adweek magazine, focusing on effective CPG marketing. Blue Diamond hosted a booth at the Gulfood Tradeshow in Dubai. Finally, we polled our fans on social media to discover which discontinued flavors they want back! ♦

Blue Diamond Growers
28,253 followers
21h • 🌐

We asked Facebook what discontinued Blue Diamond Almond flavors they want back, and the results are in!

After analyzing over 120 comments, Chile 'N Lime (which is back, by the way) and Strawberry topped the charts, with Jalapeño Smokehouse right behind them.

They even dreamed up some wild, new flavor possibilities.

We know our LinkedIn friends have their own unique taste. So we're asking you the same question—the professionals, the decision makers, the people who probably have a can of Blue Diamond almonds tucked away in their desk drawer right now.

What flavor should we create next?

Drop your wildest flavor ideas in the comments. If your suggestion makes our product team do a double take, you're on the right track.

Perhaps something inspired by your coffee-fueled morning meetings? Or a flavor that pairs perfectly with that 4pm energy slump?

The floor is yours.

We're taking notes.

Top 10 Requests

Flavor	Count
Chili Lime	10
Strawberry	9
Jalapeño Smokehouse	6
Pumpkin Spice	4
Rosemary	4
Maui Onion	3
Honey Dijon	3
Truffle	3
Gourmet Garlic	2
Garlic and Onion	2

CCO Maya Erwin and 32 others

Blue Diamond Growers
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🌟 We are thrilled to share that Blue Diamond Growers will be at the Gulfood Tradeshow in Dubai February 17 – 21, 2025! 🌟

📍 Find your way to our booth, S3-G16, in Shk Saeed Hall 3 within the World Food sector!

You can click on the link <https://lnkd.in/g/EZi-Js> for the interactive map to locate us.

We're excited for you to meet our team: **Vince Cambruzzi, Karim Greiss, and Alicia Rockwell!** Come check out what Blue Diamond Growers is all about!

#Gulfood #DWTC #Gulfood30 #tradeshaw

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Find our Stand on the Gulfood Mobile App

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Shk Saeed Hall 3, Stand: S3-G16

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Well well well... scrolling LinkedIn on a Saturday. We see you. 😊

Since we're both here doing the definitely-not-working weekend browse, here's something actually worth your time: If you live in Sacramento, come hang with us tomorrow at Urban Roots in Midtown for National Almond Day!

Sure beats updating your profile for the third time this week.

Details for the actually-offline-networking opportunity:

- 🕒 2/16 Noon-4pm
- 📍 Urban Roots, 1322 V St
- 🎉 National Almond Day celebrations
- 👉 Real people, real conversations, real snack almonds

YOU NOW YOU TMRW

CCO Montana Sly and 94 others
2 comments • 8 reposts

Blue Diamond Growers
28,253 followers
3w • 🌐

Hi LinkedIn! Nutty Cruiser almond mobile, here!

I'm humbled and excited to announce that after an intensive self-discovery journey, I'm still an awesome, giant almond.

But now, I'm a giant almond with a PURPOSE: delivering snacks to you.

Next stop on my transformational journey: Urban Roots, this Sunday, Feb 16, 12:00p-4:00p for National Almond Day.

Details below. See you there!

#WeAreBlueDiamond #NationalAlmondDay

Maya Erwin Carmen Bourgaize Eric Tinson Lorena Nuñez Tom Tran Jillian Luna Mallorie Hayes Alicia Rockwell Alfred Dias

CELEBRATE NATIONAL ALMOND DAY AT URBAN ROOTS

HOSTED BY SACRAMENTO'S OWN BLUE DIAMOND ALMONDS

Sunday, February 16th @ 12pm-4pm

URBAN ROOTS BREWERY & SMOKEHOUSE
1322 V Street, Sacramento CA

Blue Diamond invites you to celebrate National Almond Day with an afternoon of everything almond.

Stop by for Blue Diamond's debut of **The Nutty Cruiser**, handing out free product and swag. Plus, get a taste of Blue Diamond's full portfolio and newest flavors though complimentary almond & craft beer pairings, snacks, coffee, and more - all with an almond twist!

CCO Mallorie Hayes and 35 others
1 comment • 3 reposts

Blue Diamond Growers
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Many wonder, in consumer packaged goods (CPG) marketing, should you prioritize efficient digital reach or memorable brand experiences?

Well, at Blue Diamond, we're doing both.

Check out the story about our Nutty Cruiser in Adweek!

Link to the Adweek story in the comments.

CCO Brooke Uhlenhop and 50 others
4 comments

SAVE THE DATE



MAY 12, 2025

BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS TOURNAMENT

to benefit the Blue Diamond Growers Scholarship Foundation

Questions?
Call Justin Elam
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Brookside Country Club
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Registration information coming soon!

BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of March 13, 2025

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 March 13, 2025, 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	5.25%	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.

Creamy Tomato Basil Meatballs

Prep Time: 30 minutes Cook Time: 30 minutes Difficulty: Medium Serves up to: 4



Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 large egg
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- ½ cup *Blue Diamond*® Almond Flour
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning, divided
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon pepper, divided
- 1 (28 oz.) can petite diced tomatoes
- 3 Tablespoons tomato paste
- ½ cup raw cashews, soaked in boiling water for 30 minutes and drained
- ½ cup *Almond Breeze*® Original Almondmilk
- ½ cup fresh basil, chopped, plus more for garnish
- 4 cloves garlic, minced

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Prepare a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, combine beef, egg, onion, almond flour, 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Scoop into 1" meatballs and place on baking sheet. Bake 15-20 minutes, until internal temperature reaches 160°F.
3. Meanwhile, in a deep skillet over medium heat, add diced tomatoes and tomato paste. Cook about 5 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, in a small food processor or blender, add soaked cashews and almondmilk, blend until smooth.
5. Stir in basil, garlic and blended cashew mixture to the skillet. Bring to a simmer and cook about 5 minutes. Season with remaining Italian seasoning, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper.
6. Place meatballs in sauce and simmer about 5 minutes.
7. Serve with fresh basil and refrigerate leftovers.

Coffee Cake Cookies

Prep Time: 45 minutes Cook Time: 15 minutes Difficulty: Easy Serves up to: 10

Ingredients

- ¾ cup unsalted butter, softened and divided
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 3 Tablespoons *Almond Breeze*® Unsweetened Original Almondmilk, divided
- 1¼ cups brown sugar, divided
- 1 large egg
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- ¾ cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup powdered sugar

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Line a cookie sheet with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, using an electric hand mixer, beat ½ cup butter, oil, 2 tablespoons almondmilk and 1 cup brown sugar together. Beat until light and fluffy. Add the egg and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Beat until combined.
3. Stir in 2¾ cups flour, 1½ teaspoons cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Stir until just combined.
4. In a small bowl, combine remaining ¼ cup butter, ¼ cup brown sugar, ½ cup flour and ½ teaspoon cinnamon. Stir until crumbly.
5. Use a ¼ cup scoop to drop dough onto prepared cookie sheet. Use the back of the scoop to create an indent in the center of the dough balls. Sprinkle a heaping tablespoon of streusel into each indent.
6. Bake 13-17 minutes, until golden. Allow to cool slightly.
7. Meanwhile, whisk powdered sugar, 1 tablespoon almondmilk and ½ teaspoon vanilla. Drizzle over cookies and serve.



Big Ten “Fan Cans”

To celebrate the tip-off of the *Blue Diamond* and Big Ten College Basketball partnership, *Blue Diamond* held a casting call for fans to show off their love for their favorite Big Ten team. The goal was for fans to express why they were the biggest fans of their team. *Blue Diamond* then created “Fan Cans” of the Big Ten’s three greatest super fans whose names and images were printed on the can lids of their favorite flavor. Their pictures impressed by revealing exactly how these super fans appear at games to cheer for their favorite team. Fan cans are exclusively available on Amazon for a limited time while supplies last. ♦

The super fans and their favorite flavors:

“Dancin’ Jan” — Chile ‘N Lime

“Big Nut” — Spicy Dill Pickle

“Mr. Blue Hands” — Habanero BBQ





Stats on National Almond Day's Smashing Success

This year, the National Almond Day event hosted by *Blue Diamond* at Urban Roots® Brewery & Smokehouse in Sacramento was a hit! Enjoy seeing the excellent support for the event along with fun photographs! ♦

250+ attendees at Urban Roots event in Sacramento

650+ *Blue Diamond* employees supported across all events

3.3M paid media impressions and counting!

50+ organic social posts across Instagram, Facebook, Threads, LinkedIn, and X

10.2M earned media impressions and counting!

8.2k samples were distributed across all events

20k Amazon redemptions leading to about \$200k in sales. Generally, it takes about three weeks to accomplish the sales of this magnitude that were achieved in just three days with this promotion!





Almond Breeze® Named “Most Admired Brand of 2025” by BrandAge Magazine for Third Consecutive Year

The Thai alternative milk market is rapidly expanding as consumers grow more nutritionally focused and seek products that cater to their specific needs. According to Nielsen Ratings, the leading authority on consumer media habits, the Thai alternative milk market has grown by 37% in 2024 compared to 2023 and is currently valued at over 1.9 billion Baht. In the next two years, it is expected to exceed 3 billion Baht. This reflects a shift in consumer behavior, as many are choosing plant-based milk over traditional dairy milk.

Almond Breeze® launched in Thailand in 2017 and has firmly established itself as a leader in the almondmilk segment. *Almond Breeze*® has successfully maintained consumer trust and preference, as evidenced by its ranking as BrandAge 2025, Thailand’s Most Admired Brand, securing **the number one spot for three consecutive years.**

Despite economic fluctuations affecting consumer purchasing power, *Almond Breeze*® has remained strong. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many businesses faced setbacks, the alternative milk market experienced significant growth. This trend highlights that health-oriented products remain a top priority for consumers, even during economic downturns.

“We spoke with customers and analyzed revenue trends, finding that while other businesses struggled during COVID-19, the alternative milk market grew. This demonstrates that health remains a top concern for consumers, and they are willing to spend on healthier options,” explained Suriya Moonsri, sales director for Thailand at Heritage Group.

Looking ahead, *Almond Breeze*® aims to strengthen its leadership in the almondmilk market while expanding its customer base. The focus is to enhance customer experience and increase consumer awareness of almondmilk’s versatility. And while *Almond Breeze*® works to maintain existing customer loyalty, reaching new customers is just as vital.


Moonsri concluded, “*Almond Breeze*® is not just a drink; it is an integral part of daily life. We are committed to maintaining our market leadership in Thailand and growing the brand sustainably. Our goal is to remain the top-of-mind brand that consumers always think of when choosing almondmilk.” ◆

“*Almond Breeze*® is not just a drink; it is an integral part of daily life.”

— Suriya Moonsri, sales director for Thailand at Heritage Group




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you know how
to land the
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Implementing a Digital First Approach

In my last column, I talked about the idea of taking a “Digital First” approach to managing our member-grower facing business. Let’s take a closer look at what that means and thoroughly explain the first initiative as part of that project, which is the Direct Deposit Drive.

In January, Matt Piersol, sr. director of corporate planning and I presented our plan to accelerate direct deposit adoption to our Grower Liaison Committee. We put forth the goal to obtain at least 90% participation in direct deposit adoption by the start of the 2026 harvest. To say the least, the support from the GLC members and board of directors present at the meeting was overwhelming. Not only was it confirmation that we are moving in the right direction, but we also received many great ideas to accelerate the process.

The Case for Change

You will often hear the term ACH which stands for Automated Clearing House, which is the universal payment system established in 1974 that transmits the money directly from bank to bank for distribution into your personal bank account. ACH is administered by the U.S. Federal Reserve or The Clearing House Payments Company, a private business owned by 24 of the world’s largest commercial banks. According to Forbes, in 2021, the ACH network processed 29.1 billion payments worth over 72.6 trillion dollars. So, I think we can all be assured that this is the most efficient process to receive payment.

As a member-grower, the biggest benefit for you in switching to direct deposit is the speed and safety in which you get paid. Compared to the 3-4 days processing time to print a check, plus the added transit mail delivery window, direct deposits typically post on midnight of the night we make the payment. ACH is



The commercial postage machine in Blue Diamond Office Services is a sophisticated piece of equipment. Photo credit: Ben Goudie

a very reliable means of transmitting funds and we rarely (if ever) encounter errors when making regular payments. On the other hand, it is not only common, but has become a regular occurrence, that we need to cancel checks and reissue them due to loss, theft, or being fraudulently cashed. This puts a resource strain

on Blue Diamond as we must monitor and approve checks that are listed as fraud alerts. According to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, there was an 87% increase in reports of theft from mailboxes between 2019 and 2022, and crimes investigated by the service nearly doubled between 2019 and 2023. We see this all



The high-speed folding machine handles most envelopes; some large envelopes still need hand-folding. Photo credit: Ben Goudie

too often, working with member-growers who have been impacted by theft as we help them get connected via direct deposit to avoid suffering another loss. It proves that hard mail is not the safest option.

The cost of printing and mailing checks is an increasing expense. One internal estimate notes that *Blue Diamond* spends at least \$250,000 per year just to mail checks. This includes postage, equipment maintenance, and supplies. Not included in this estimate, is labor cost and time spent away from other duties which is the largest impact to the Grower Accounting Department. One additional aspect is the maintenance of the sophisticated large-scale printing and mailing equipment that must be serviced regularly, which comes at a significant annual cost. Unfortunately, just recently we had our mailing machine break down while running our recent January progress payment this year. A part was needed that had to be shipped in from out of state, which would have caused a several day delay. Yet, we had to make the payment so that meant all hands on deck. We mustered a large group of staff, eight people in total combined from the Grower Accounting and

Accounts Payable departments, to hand-stuff thousands of envelopes. Amazingly, the team got it done on time and no payments were delayed!

Direct Deposit Statistics

How does *Blue Diamond* compare to other cooperatives and grower marketing organizations? Currently, *Blue Diamond* has only 51% of all payees enrolled in direct deposit. By comparison, other peer cooperatives such as Ocean Spray has a 92% adoption rate, with Land O' Lakes at 95%. Some private marketing companies such as Driscoll's require 100% adoption.

To give you an additional reference point, *Blue Diamond* has been leading the behavior internally as well. Our employees have a 99% participation rate for direct deposit for payroll with 95% receiving paperless paystubs by email. Additionally, 89% of *Blue Diamond's* vendors require electronic payment.



Blue Diamond Accounting Staff: Louis Heinzer, Nandeta Sharma, and Erika Martin are preparing a delivery advance payment to be mailed out. Photo credit: Ben Goudie

Sustainability Expectations

It is common for most major companies to have paperless as a baseline expectation when it comes to sustainability. Most companies have been heading in this direction for the last decade. This reduces CO2 emissions, limits paper consumption and cuts down on end stream waste. Certainly, we want to show our customers we are moving in a positive direction to maximize our favorable sustainability profile and maintain our business opportunities.

Implementation Timeline

The plan to make this happen begins with a “Direct Deposit Drive” starting this spring striving to get as many payees signed up as possible. This spring, we will send a letter and a direct deposit form to all member-growers who still need to sign up.

Over the next year, we will continue to accelerate digital adoption by adding enhancements to our grower portal to make it easier to receive information and updates via the *Blue Diamond Portal*. The vision is for the Portal to become a simple and easy place to make updates and verify account information. We are working on an easier sign-on process, enhanced tech support, and smooth printing of statements and historical digital reports.



The timeline provides ample opportunity for member-growers to switch to direct deposit before a new policy takes effect for harvest 2026.

The next focus is to have the majority of member-growers receive statements and payment documents via email or portal notifications. This spring, we will be notifying member-growers who currently receive both email and paper statements that we will change the default to email only. Additionally, as we move through the "Accelerate Digital Adoption" phase, we will focus on moving most member-growers to email statements. We will enhance *Blue Diamond* Portal notifications and the report generating capability to provide easy access to statements and payment documents.

Can I still receive checks and statements by mail? Yes, you can, however, starting with harvest 2026 we will initiate a new policy requiring a service charge to cover the printing and mailing of checks. This is to honor those who are already on direct deposit and are not costing the Cooperative more to process payments and incur postage fees.

Moving forward, any new payee account set up with *Blue Diamond* (this includes assignees, renters, bankers)

will require a direct deposit application as part of the contract or assignment package.

Setting up direct deposit is easy. Simply request a form from your regional manager or the Membership Office (209) 545-6225. Be sure to have the form submitted at least two weeks prior to a scheduled payment to accommodate processing and confirmation from your bank. It's that easy! Then sit back, and after the next payment, open your online banking app the morning after a payment and you'll see that it is quick and reliable. ◆



Ben Goudie,
Director, Member Relations,
Blue Diamond Growers

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The Nutty Cruiser Visits Growers Rick and Jeanette House

A drawing was held at the Blue Diamond Annual Meeting back in November 2024, for one lucky grower to have the Nutty Cruiser show up at their home, with lunch!

The winners were growers, Rick and Jeanette House. Jeanette shared, “When I got the call that I won, I was shocked and pleasantly surprised because the Nutty Cruiser is so cool. I love it!” So, on a crisp, breezy morning in February, the Nutty Cruiser rolled into the orchard alongside rows of Independence almonds, all sporting various stages of bloom. The family was thrilled as they gathered around to snap some photos, enjoy a delicious barbecue lunch, and even catch some flying almonds that came launching out of the almond cannon (which was the kids’ favorite part, of course)!

In 1976, when Rick was in high school, his parents purchased the land that was originally peach orchards. About three years after purchasing the orchards, the family replaced the peaches with almonds and they have been *Blue Diamond* members ever since. They expressed that they are with *Blue Diamond* for the long haul. “It’s always been a great experience with *Blue Diamond*. They’ve always treated us well,” said Jeanette, who also shared that she and Rick plan to pass along the orchards to their sons, Andrew and Adam.



Rick and Jeanette House

“We’re very optimistic about the future,” said Rick House. “I think we’re getting to a point where they’re [the almonds] starting to pay more and we’ll be pretty good for the years to come. We enjoy farming and are going to remain *Blue Diamond* growers for as long as I’m here. We’re very happy with what’s going on.”

As the fun concluded and the Nutty Cruiser hit the road once again, Jeanette gushed on some of her favorite *Blue Diamond* products: *Almond Breeze*® Unsweetened Original Almondmilk, *Ranch Snack Almonds* and *Wasabi Soy Snack Almonds*. She had a hard time choosing just one. Rick’s favorite *Blue Diamond* product is *Nut Thins*, though the family explained that they enjoy all things *Blue Diamond*. ◆



Rick and Jeanette House and family



Blue Diamond Donates Product to Families During LA Fires

Last month, in the wake of the devastating Los Angeles fires, Blue Diamond donated nearly 9,000 pounds of various Snack Almonds and Nut Thins crackers to support the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs). Families who needed support appeared at the DRCs for federal assistance and they also received some Blue Diamond product. We are grateful for the great team collaboration to make this happen, and for the chance to support those who need it most. ♦

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The Impact of Trade Policies on Almonds

President Donald Trump has taken significant steps to reshape U.S. trade policy through executive orders (EOs) that impose tariffs on key trading partners, including China, Canada, and Mexico. These recent trade actions mark a return to protectionist policies, which have historically led to retaliatory measures against U.S. agricultural exports. Such developments present immense challenges and long-term risks for the almond industry. It is crucial for stakeholders to stay engaged and proactive, applying lessons learned from the last trade war as we navigate these uncertain times.

President Trump’s current trade strategy focuses on using tariffs as a tool to address trade imbalances, secure better terms from trading partners, and bolster domestic manufacturing. In early 2025, the administration implemented significant measures, including 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum, extensive import duties on Chinese goods, and new levies on products from Canada and Mexico. These actions echo similar strategies employed in 2018, which triggered retaliatory tariffs and resulted in substantial losses. A study from UC Davis estimated that between 2018 and 2022, the U.S. almond industry suffered nearly \$880 million in lost exports due to retaliatory tariffs.¹

In response to these economic setbacks, the USDA rolled out the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) to provide financial relief to affected farmers. Although the program offered some assistance, it was far from a comprehensive solution. Many almond growers struggled to access aid due to restrictive eligibility criteria, and the financial assistance provided was insufficient to cover the full extent of the losses. These shortfalls highlighted the urgent need for more robust trade mitigation strategies to safeguard American agriculture from the repercussions of international trade disputes. The Almond Alliance continues to engage actively with policymakers to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

¹ Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics. California Agriculture: A Century of Change. University of California, October 24, 2022. https://s.giannini.ucop.edu/uploads/pub/2022/10/24/v26n1_1.pdf

On March 3, 2025, the Almond Alliance sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), urging them to consider the potential impact of retaliatory tariffs on American agriculture, particularly almonds. In our letter, we also requested a reduction in trade barriers in key markets, where we believe there are opportunities to negotiate favorable terms for our industry, despite the current trade disputes. Additionally, we emphasized the need to simplify the process for relief programs when retaliatory tariffs cannot be avoided.

The impact of the 2018 trade war serves as a stark warning of potential future challenges. Global almond markets are highly competitive, and disruptions to trade relationships can have lasting consequences. The Almond Alliance is applying the lessons we learned from the previous trade war and actively engaging with members of Congress to advocate for trade policies that protect U.S. almond exports and ensure that our farmers do not bear the burden of international trade conflicts. The Almond Alliance remains committed to giving almond growers a voice in these discussions. We will continue collaborating with Congress, the administration, and industry partners to champion fair trade policies that protect market access and promote long-term stability. ♦



Alexi Rodriguez,
President & CEO,
Almond Alliance

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2025 Climate-Smart Grant Update for *Blue Diamond* Member-Growers

What's Next in Light of the Recent Changes to the Grant Program?

While there was some good progress that came from the Climate-Smart Grant program in 2024, it is challenging to see that year three (launched in February 2025) is still uncertain. Several programs, including the Climate-Smart Program, are under review by the new administration to determine the program's future. We were recently made aware the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) ended a crucial contract for the implementation of Whole Orchard Recycling, effectively stopping our ability to process new or existing applications for the recently launched practice. The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funds fall under the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture, Brooke Rollins, who was sworn in on February 13.

With the delays and pending decision, we understand the impact on our growers and **as of March 19, we are still awaiting payment for growers who implemented Climate-Smart Grant practices in 2024.** We have requested clarity from the USDA, as the timing of payments remains under their control. *Blue Diamond* continues to advocate for payment for all practices that were implemented by growers last year.

Blue Diamond growers should have received a letter by mail in March indicating that since a significant amount of time has passed since we learned about our grant's uncertainty we have decided to pause the application intake and processing for all practices until further notice. This is to minimize the costs incurred to them and our cooperative. It was a difficult decision, but we believe it is in the best interest of our growers and *Blue Diamond*. Once we receive direction from the USDA on the status of the grant, we will determine the path forward. **To reiterate, *Blue Diamond* is pausing application intake and processing for all practices, until further notice.**

We greatly appreciate our growers' continued engagement with *Blue Diamond's* stewardship efforts and their patience as we await additional information. *Blue Diamond* will continue to provide updates as necessary. ◆



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Questions?

Daniel Dekeyrel
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THE BEE BOX

The Symbiosis Between Almonds and Honey Bees



Typically, this column addresses issues on bee health and culture, concerning the art and science of beekeeping and how almond growers can support pollinators within and around their lands. I will follow that format this month and will also provide an update on recent issues that may have impacted the 2025 bloom. Additionally, I will also discuss a few questions on the 2026 bloom.

During my tenure at *Blue Diamond*, I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with many of the people who act as resources for our member-growers. One of the most important resources almond growers depend on are the beekeepers who are so critical to the development of our crops each year.

California's almond growers and American beekeepers live in a symbiotic relationship. Simply stated, each one needs the other. While the following points may be well known, some truths should be reiterated:

- The California almond bloom is the single largest pollination event in the world.
- California's almond orchards are the first crop that the bees are brought into after their winter slumber. Almond pollen is among the most nutritious food sources the bees are exposed to during the entire year, providing the nutrition needed to build the colony's strength during bloom. The almond bloom is critical to the success of the colonies for the remainder of the year.
- Beekeepers have been combatting significant issues for several years. Parasites, viruses, the lack of forage across the U.S., and chemicals (not just pesticides) can be detrimental to bees within the hives.
- Pollination costs have increased for California's growers, just as the cost of providing adequate hives with sufficient strength for the bloom has increased for beekeepers.

These truths provide solid grounding for *Blue Diamond's* efforts to assist our member-growers' work in supporting pollinator health, thus promoting the symbiotic relationship.

We have increased our efforts to support the planting of cover crops within our member-growers' orchards. Ideally, every orchard would have flowering plants available no later than the first of February, prior to the arrival of the hives for the upcoming bloom. Having forage available ahead of the bloom provides the nutrition needed within the hives to support new bees that emerge from the brood cells. It also inspires the queen to lay additional eggs that will emerge as adults during the bloom.

Some growers have expressed concern that the alternative forage provided by cover crops during the bloom will distract the bees from the job they were "hired" for: to pollinate the almond flowers. In truth, a flowering cover crop serves to anchor the bees within the orchard and can enhance pollination effectiveness.

Almond flowers release pollen each day as the anthers (the male flower part) dry and burst open. Under good pollination conditions, the bees will have stripped or gathered the pollen released each day by mid-afternoon. Left to their own devices, and given the opportunity, the bees will fly away from the orchard in search of other forage. Having forage available within the orchard eliminates the inclination to wander and can enhance pollination of your crop.

The bees benefit greatly from remaining in your orchards. After your trees have completed their bloom, if cover crop is still blooming, the bees will stay in your orchard. This reduces the opportunity for them to “get in trouble” through exposure to pesticide applications in surrounding crops.

Farming is tough; it never presents us with perfect conditions. Using the flowering species currently available, the best opportunity to have flowers blooming by February requires planting cover crop seed by mid-October, followed by immediate irrigation to promote germination. This works in orchards with full coverage irrigation and most micro-sprinklers. Orchards utilizing drip irrigation do not have this option available and are totally dependent on early rainfall for a successful cover crop. Alternatively, the work to identify flowering species that will bloom prior to the beginning of February continues, but options are limited.

If cover crops are not practical for your orchard, hedgerows may be an acceptable alternative. Flowering “bushes” near the orchard can also provide forage for the bees during the bloom. Hedgerows also have the benefit of being perennials that provide habitat for wild bees and other species year-round. Conservation cover, planting of flowering species on lands adjacent to the almonds, can also play a role in supporting the bees during the bloom, with positive impacts on your bottom line.

Challenges facing American beekeepers and the supply of honey bees in the U.S.

As the 2025 almond bloom began, the American honey bee industry received quite a bit of media coverage. Widespread reports of bee “die-offs” made the headlines as beekeepers across the U.S. prepared their colonies for shipment to California. Beekeepers have reported finding hives with adequate stores of food with no bees, or so few bees that the hives were not sustainable. It has been common for operations to experience losses of 25% to 75%. Some have even reported losses exceeding 80%.

To understand the depth and breadth of the issue, Project *Apis m.* launched a survey of beekeepers across the U.S. The survey collected data from 702 beekeepers covering colony losses, management practices and potential contributing factors. Zac Browning, a fourth-generation beekeeper, and board chairman of Project *Apis m.* reported that “Initial survey results of colony losses suggest that

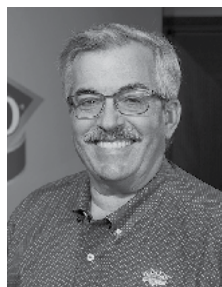
commercial beekeepers may have lost in excess of 60% of their bees.” A summary of the survey data estimated that participants accounted for over 1.835 million colonies, approximately 68% of the nation’s bees.

At this point, there is no clear cause for the devastating losses beekeepers have endured. Recall that no clear factor was ever identified for Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Initial analysis of the survey data indicates that losses from the current issues are greater than those from CCD.

Honey bee researchers with the USDA and several university laboratories have collected samples of bees, wax, food stores within the hives and even the hives themselves. There is much work ahead to analyze the data gathered in the surveys and the materials that have been gathered from impacted apiaries. In addition to the root cause(s), the most significant question is whether beekeepers will be able to rebuild their colonies in time for next winter. This poses the greatest concern for almond growers in the 2026 bloom.

While the *Blue Diamond* field staff only received a few calls from growers reporting a shortage of hives or their inability to secure hives for the recently completed bloom, there have been several reports of weak hives. In my opinion, the greatest limitations on the potential of the 2025 crop are likely to be the result of unfavorable conditions prevalent during the 2024 growing season. This includes impacts of the high temperatures during bud differentiation and reduced crop inputs as growers worked with limited budgets.

It will be several months before we begin to understand the root cause(s) of the current honey bee die-off. In the meantime, I encourage you to take advantage of the programs *Blue Diamond* offers to enhance pollination opportunities within your orchard. ♦



Mel Machado,
Vice President,
Member Relations,
Blue Diamond Growers

THE ALMOND BOARD

Got Carpophilus Beetle? Make it Official with the Ag Commissioner

The carpophilus beetle, a serious pest threatening California's almond industry, is officially documented in only four counties — Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, and Kings. However, according to entomologists and industry experts, its presence is far more widespread, raising concerns about the limitations of official reporting and its impact on securing resources for control and mitigation.

Houston Wilson, a Cooperative Extension specialist in the Department of Entomology at UC Riverside, has been surveying reports and conducting research on the beetle in collaboration with other UC and USDA researchers. "We've identified infested orchards — both almonds and pistachios — from every county within the San Joaquin Valley," Wilson said. "We're also hearing reports of crop damage from the Sacramento Valley (Sacramento through Butte Counties), but we have yet to directly confirm it there due to limited survey efforts."

The Importance of Official Documentation

Despite mounting evidence of the carpophilus beetle's spread, official state records remain limited. Wilson explains that for a find to be considered "official," the county Agricultural Commissioner must collect a sample and submit it to the

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) for verification. The current process means that many beetle infestations, though identified by researchers, remain unofficial.

"While we have unofficial records from our survey efforts, my understanding is that the official records only reflect what has gone through the CDFA process," Wilson said.

For growers, the discrepancy between unofficial and official findings is more than just a technicality — it could also affect the allocation of resources. According to the Almond Alliance, securing state and federal assistance depends on having documented proof of the beetle's widespread presence.

"The widespread documentation of the carpophilus beetle serves as a vital indicator of the extent and severity of the issue," said Almond Alliance president and CEO Alexi Rodriguez. "When more counties report official beetle findings, it underscores the pervasive nature of the problem, highlighting its impact beyond isolated areas."

Challenges in Reporting

Wilson acknowledges that the reporting process can be complicated, but he and his team actively assist growers. "If a grower

contacts me about suspected beetle damage, I usually visit the farm to assess the situation," he said. "If we confirm the presence of the carpophilus beetle in a county that hasn't had an official report, we advise them to contact their Agricultural Commissioner and guide them through the reporting process."

Rodriguez recognizes the difficulties growers face in reporting. "I want to acknowledge that the reporting process is not easy; however, expanding the network of official findings will allow us to advocate for more effective solutions by highlighting the problem's regional and national significance," she said.

Identifying the Carpophilus Beetle

For growers looking to detect the beetle, Wilson advises examining nuts in windrows, where nuts can be easily



The carpophilus beetle, first identified in California orchards in 2023, is believed to be fairly widespread, however official reports of the pest have only been filed in four counties. Photo courtesy of UC ANR



Late this summer, growers and pest control advisors should contact their local agricultural commissioner's office if they find carpophilus beetle damage when they do their windrow sampling.

sampled. "The most apparent sign is a fine, powdery white frass on the nut, which results from beetle larvae tunneling into the kernel," he said. "If you blow that frass away, you might see a circular hole in the shell where the adult beetle chewed through to lay its eggs. Inside, the larvae create distinctive oval-shaped tunnels in the kernel itself."

Wilson is part of a team that, last year, developed a pest identification guide to help growers differentiate carpophilus beetle damage from other pests, such as navel orangeworm or ants.

Securing Support for Growers

To address the growing concern, the Almond Alliance continues to work with officials at both the state and federal levels. "This engagement is expected to lead to more coordinated and robust interventions, mobilizing the necessary support and funding to mitigate the impact of beetle infestations on ecosystems, agriculture, and local economies," Rodriguez said.

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California ♦



Carpophilus beetle damage. Photo credit: Mel Machado



Carpophilus beetle damage on Nonpareil. Photo credit: Mel Machado

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TIME TO CONSIDER

*It is estimated that insects originated 480 million years ago, and I'm sure they are still just as much of a pain today as they were back then. Growers battle insects each year, but the last two years have been extremely difficult thanks to these prehistoric creatures. Almond growers battle the typical culprits like **navel orangeworm**, **mites** and **ants** each year, but here at Blue Diamond, we have noticed a frightening trend in reject data from a particular group of pests. **Leaffooted bug** and **stink bugs** have become a devastating pest throughout the California almond growing region and this article will focus on how to identify, target, and manage these pests. Lastly, I'll dive into the **carpophilus beetle** and what we know about this pest so far.*

Leaffooted bugs and stink bugs come from the same family of insects, called Hemiptera, which is just the scientific way of saying they are a piercing/sucking insect. Both pests cause damage when they feed on maturing almonds with their needle-like mouth part, called the proboscis. They insert the mouth part into the nut and that damage can lead to the nut aborting, or if feeding is done later in the season, it may not abort but will leave a reject known as **brown spot**. How can you tell the difference between the pests? Leaffooted bug (*Figure 1*) is easy to identify since it has a small appendage on its hind leg that looks like...you guessed it, a leaf! There are three different species of leaffooted bug, but they all look relatively similar. Stink bugs

are another story. We have quite a few native stink bugs in California and not all cause damage. I am only going to talk about the species that cause problems for you as growers. Green stink bugs are a native species to California and look just like they sound (*Figure 2*). The second, possibly more worrisome stink bug, is the invasive **brown marmorated stink bug** also known as **BMSB**. BMSB was first found in California in the mid-2000s and has now been found in more than 16 different counties. BMSB looks similar to a native stink bug but has one very noticeable marker, two white bands on their antennae (*Figure 3*). The damage caused by BMSB and green stink bug is very similar, and both will feed/sting a nut multiple times. BMSB can also be a nuisance for homeowners

where large populations of the pests will try to enter homes in the fall and winter months.

Hopefully you are now confident in what these pests look like, but I am going to burst your bubble a bit. These pests are not easy to find in the field. For one, they camouflage perfectly with the almond trees, so you may walk right past them. Two, they hide really well! When I was working as a Pest Control Advisor, I found leaffooted bug in a grower's field, mostly by luck, but it actively tried to hide from me. If I moved to the left it would move to the right, if I pulled the branch down it would try to move lower under the leaves. They work hard to not be seen. In most situations you'll hear a leaffooted bug flying



Figure 1 courtesy of UC Davis IPM



Figure 2 courtesy of UC Davis IPM

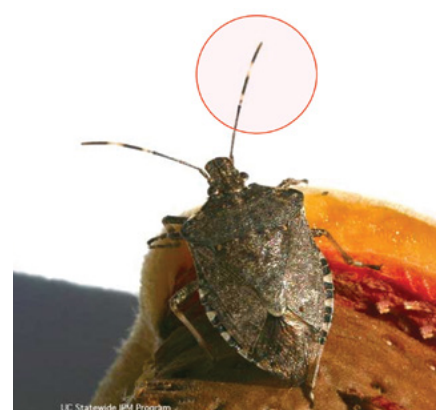


Figure 3 courtesy of UC Davis IPM



Figure 4 courtesy of UC Davis IPM

before you see one. But be prepared; they sound like a Chinook helicopter buzzing by. Since these pests are hard to find in the field the best way to identify a potential problem is probably also the most depressing. You must look for the **damage**. The damage is identified by dropped or aborted nuts—especially in March and April—or nuts with exuding gumming (Figure 4). These insects will continue to feed after the nut has hardened, which will result in the reject known as **brown spot** (Figure 5).

The damage caused by both insects can be severe. You may lose production from aborting nuts, have high reject levels because of brown spot, or even both. Controlling the pests becomes the number one priority. The problem is, as growers, you have lost some of the best tools against these pests. Chlorpyrifos used to be a successful product when battling these bugs, but with new restrictions it has become a relic of the past. This leaves growers with pyrethroids, which can cause secondary pest issues like mites when used multiple times. The hardest part about controlling these pests is the spray material needs to make contact with them. They are notorious for walking on their “toes” and not having much contact with foliage. They also feed from deep inside the nut, so they have little chance of ingesting material. In my opinion, the best way to achieve control starts well before an application. It starts



Figure 5 courtesy of Mel Machado

with finding and removing areas or hosts where these pests can overwinter. Leaf-footed bug will overwinter in fruit trees (pomegranates), evergreens, and wood piles. Stink bugs can overwinter in the orchard, but that is why scouting becomes vital as we enter the season. Once a bug or damage is found there is no waiting period before an application should be made. The longer you wait, the longer they will have to feed. Lastly, choose the correct product and make sure to have a good application. Your PCA can help you with all the things I have listed.

There may be a few of you readers who have not dealt with these pests and are wondering why I am talking about them so much. Here is why: According to our reject data, since 2014, brown spot has increased dramatically and is now the number two cause of rejects, only behind navel orangeworm. In some cases, the damage has been so severe that reject levels have gone over 30% deeming those deliveries as oil stock. These are pests that you need to be aware of, scout for, and control.

The **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. In our reject data, there was a relatively small amount of damage caused by carpophilus, but that does not mean it will not continue to spread or increase. Researchers are still working on strategies for this pest but one thing they all agree on is the need for quality winter sanitation to prevent the overwintering of this pest. We will continue to monitor carpophilus and will update growers if issues arise.

To repeat what I said at the start of this article, insects originated 480 million years ago. That means we will likely be dealing with them for another 480 million years or more. The best thing you can do as growers is to be diligent in scouting for these pests, targeting them at the right time, and using the best control method to prevent them from damaging your crop. ♦



Trent Voss,
Lead Regional
Manager,
Blue Diamond
Member Relations

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FOR SALE

- 2 supercarts, good tires. \$4,500 each.

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Call Arby: (209) 505-0555 or text (209) 602-1400. Turlock area

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Additionally, please contact your regional manager to provide any updates to your acreage, contract information or any other important administrative changes.

Thank you!





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