



almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

MAY-JUNE 2025

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ON THE COVER:

The orchards are inching their way toward harvest. Photo credit: Mel Machado



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Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



As I write the column for this edition, I am at the INC World Nut & Dried Fruit Congress in Spain. As the world's largest nut and dried fruit event, it's a great opportunity to discuss the challenges in our industry and how we can work together to overcome them.

Back in California, summer is almost here, and it's shaping up to be another busy season at *Blue Diamond*! I know many of you are out in the orchards, fertilizing and tending your trees and Mel has been keeping me updated on the plant bug situation. It seems that what used to be an occasional pest has now become an annual challenge. On top of that, abandoned and neglected orchards continue to be a concern, serving as breeding grounds for pests like the navel orangeworm, which can cause significant issues for neighboring, healthy orchards.

One of the recent Masters sessions featured USDA and pest control subject matter experts who shared the latest strategies on addressing plant bug and navel orangeworm infestations. We know it's essential to stay informed, and we are committed to keeping you updated on developments that impact your farming operations and the industry as a whole. The team has coordinated a few of these sessions to share knowledge and resources and I encourage you to be on the lookout for similar opportunities in the future where you can participate.

Trade and economic market shifts are top of mind for many growers, too, as we navigate evolving challenges and opportunities in the agriculture landscape. The second session of the Masters series featured our own vice president of Ingredients, Branded International and Business Development, Laura Gerhard, and chief Government and Public Affairs officer, Alicia Rockwell, where they discussed the implication of tariffs, emerging risks, and

evolving market trends. In April, Alicia spent time on Capitol Hill engaging with policymakers and advocating for *Blue Diamond* to ensure our growers' voices were heard on critical issues.

Many of you have asked about the Partnerships for the Climate-Smart Commodities (PCSC) program, or as you may know it, the Climate-Smart Grant, that supports Whole Orchard Recycling. Under the new administration, this initiative has been restructured into the Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) program. The good news is that we meet all eligibility criteria! More information on this is coming soon.

On the sales front, we continue to expand our reach within the produce aisle and beyond. In collaboration with Oppy, we secured a major placement in all 189 Jewel-Osco stores across Chicago, featuring Lightly Salted and Whole Natural, Oven Roasted Honey, Sea Salt & Black Pepper, Toasted Almonds & Cherries, and Sea Salt Almonds & Blueberries as part of their "Spring Into Fresh" program. We also partnered with Roundy's, a division of Kroger, to showcase our products in 150 stores during May and June, offering promotional pricing to attract new customers.

For those of you who follow college basketball, the March Madness campaign was a real success. The campaign sold the largest quantity of displays to date. It also contributed to a significant overall volume lift and a category share gain.



In product development, we've unveiled a redesigned package for our Barista Blend Almondmilk, crafted with the expertise of our 3,000 grower-members and tailored specifically for coffee professionals. We launched our new packaging at the Specialty Coffee Expo in Houston last month. This new packaging reflects our rich heritage and honors the journey from our orchards to coffee cups nationwide. Learn more about Barista Blend and our presence at the Specialty Coffee Expo on page 22.

With July approaching, I am looking forward to reconnecting with many of you at the District Meetings. Last year, I thoroughly enjoyed getting together with you at venues across the Central Valley. Meeting with all of you is the highlight of what I do, and I value the opportunity to hear your insights and feedback. I look forward to seeing you there once again.

Until then, take care, stay safe, and keep up the great work in the orchards. You're the heart of *Blue Diamond*, and I couldn't be more grateful for your dedication. ♦

Kai

Kai Bockmann
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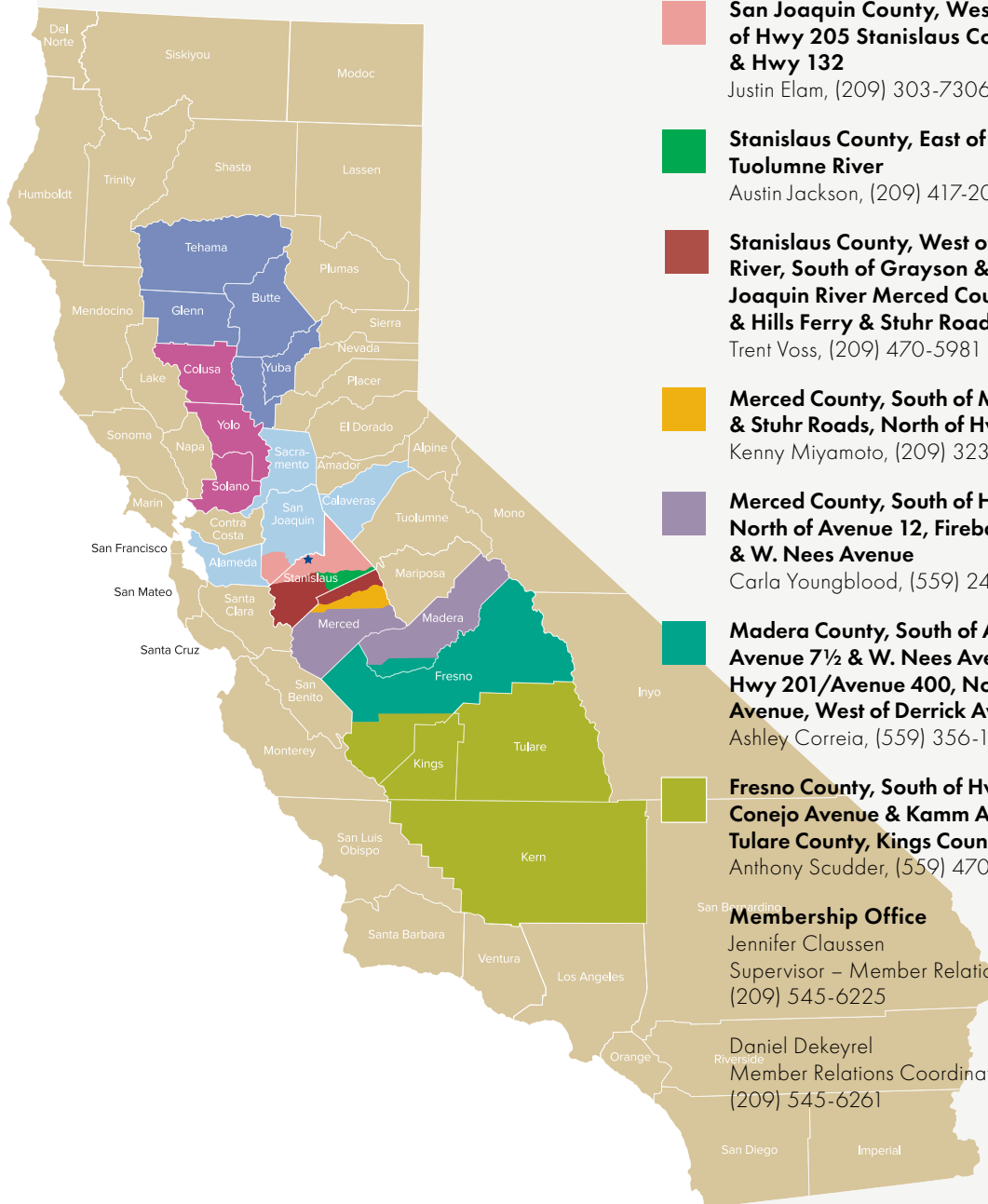
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contact information, please
contact your regional manager.

ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



Blue Diamond Almond Market Update — May 16, 2025

OVERVIEW

April shipments totaled 241.1 million pounds, surpassing market expectations. Export shipments set a new monthly record at 187.8 million pounds, marking a 6% increase year over year, bringing the year-to-date total in line with last year's performance. However, domestic shipments saw an 18% decline, with a downward trend over the past several months impacting total shipments. Year-to-date shipments now stand at just over 2 billion pounds, reflecting a 1.4% decline compared to the same period last year.

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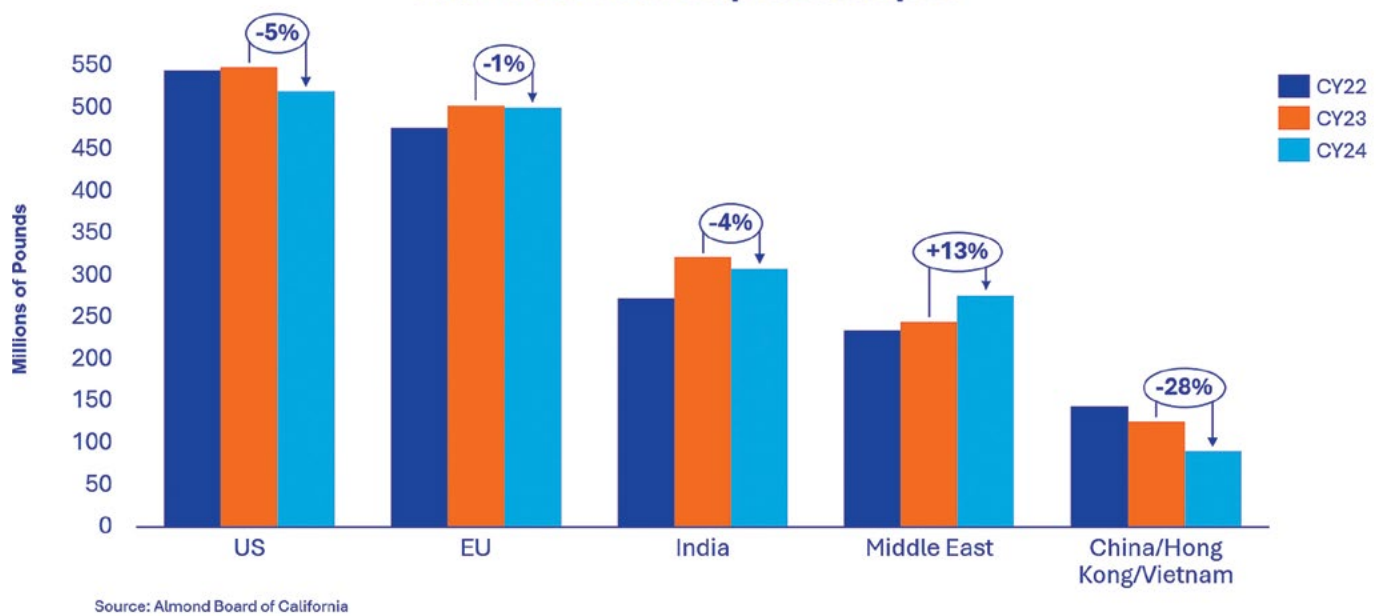
India:

April shipments totaled 45.9 million pounds, marking a 16% increase from the prior month and a 39% increase from the same period last year. The year-to-date gap stands at 4%, with total shipments reaching 307 million pounds, compared to 321.1 million pounds at this time last year. The 1,400+ containers shipped during the month highlight India's efforts to stock up ahead of the upcoming early Diwali. Despite the ongoing geopolitical shifts, India continues to source the majority of its almonds from California. Demand is expected to remain strong through the first half of July, to ensure shipments arrive before Diwali.

China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:

Shipments to the region for the month totaled 9.2 million pounds, reflecting a 25% decrease compared to last year. Year-to-date shipments are trailing by 28%, as tariffs continue to impact new sales in the region. Chinese buyers are increasingly sourcing from Australia, as the tariff impact has made California almonds less competitive. With the recent announcement of a 45% U.S. tariff on shipments to China for a 90-day period, buyers may seek to hedge their positions against a potentially smaller Australian crop. Meanwhile, kernel sales into Vietnam continue to rise, driving a 45% increase in year-over-year shipments through April. Vietnam has become the preferred destination for manufacturing, as shifting geopolitical dynamics continue to alter global trade flows.

Year-Over-Year Shipments April



Europe:

Europe reported a total of 66.5 million pounds in shipments for April, reflecting a 23% increase year over year, bringing the continent's year-to-date total to -1%. Many European buyers have maintained a hand-to-mouth purchasing approach throughout the year, which was particularly evident this month following a slow March. Two key markets, Spain and Germany, have seen declines this year, but this has been offset by growth in the Netherlands and Italy, which have increased by 28% and 10%, respectively. Both countries have now surpassed Germany in the rankings of European almond importers. With coverage for the rest of the year still pending, demand is expected to remain steady.

Middle East:

The Middle East experienced another strong month of shipments, totaling 29.8 million pounds, reflecting an 8% increase compared to April 2024. Year to date, the region is up 13%, maintaining strong demand for California almonds and proving to be a consistent bright spot for the industry this year. Several countries in the region have seen significant growth compared to last year, with Turkey up 24%, Jordan up 39%, and Saudi Arabia up 34%. Although Turkey had a slower month in April, Mersin continues to serve as a major trade hub, along with Dubai. Buyers in the region have secured nearby coverage but will likely seek additional purchases to cover their July-forward needs as we approach the transition period before the new crop.

Domestic:

April shipments totaled 53.3 million pounds, marking a 17.8% decline compared to last year, bringing year-to-date shipments to 518.8 million pounds, a 5.2% decrease from the prior year. New sales for April amounted to just over 51 million pounds, resulting in commitments of 202.5 million pounds, down 16.97% compared to crop year 2023. The domestic market has now seen six consecutive months of decline compared to the previous year, with the last two months showing declines exceeding 17%. While consumer spending and point-of-purchase decisions have moderated, there is potential for stabilization in the coming months.

COMMITMENTS

Total commitments amounted to 581 million pounds; a 5% decrease compared to the previous year. New sales for the month reached 192.5 million pounds, reflecting a 12% decline year over year. Current shipments and commitments now represent 81.6% of total supply, slightly trailing last year's pace with three months remaining in the crop year. The industry is on track to experience a similar tight carryout to last year, with projections of just under 500 million pounds.

CROP

The 2025 Subjective Estimate, released on May 12, forecasts a crop of 2.8 billion pounds, based on 1.39 million bearing acres and an implied yield of 2,010 pounds per acre, slightly below the five-year average. Assuming crop production reaches the high end of industry estimates at 2.8 billion pounds, the industry is still expected to maintain a balanced supply and demand landscape through next year and points to price stabilization as we approach the new crop. The market will wait for further clarification on the crop with Objective Estimate in July. ♦

Market Perspective

Overall, the market outlook for the coming months remains positive, supported by sustained global demand and tight supply as we approach the final months of the crop year. This should help stabilize prices heading into the new crop. While uncertainties remain, particularly regarding potential tariff changes and the outlook for the 2025 crop, robust demand in key export markets such as India and the Middle East is expected to drive growth. It would be wise for buyers to secure coverage sooner rather than later to mitigate the risks of supply shortages and price fluctuations.



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



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Sitting Down with Chief Agricultural Officer, Mel Machado

Blue Diamond icon, Mel Machado, was recently promoted to chief agricultural officer. He joined Almond Facts to discuss his new role, the strategic plan, and his passion and vision for growers and almond farming.

AF: When you started your career at Blue Diamond in the 1990's did you have any idea you'd end up where you are now?

MM: Definitely not! I've often wondered how I ended up here. I grew up in a dairy and my background and interests were in vegetables. I ran the school farming operation and taught plant science and ag business for the night program at Merced College for 13 years. I never thought I'd be teaching either. But the department chair, Ken Huepel, called as I was graduating from Fresno State and asked me to visit with him which led to the position as a part-time instructor where I taught plant science courses. Meanwhile, I was a full-time "Farm Coordinator" overseeing the 250-acre school farm. Ken had a way of challenging you. One day he informed me that I was going to teach a computer applications course. Not having any experience in that area, I was naturally very concerned. But he told me, "You do your best work when you're learning. You've got a year to get it done." He was an amazing mentor, and I owe him a lot. When I eventually decided to get out of education, I was considering public relations in agriculture, which is kind of what I'm doing now! I had turned down three positions at that time for the spot that opened at *Blue Diamond* that I was fortunate enough to get.

AF: Let's talk about your role at *Blue Diamond*. It has changed as you've moved from vice president of Member



Relations for the past four years, to chief ag officer. Could you talk about your primary responsibilities in the role and what growers can expect?

MM: The big change for me is that I'm no longer involved in the day-to-day management of the Member Relations team. It's now in the capable hands of our lead regional managers, Christine Ivory and Trent Voss. Member Relations now reports to Steve Schult, SVP of Global Supply Chain. The move integrates Member Relations deeper into the organization and allows me to be more involved in the strategic initiatives.

One of my roles has been, and will continue to be, an ambassador to the almond industry and to the greater ag community. My internal role deals more with the development and implementation of initiatives as they relate to the strategic plan, and how the function of producing the almonds interacts with how we're advancing the direction of the Cooperative.

AF: Talking about strategic plan, what role have you played in moving the plan forward thus far?

MM: I've been working with Rebecca Bolton on *Blue Diamond's* finance team to update and optimize the premium schedule. As our technology improves, we're working to match the costs of processing the almonds with the values we can earn in the marketplace to incentivize and reward growers for the quality almonds they deliver. Obviously, these values need to consider the costs growers incur in producing the best quality crops.

We're also launching a variety optimization project. Nurseries and the USDA have been launching quite a few new varieties, and more are under development. Growers will often ask, "What do you want me to plant? What does the cooperative want or need?" But this is a complex decision. On the growers' side of the equation, there are interactions between soil, geography, weather, water, and rootstocks. That must all be considered. Some of the options growers have may not be the best choice for the applications *Blue Diamond* needs nor the markets we serve. Some of the attributes we need or favor the most may not be the best choice for growers. Obviously, planting an orchard is a long-term commitment and a serious investment. Current university data places planting an orchard at \$12,000 per acre. Adding the annual

productions, which have increased significantly, can result in 11 to 13 years to break even on the initial investment. We want to be sure that the almonds our growers can produce will bring them the highest possible net return. That ultimately requires strong correlation between what the growers can produce and what the Cooperative can do with that production.

AF: Could you share what it means to be an ambassador for *Blue Diamond* and the almond industry? What does that look like for you moving forward?

MM: There will be components in the legislative, regulatory, and educational environments. While my term as a director on the Almond Board is ending, I'll still be deeply involved in work at the Board committee level. I'm on the Integrated Pest Management Program Advisory Committee for the UC. Then there's industry relations; over the past few years I've been working with the honey bee industry to understand their issues as they relate to the supply of strong colonies for almond growers. I frequently present to Pest Control Advisors and growers on pest management issues and the economic implications to growers. Finally, as ambassador, I will work to enhance *Blue Diamond's* reputation in the local community and with industry partners. I am all about the practical application. That's why I'm here. So, in this case, with the university,

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it's determining how to take that science, that biology, that botany, and turn it into the practical application that growers need to properly implement new practices and refine old ones. It's considering how to take what the experts know and apply it in a practical fashion in the orchard. Nothing else matters to me.

AF: What motivates you most in this role? What's the most rewarding part of being an advocate for almond growers?

MM: Easily, it's the people. Working with growers is the fun part of this job. It's an absolute blast. I've had the good fortune of being around the grower community for a long time. When I was a student at Fresno State I got involved with the Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee of the Farm Bureau, the YF&R. I am literally here today because of my involvement in the YF&R. I chaired the Vegetable Advisory Committee for the California and the American Farm Bureaus for five years. I was a veggie guy, not a tree guy, but I was able to build a good network within the California grower community. *Blue Diamond* member Dan Clendenin was on the liaison committee back in 1992 and told me to apply for a *Blue Diamond* field supervisor position for northern Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. I was fortunate to be selected.

AF: In the tough times growers are facing what are some key actions *Blue Diamond's* leaders are taking to support our members?

MM: We are laser focused on increasing the value of the crop to increase the return to the grower. That's not something you just throw a switch on and add a buck a pound to the value. It requires a lot of work because there are so many external forces involved. The industry is very fragmented. You've got almost 100 handlers, and no one knows how many individual growers are selling their own crops. That means you have quite a few sellers chasing the same number of buyers. It takes a lot of work by a well-tuned organization to fight for every efficiency, every optimal condition you can create to gain an advantage over the competition and then leverage that advantage

to produce results for the grower. That can take years and you're working in an environment that, in many cases, works against you. Tariffs, for example. Non-tariff trade barriers, insect pests, diseases. We're working on all that so we can optimize our operations and maximize that return. It's a lot of work but I'm a firm believer in the fact that you can only coast downhill. If you're not fighting and scraping for it every year, you're coasting, and you can only coast downhill. It's an ongoing fight and you can't sit back and relax.

AF: Where do you see the future of almond farming in the next 5 to 10 years?

MM: It's obvious that Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) will have a role in this. Even today, the agriculture community doesn't fully know what that impact will be and we're ten years away from full implementation. There will be some kind of impact on the entire Central Valley from Tehama to Kern. In the northern San Joaquin Valley, we also have the peak flows issue for the Stanislaus, Merced and Tuolumne rivers which threatens to reduce the amount of water available to irrigation districts sourcing their supplies from those rivers. Water is very controversial in California. I remind growers that any conversation about water in California is a conversation about moving it because it's never in the right spot. Here at *Blue Diamond*, we are nearing the completion of our own water risk analysis project to help us fully understand the risk to our growers and the Cooperative.

Regulatory pressures in California on plant protection materials will not get easier. The Department of Pesticide Regulation's Sustainable Pest Management Project is certain to provide challenges as well.

I understand the uncertainty facing growers. Farmers are resilient and they find a way. What got us here today isn't going to get us where we need to go 25 years down the road. So where do I see the farming of almonds five to 10 years from now? We'll still be here, but it'll be different. Farming is a lifestyle and it's also a business that needs to be managed appropriately.

AF: Could you provide one or two suggestions for almond growers to get more involved with *Blue Diamond*?

MM: Get more involved in agriculture, period. Read a lot and be informed. And read things beyond what interests you. Insects, diseases, varieties, regulatory and legislative issues all need attention. Your best source of information might not be your best friend. In other words, the guy you're leaning on as your source might not have your best interest in mind. Take the time and pay attention, listen, and ask questions. There is no such thing as a dumb question! The most beautiful thing about this network of people that I've developed over the last 48 years is I can pick up a phone and ask questions. I'm still in regular contact with several people from my past who have nothing to do with almonds, but I can call them to ask for news or updates. The best growers know they don't have all the answers and aren't afraid to ask questions. In this business, you can't know all the answers.

AF: What's your greatest wish for the future of *Blue Diamond's* almond growers?

MM: That the value of what they produce continues to be recognized by the consumers and that we can deliver a return to growers that enables them to enjoy their business. I want the consumer to realize the value that our growers and the Cooperative provide: a wholesome, nutritious food that easily fits into their daily diet and provides them with many benefits.

Farming isn't easy. But working together, I know that our member-growers will be able to continue producing the amazing almond. ♦

Power 100: Sacramento's biggest names in food and agriculture



In April, *Blue Diamond's* President and CEO, Kai Bockmann was included in the Sacramento Business Journal's Power 100, a yearly review of the most powerful people in the Sacramento region's business community.

Bockmann's section covers top leaders in food and agriculture. **Congratulations, Kai!**

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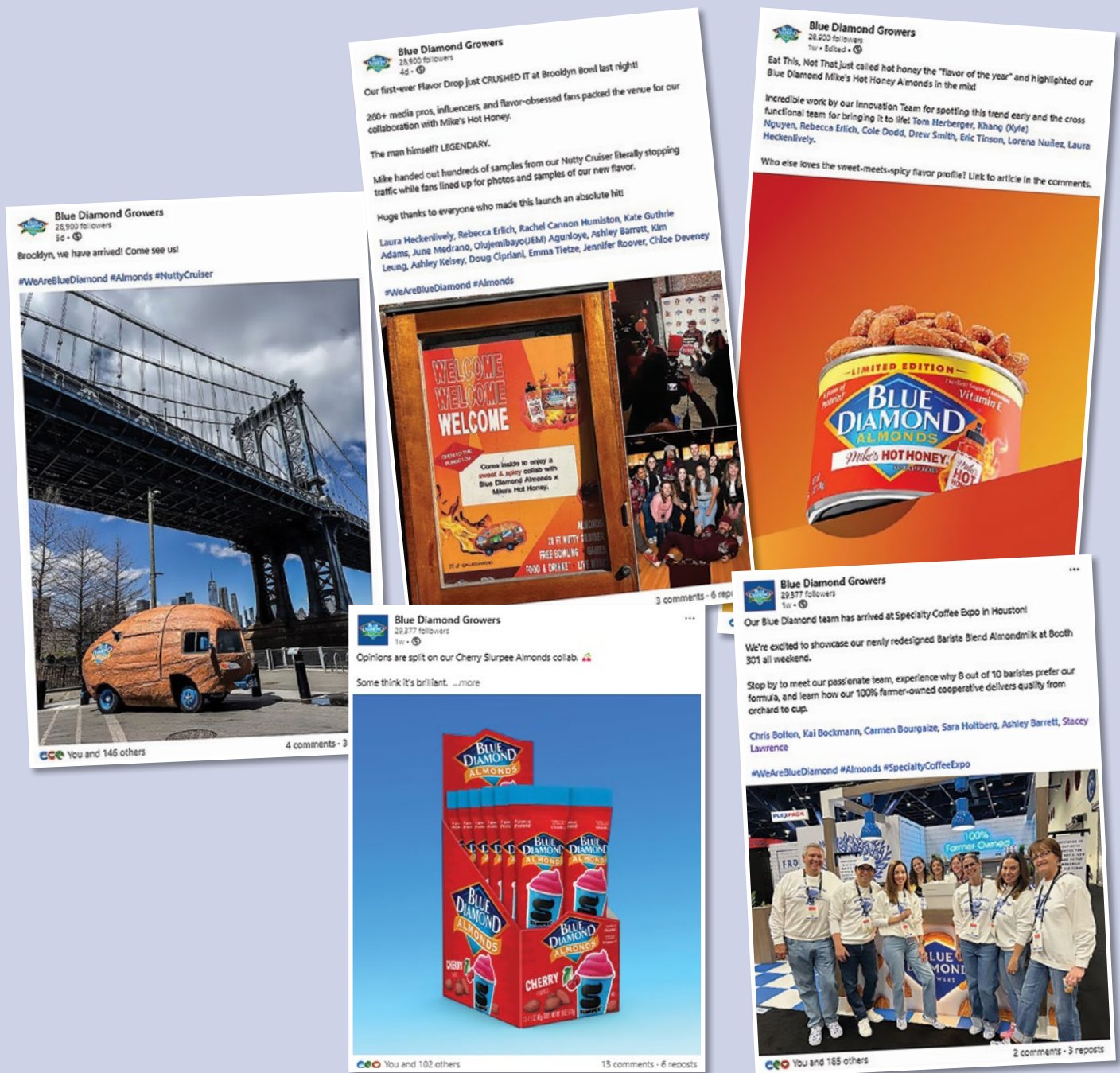
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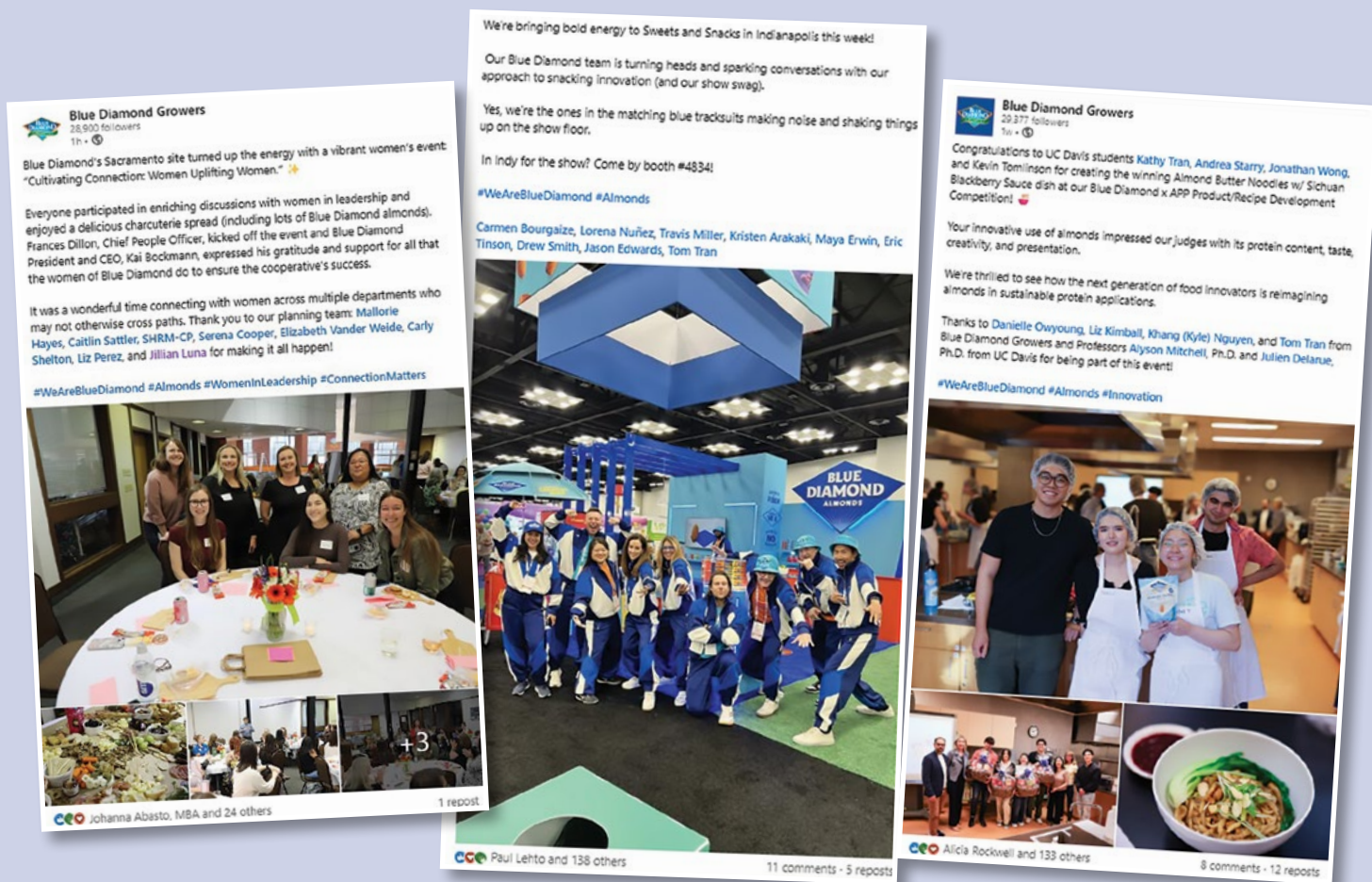
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#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



From trade shows like Specialty Coffee Expo and Sweets & Snack Expo to bold, new flavor launch like Cherry Slurpee at 7-11 and Speedway stores, we've got our foot on the gas pedal at *Blue Diamond*. We also enjoyed "Cultivating Connection: Women Uplifting Women" an internal event for the women of *Blue Diamond* and chased the Nutty Cruiser™ to Brooklyn Bowl for a fun event. UC Davis culinary students participated in a cooking challenge that featured *Blue Diamond* ingredients. And finally, our Mike's Hot Honey flavored almonds were highlighted in "Eat This, Not That" ♦






BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of May 15, 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 May 15, 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 Sausage and Gnocchi Skillet

Prep Time: 5 minutes Cook Time: 15 minutes Difficulty: Easy Serves up to: 4

Ingredients

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 lb. ground Italian sausage | 1 (16 oz.) container shelf stable potato gnocchi |
| 2 Tbsp. olive oil | ½ tsp. Italian seasoning |
| 1 (8 oz.) container white button mushrooms, sliced | ½ tsp. paprika |
| 3 cloves garlic, minced | ½ tsp. salt |
| ½ cup chicken broth | ¼ tsp. pepper |
| ½ cup <i>Almond Breeze</i> ® Original Almondmilk | 1 (5 oz.) container baby spinach |
| 1 Tbsp. cornstarch dissolved in ¼ cup water | ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper |

Directions

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, add sausage. Cook until crumbled, then remove from skillet and set aside.
2. In the same skillet, add oil. Add mushrooms and cook about 3-5 minutes, until lightly browned. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant.
3. Stir in broth, almondmilk and cornstarch slurry. Bring to a boil, then simmer until thickened. Stir in gnocchi, Italian seasoning, paprika, salt, pepper and spinach. Cook until spinach is wilted and gnocchi is tender.
4. Stir sausage into mixture and cook about 5 minutes. Top with crushed red pepper.
5. Serve and refrigerate leftovers.





Pannenkoeken with Mixed Fruit

Prep Time: 10 minutes Bake Time: 20 minutes Difficulty: Easy Serves up to: 6

Ingredients

2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
6 large eggs
1 cup *Almond Breeze*® Original Almondmilk
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 kiwi, peeled and chopped
½ cup strawberries, sliced
½ cup blackberries
½ cup red or green grapes
Maple syrup, to serve

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Place butter in a 12" cast-iron skillet and place in the oven while preheating.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk eggs, almondmilk, flour, sugar and vanilla extract together.
3. Remove skillet from oven and swirl melted butter around to coat pan. Pour in batter and bake 20-25 minutes, until puffed and lightly browned.
4. In a medium bowl, stir kiwi, strawberries, blackberries and grapes together.
5. Serve pannenkoeken with mixed fruit and top with maple syrup. Refrigerate leftovers.

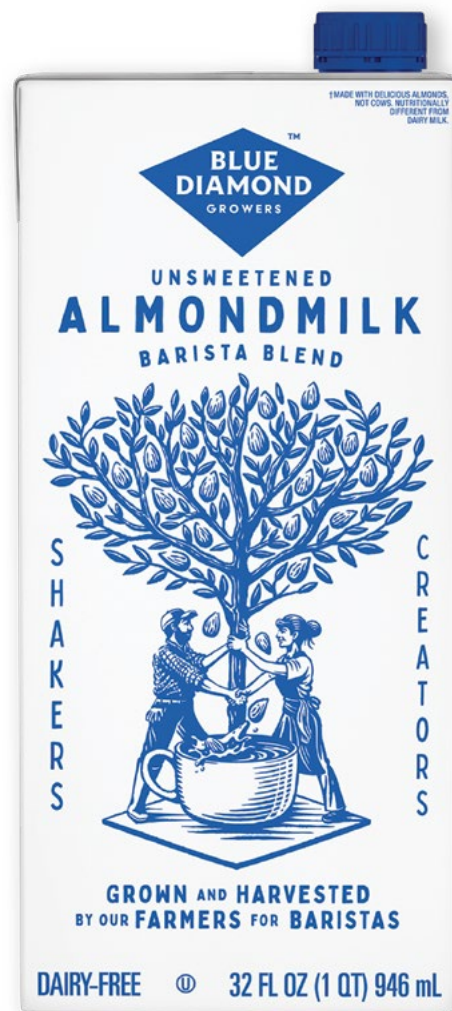
New *Blue Diamond* Barista Blend Almondmilk Packaging Revealed at Specialty Coffee Expo

Blue Diamond has just unveiled its new package redesign for the Barista Blend Almondmilk. This reinforces the brand's legacy in supporting small family-owned almond orchards and coffee shops nationwide. This new branding debuted at the Specialty Coffee Expo in Houston, Texas from April 25-27.

Designed to froth, steam, and blend flawlessly into coffee beverages, *Blue Diamond* Barista Blend is a rich and creamy non-dairy milk that delivers both taste and performance and is available exclusively for foodservice locations, including independent cafes and nationally recognized chains.



New branding showcases the journey from farm to cup for the perfect serve



"*Blue Diamond* Barista Blend's new packaging tells the story of our more than 100-year legacy as passionate almond innovators. The origin of our almonds begins in local California orchards and reaches coffee cafes nationwide for the perfect serve," said Carmen Bourgaize, chief commercial officer at *Blue Diamond*. "We are excited to refresh our packaging to better represent our brand and heritage."

The new packaging comes at a time of rapid growth in the non-dairy category. Plant-based milks are growing twice as fast as dairy milks in foodservice operations, driven by consumer preference and demand.¹ The packaging is a playful acknowledgment of the journey from farm to cup between almond growers and baristas. To tell this story, illustrations in a contrasting blue and white color palette intentionally connect the hands of the almond tree "shakers" with those of the coffee "creators."

To inform the redesign, *Blue Diamond* conducted quantitative research and in-depth sessions with baristas and cafe owners as they used the product. Eight out of 10 baristas preferred the product in both hot and iced drinks versus the almondmilk they use today. Eighty-two percent praised *Blue Diamond's* foam depth and stability and 72% rated the taste as exceptional.² ♦

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1280394/global-plant-based-food-market-value/>

² BDG Proprietary Qualitative and Quantitative Research, Palate Insights, August 2024 and November 2024



Blue Diamond Growers at Specialty Coffee Expo

Blue Diamond Growers debuted the new Barista Blend at the Specialty Coffee Expo in Houston, Texas during show hours from Friday, April 25 to Sunday, April 27. Attendees enjoyed Blue Diamond's Barista Blend Almondmilk in coffee samples and learned about the product and its heritage. Baristas were impressed with the ability to do latte art with Barista Blend with many saying they cannot do latte art with their current almondmilk. They also commented on the color being close to dairy milk and that our Barista Blend had a more neutral flavor versus their current product.





How Convenient! Limited-Edition Cherry Slurpee® Flavored Almonds

Your stop at the convenience store is about to get even sweeter as *Blue Diamond* launches limited-edition snack almond flavor: Cherry Slurpee® Almonds. This tasty flavor is available nationwide in 7-Eleven and Speedway stores from April 30 through June 24 in 1.5-ounce tubes. The Cherry Slurpee® Almond tubes are on promotion: get two 1.5-ounce tubes for \$3. To celebrate the nostalgic flavor, the Nutty Cruiser™ will visit the 7-Eleven headquarters in Irving, Texas on June 11! ♦

Every bite of Cherry Slurpee® Flavored Almonds brings a new experience you'll love. Think summer. Think sweet treats. Think pure goodness. You get all that and more in these tart-tastic snacks with 7 grams of protein.



“Bring Your Flavor Tour” Launches



The Nutty Cruiser™ kicked off the summer “Bring Your Flavor Tour” starting with the Los Angeles County Fair from May 2-4, and it was a hit! *Blue Diamond* plans to distribute one million samples during fiscal year 2025 and we are currently on track to make this happen. Each event will include the Nutty Cruiser™, Guess Your Flavor game, photobooth where guests can choose if they are sweet, spicy, or bold, almond-hole (a twist on corn hole), and samples at the Flavor Bar! ♦

Follow the Nutty Cruiser™ on its national tour here:
bit.ly/nutty-cruiser



Blue Diamond's Energetic Appearance at the Sweets & Snacks Expo

Blue Diamond Almonds stole the show at the Sweets & Snacks Expo with an interactive booth featuring a branded claw machine and a branded Plinko game that regularly drew lines 20+ people deep (a rare achievement at the event)! The Blue Diamond team's coordinated blue tracksuits became the unofficial outfit of the show, while the Nutty Cruiser™ at the main entrance created an unforgettable first impression. With brand ambassadors distributing samples outside and strategic product sampling inside, the comprehensive brand experience helped the team forge valuable connections with key retail buyers throughout this wildly successful event! ♦

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Blue Diamond's Big Shift: Direct Deposit is the Future for Grower Payments

As mentioned in the last issue, in a bold move toward efficiency and security, *Blue Diamond Growers* is ushering in a significant change to its payment processing system. With over \$250,000 spent annually on printing and mailing grower checks and statements, the traditional approach has proven costly and leaves growers' funds susceptible to mail fraud and theft. Beyond financial risks, reliance on paper payments means slower fund delivery—taking days compared to the swift and seamless experience of direct deposit.

Recognizing these challenges, *Blue Diamond* is launching a direct deposit drive to encourage grower participation before mandatory enrollment begins at harvest 2026. The transition, which is overwhelmingly supported by the board of directors, marks a complete policy shift that aims to streamline payments and enhance security for growers.

Progress in Motion

Since initiating the campaign, grower adoption has climbed steadily—from 51% participation in January to over 64% as of the April payment. But there's more work to be done. The goal is 100% participation by harvest 2026, ensuring every grower experiences the benefits of direct deposit.

Don't Delay. Sign Up Today!

Switching to direct deposit isn't just a matter of convenience, it's a crucial step toward a more secure, reliable and efficient payment system. Processing typically takes two weeks, so growers are urged to submit their applications promptly to avoid delays.

Ready to Enroll? Here's How

Member-growers can obtain direct deposit forms from the Grower Portal or by reaching out to their regional manager. The Membership office can also help with processing direct deposit forms at (209) 545-6225.

Change is on the horizon, and *Blue Diamond* is paving the way for a future free from the hassles and lack of security of paper checks. So make the switch to direct deposit today and ensure a smooth transition before harvest 2026.

Pre-Harvest Checklist: Preparing for a Smooth Harvest

To ensure a seamless and efficient process as the harvest season approaches, *Blue Diamond Growers* encourages all member-growers to complete their pre-harvest checklist. Proper preparation helps prevent delays, minimizes errors, and ensures growers receive timely payments. Here's your step-by-step guide to pre-harvest readiness:

May

✓ Portal Access

Sign up for the *Blue Diamond* Portal or log in to confirm your password is active. This ensures you can access essential tools and resources when needed. Make sure you have a designated email updated in our system to receive the latest notifications.

✓ Acreage Updates

Review your current acreage details. Did you pull or plant any new orchards this year? Have you updated any subcontract designations or field names? Make the necessary changes to ensure accurate reporting.

✓ Hulling Verification

Confirm your designated huller for the current crop year. Accuracy here prevents unnecessary processing delays.

June

✓ Assignment Updates

Verify any Irrevocable Assignments from prior years that have ended and establish new ones for the upcoming crop year.

July 15, or Two Weeks Before Harvest

✓ Deferrals

Planning to defer any payments from your 2025 crop? Complete and submit a Crop Deferral form to process your request.

✓ Huller Communication

Determine which lots require a Breakdown Request by checking the designated box on the tag. Additionally, confirm subcontract field names for accuracy.

✓ Harvest Coordination

Educate your crew and custom harvesters on subcontract field names to reduce errors and ensure smooth field operations.

✓ Stockpile Advances

If you anticipate needing a stockpile advance, complete a Stockpile Advance Agreement form ahead of time.

At Harvest

✓ Harvest Timing

Only harvest when the crop is dry and ready—this ensures optimal quality and prevents unnecessary complications.

✓ Inshell Survey

Planning to produce inshell almonds? Conduct a reject damage field survey and ensure damage levels remain below 3.0%.

Have Questions?

For guidance and assistance, reach out to your regional manager. Preparing ahead of time ensures a hassle free harvest and efficient payment processing. Let's make this season the smoothest one yet!

Article contributed by Blue Diamond Growers. ♦

ARE YOU SIGNED UP ON THE BLUE DIAMOND PORTAL?

The Portal Features:

- Access to complete grower account information
- Full financial history
- Full delivery and grading history
- Run pre-set reports
- Email or export information to Excel or as a .pdf
- Access to real-time delivery and grades
- Viewable on any device

Where Do I Sign Up?

Sign up via your regional manager or through the Member Relations Department.

**For questions or support, call Daniel Dekeyrel
(209) 545-6261**



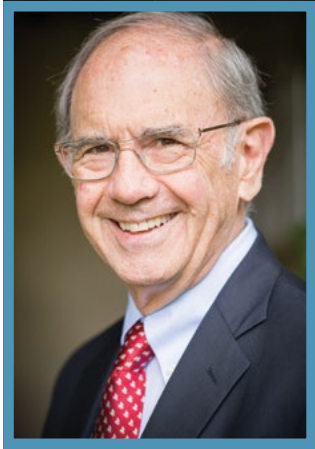


Photo credit: Paul Wilkinson Photography

A Conversation with John Monroe

Reflecting on Nine Years of Service on the *Blue Diamond* Board of Directors

Almond Facts (AF):

John, thank you for taking the time to speak with Almond Facts. As your term on the *Blue Diamond* Board concludes, we'd like our growers to understand what it takes to serve on the board of directors.

But first, please tell us a bit about your farming operation and how you became a *Blue Diamond* member.

John Monroe (JM): Our farm is based in Arbuckle, where we grow a few blocks of almonds. We planted our first block in 1998, but our ag journey started earlier with my father-in-law, Bill Warne. After retiring as California's director of Water Resources in 1966, Bill returned to agriculture, bought land in Arbuckle, and partnered with local grower Bob Henderson to plant walnuts.

We joined *Blue Diamond* in 1982, planting our first almond block in what we thought was an innovative layout. Turns out we had the wrong varieties planted too densely, but thankfully, it was a small block. We learned a lot and have been improving ever since. Today, we're working with the third generation of Hendersons, many of whom are *Blue Diamond* members. Every new planting is a chance to apply what we're learning and try something better.

AF: Were you always interested in being a farmer?

JM: Not at all. I grew up in New Jersey near the Meadowlands, with a view of the New York City skyline from my house. If you'd told me in high school that I'd end up in agriculture, I wouldn't have believed you. But I've had so much fun with the farming adventure.

AF: With a background in electrical engineering, what led you to such a vast career shift?

JM: It started as my father-in-law's retirement project. As he got older, I stepped in to help manage the orchard. After he passed, we decided to continue farming with the Hendersons. We bought 50 acres in the mid-90s, then expanded with 200 acres off I-5. The decision aligned perfectly with my retirement from Hewlett Packard. It was great timing. Farming has been a tough but incredibly rewarding second career. I love the people, the challenges, and the sense of purpose. I'm always happy after a day on the farm.

AF: How has *Blue Diamond* evolved and changed since you joined the board in 2016?

JM: It's grown tremendously. In 2015, the board committed to a strategy focused on delivering consistent, industry-leading grower returns. That required serious investment in food safety, marketing, sales, and production capacity. Today, *Blue Diamond* is a major player in the snack nut category, a leader in plant-based beverages, and a fierce competitor in the ingredients space.

AF: What are you most proud of during your board service?

JM: Hiring Kai Bockmann as CEO in 2022 was the biggest move. It's the most important decision a board can make. Kai brings energy and focus; he challenges us to think bigger and move faster to strengthen grower returns.

I'm also proud that we've delivered industry-leading returns for nine straight years. We're aligned on a clear goal: maximizing value for our growers, now and in the future.

Another highlight is the Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP), which rewards growers for sustainable, high-quality practices. It also gives our sales team an edge with customers who prioritize stewardship.

As chair of the Governance Committee, I led the work to formalize our Governance Guidelines, helping the board operate more effectively.

And I'm especially proud of my role as president of the *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation. Each year, we award 25 scholarships to California students pursuing degrees in agriculture. That work has a lasting impact.

AF: What surprised you most about being on the board?

JM: I was surprised by how unprepared I felt at my first meeting. When Kent Stenderup and I joined in 2016, the rest of the board had served for many years and knew what to expect. That experience pushed us to develop a formal orientation process for new directors, with help from Dan and Jan Mendenhall and later Matt Efird. It's made a big difference as new directors are now ready to contribute from day one.

AF: Is the board aligned on strategy?

JM: Absolutely. What unites us is our commitment to maximizing grower returns. That shared goal drives alignment, even when we bring different perspectives to the table. Coming from a corporate background, I was used to people having conflicting agendas. *Blue Diamond* is different. We may debate how to achieve our goals, but we're always aligned on *what we're trying to do*.

AF: What advice do you have for fellow growers about getting involved?

JM: Get involved! Our Cooperative needs active members. Start with the Grower Liaison Committee. It's a great way to stay informed and make your voice heard. Sign up for the *Blue Diamond* Leadership Program. You'll get to know *Blue Diamond* in depth. Serving on an Almond Board committee is a great way to learn more about the almond industry statewide.

AF: Now that your time on the board is ending, what's next for you?

JM: I'll be serving as president of The Forum Charitable Fund and continuing my work on the board of the Stanford Jazz Workshop, which promotes jazz education. I'm also looking forward to spending more time with family, especially watching the grandkids grow in England, and playing as much trombone as I can!

AF: What's your favorite *Blue Diamond* product?

JM: Whole Natural almonds. I buy 25-pound boxes, roast them myself, and eat a handful every morning with my cereal. If everyone ate as many almonds as my wife Meg and I eat, we'd need a lot more trees! I'm also a fan of Honey Roasted and the new Almonds & More line.

AF: Finally, what would you say to someone considering running for the board?

JM: I'd say, "Yes, but get involved first!" We need directors who know *Blue Diamond*, care about improving grower returns, and are ready to contribute. Board service is a serious time commitment (six meetings a year) and it requires business experience. Director-at-large, Chris O'Leary created a great list of key skills, which you can find in the blue box on page 30.

I'm proud of the work the board has done and if you're thinking about running, reach out to me or any director. We'd love to talk with you. ♦



**Jillian Luna,
Communications
Manager,
Blue Diamond
Growers**

DIRECTOR SKILLS NEEDED ON THE *BLUE DIAMOND* BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1) SALES & COMMERCIAL

- Understand how business in general and particularly, the almond industry, works from a sales and commercial standpoint including knowledge of key customers in the retail (e.g. Walmart) and food service (e.g. Sysco) channels, and knowledge of what products will sell well.
- Understand the role pricing plays in purchase decisions and how products are merchandised on-shelf.

Growers are not required to have actual sales or commercial experience to demonstrate a competence in this area. Growers are consumers who purchase products in retail channels. If you find yourself interested in why certain products sell while others do not, you may have the sales and commercial acumen needed on the board.

2) FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

- Understand the key financial principles of profit margin, cash flow, and EBIT. Some knowledge of accounting is helpful.

Growers utilize financial principles given the nature of their business. If you find yourself particularly interested and focused on how to make your business more profitable, you may have the financial skills needed on the board.

3) PEOPLE & CULTURE

- Understand the value a strong team brings to a business and how to recruit, motivate, and retain key talent.
- Understand how to develop and sustain an effective work environment and culture.

Given the nature of their businesses, growers build teams and attract and retain talent. If this is a strong area for you, or if you are interested in growing in this area, you may have the people and culture skills needed on the board.

4) INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

- Operating in international markets differs from domestic markets. Given the importance of these markets to *Blue Diamond's* strategic plan, these skills and experiences are key.

Growers who have worked and lived in markets outside the United States may have the experiences and international business acumen needed on the board. ♦



Blue Diamond Volunteers Serve Community Garden for Sixth Year

Nearly 30 *Blue Diamond* volunteers across two shifts got their hands dirty to prepare The GreenHouse community garden for another season. The team transformed four old cinderblock planters into beautiful, wooden garden beds and installed an arch for vining plants. And *Blue Diamond's* own Dr. Dan Sonke planted a fantastic monarch butterfly garden habitat with several plant and flower species that foster healthy spaces for the butterflies! Thanks to the amazing facilities team and all the volunteers, the children who participate with The GreenHouse are starting the season off strong!

About The GreenHouse



Our mission is to cultivate a thriving community by nurturing the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical development of our youth and inspiring them to grow to their full potential.



The GreenHouse envisions youth who are:

1. Socially, Emotionally, and Spiritually Thriving.
2. Academically Successful.
3. Physically Healthy.
4. Growing to their Full Potential. ♦

Julian Heron Honored

While in Washington, D.C. for an advocacy trip, *Blue Diamond* board director and PAC committee chair, Matt Efird, board director and PAC committee member, George te Velde, and chief Government and Public Affairs officer, Alicia Rockwell presented long-time *Blue Diamond* D.C. advocate, Julian Heron, with a custom-made belt buckle in honor of his 50 years of service to *Blue Diamond*. Heron began advocating on behalf of *Blue Diamond* more than five decades ago, opening global markets for almonds, creating the Market Access Program (MAP), and securing direct payments for growers during COVID-19. Heron's contributions to the Cooperative were immense and we are so thankful for his dedication. ♦



Great Success at the 2025 *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation Golf Tournament

What started as a cold, rainy morning turned into a beautiful day with cloud-dappled skies at the 2025 *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation Golf Tournament! The tournament hosted 135 golfers who enjoyed breakfast and a day on the course followed by lunch where 30 donated prizes were raffled. All funds raised from this event support the *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation, which awards scholarships to college students who are pursuing a four-year degree in an agriculture-related field. Thank you to all the golfers who participated and to our many *Blue Diamond* volunteers who made it happen! We are pleased to support such a worthy cause that bolsters the future of California agriculture. ♦



Thank you to our tournament sponsors!

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Turning Points: A Shifting Tone in Sacramento Presents Opportunities for Ag

California's policy landscape is shifting. While the state remains deeply progressive, we see a more moderated approach on key issues impacting agriculture and the state as a whole. Even among those elected and appointed officials who have long championed strict regulatory measures, there is a growing recognition that certain policies need to be reevaluated to achieve real, sustainable progress.

This shift presents opportunities. The Newsom Administration continues to support Sites Reservoir and other ag friendly water projects, such as groundwater recharge, signaling an understanding that long-term water security is essential to the state's economic and environmental future.

At the same time, the California Air Resources Board is reassessing some of its most ambitious climate mandates, opening the door for more balanced discussions about the feasibility of regulatory goals.

On an important issue to *Blue Diamond*, Governor Newsom recently pulled back a regulation mandating the recyclability and composability of food packaging to reduce costs. We welcome the recognition of this need to ensure affordability in the regulatory process given industry projections for the cost of this regulation may skyrocket into millions of dollars. The governor and his office acknowledge these challenges and have temporarily pulled back the regulation to make it more affordable. Ag Council remains engaged at every level of the regulatory process on this critical issue.

In the state legislature, we are pleased to see policymakers reexamining the state's permitting process, recognizing that excessive red tape has stalled critical infrastructure projects, including those that benefit agriculture, as well as urban, suburban and rural communities.

A report released in March by the Select Committee on Permitting Reform highlights the need for updating these processes, creating an opportunity for long overdue improvements. The report resulted in a package of housing bills now moving through the state legislature to reduce uncertainty, speed up project timelines, and cut costs by standardizing permitting processes and removing mandates for builders, such as impact studies.

Regarding water, the report identifies water permit reform opportunities, such as eliminating uncertainty in the application process, enhancing interagency coordination and consistency, and developing specific permitting pathways for drought resilience and flood risk reduction projects. We look forward to supporting such efforts to boost water supply infrastructure.

In another turning point, and for the first time in state history on the labor and workforce front, voters defeated an initiative at the ballot box last November to further increase the minimum wage—an effort in which Ag Council and its members played a leadership role during the election.

Governor Newsom's podcast launched earlier this year is another example of a shifting tone as it shows he is willing to engage in complex policy discussions with those who hold different perspectives and political views.

These developments reflect a broader reality: the challenges agriculture has faced for decades—rising costs, regulatory complexity, and infrastructure needs—are gaining more attention from California policymakers. Issues once seen as sector specific are now being recognized as broader community and infrastructure development concerns that impact residents across California.

Ag Council will continue working to ensure agriculture has a strong voice in these discussions. By staying engaged and finding common ground, we can help shape policies that balance the state's diverse priorities.

There is still plenty of work ahead, but a window is opening, bringing a more pragmatic tone to Sacramento, and now is the time to maximize those opportunities.

Please be sure to check out our website at www.agcouncil.org where you can sign up to receive our *In the Know* newsletter or feel free to reach out at (916) 443-4887.



A great group of growers and Blue Diamond employees attending Legislative Day

Blue Diamond Team Members

Elizabeth Vander Weide, Liz Perez, Chris Truxler, Liz Kimball, Mallorie Hayes, Mel Machado, Alicia Rockwell

Growers

Lincoln Denlinger, Christopher Rishwain, Jason Chandler, Ali Arshad, Ashley Dowden, JonnaLee Dunn

Ag Council's Legislative Conference

Ag Council thanks *Blue Diamond Growers* for their active participation during our Legislative Conference on May 6. *Blue Diamond's* growers and staff attended meetings in multiple legislative offices throughout the day to discuss priority issues at the forefront in the state legislature, such as advocating for critical funding for food and ag programs including the Food Production Investment Program and FARMER, as well speaking about legislation affecting water policy. Ag Council appreciates everyone who joined us for this important outreach and the more than 50 attendees who enjoyed the reception. ♦



Alicia Rockwell, chief Government & Public Affairs officer - Blue Diamond Growers with Ag Council's board attendees and their Influential Legislator Award recipient, Senator Angelique Ashby (D-Sacramento).



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

THE BEE BOX

Cover Crops and Honey Bees, a Match Made for Almonds

Blue Diamond will soon be opening the application period for the Blue Diamond Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) Grant, formerly known as the Climate-Smart Grant. This opportunity provides farmers with free cover crop and conservation cover seed plus an additional per acre incentive payment. This program can help Blue Diamond farmers with qualifying for OSIP and receiving increased prices for their almonds for their participation. In addition to these financial incentives, cover crops can enhance soil health and pollinator productivity.

A diverse mixture of plants in a cover crop provides several benefits. While some cover crop seed mixes include only a single plant family for a specific purpose, others incorporate multiple families. Each plant family supports unique soil biology, but overall, cover crop root growth enhances soil biological activity, or soil health.

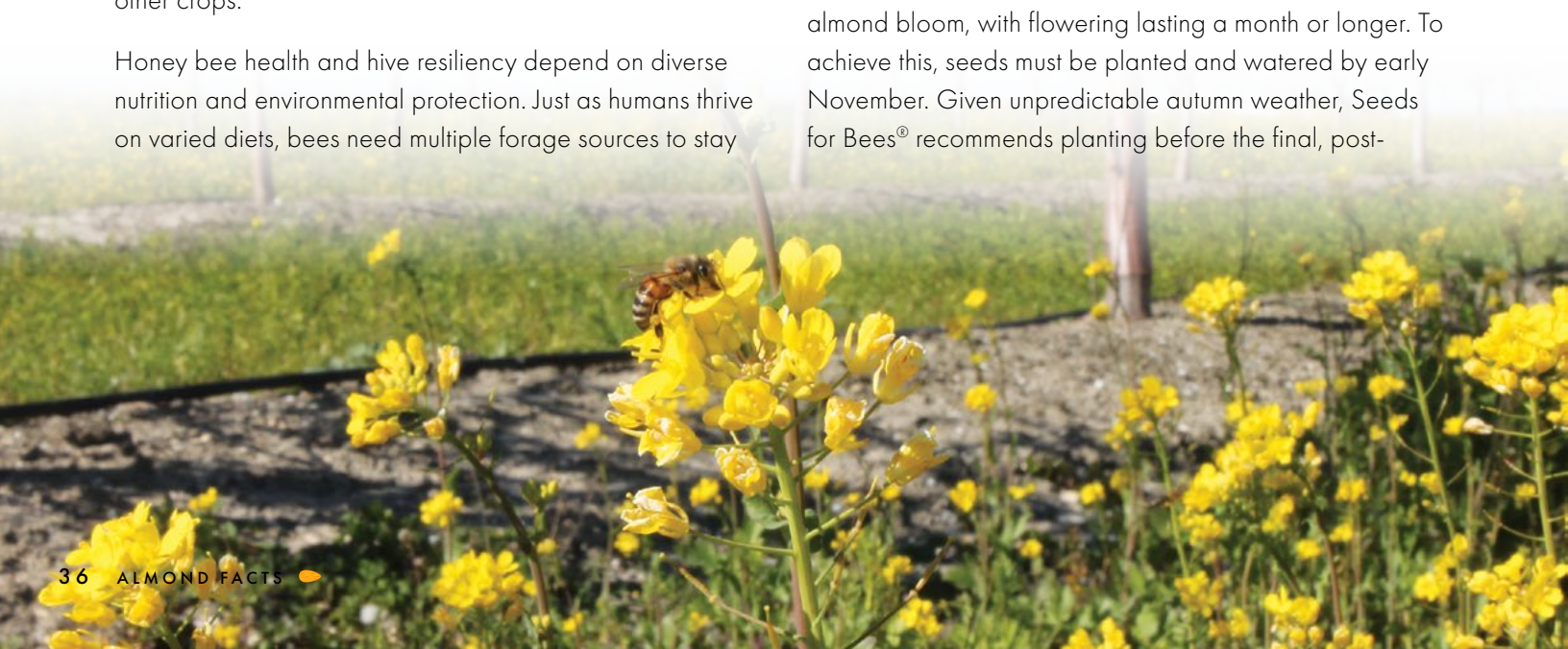
When honey bees arrive in California in late winter, a flowering cover crop in or near the orchard creates a “feedback loop” within the hive, triggering population expansion. As soon as flight conditions improve, bees scout for food sources and communicate their findings back to the colony. Increased pollen intake signals the queen to lay more eggs, increasing foraging and worker bee production. This boost breaks winter dormancy, meaning the colony is more prepared for almond pollination. Continued forage availability in spring further supports hive growth, benefiting both almond pollination and beekeepers as hives move to other crops.

Honey bee health and hive resiliency depend on diverse nutrition and environmental protection. Just as humans thrive on varied diets, bees need multiple forage sources to stay

healthy and productive. Importantly, cover crop flowers don’t divert bees from almond bloom, almond blossoms are more attractive and resource rich, when compared to many other late winter flowers. A varied diet strengthens hive populations, reducing sick or undernourished bees and ensuring more active pollinators for your crop.

By mid-afternoon, once bees have visited all the fresh almond blossoms, and removed all the pollen available that day, they seek alternate pollen and nectar sources until new almond flowers open the following day. A flowering cover crop provides this supplemental forage without compromising almond set. If located within the orchard, cover crops anchor bees nearby, reducing energy spent foraging, extending worker lifespans, and minimizing exposure to external threats.

Early flowering cover crops, like Seeds for Bees® Pollinator Brassica mix, can be timed to bloom before or during almond bloom, with flowering lasting a month or longer. To achieve this, seeds must be planted and watered by early November. Given unpredictable autumn weather, Seeds for Bees® recommends planting before the final, post-



harvest irrigation. Beyond bee nutrition, brassicas improve soil by breaking up compaction with their deep roots. Meanwhile, legumes like vetches, bell beans, and clovers typically start to flower near the end of almond bloom, fixing atmospheric nitrogen and providing forage when other sources are scarce.

Flowering cover crops also support native pollinators, whose presence has been shown to increase honey bee activity and bloom visitation. While native pollinators contribute to almond pollination, competition may enhance honey bee efficiency. In a study by the Almond Board of California, it was theorized that wild pollinators boost honey bee pollination by encouraging bees to cross between cultivars more frequently. This increased movement between rows can improve the efficiency of pollination, which can prove vital in seasons with poor pollination weather. Additionally, boosting native pollinator populations promotes biodiversity as they pollinate wildflowers and other crops after almonds.

Originally collaborating with beekeepers, Project Apis m. identified early flowering cover crop species to supplement forage during almond bloom. Brassicas emerged as a solution, benefiting both bees and almond growers by improving water infiltration and soil organic matter. The challenge was selecting the right plants and managing their growth to align bloom timing with bee and almond pollination needs. Through partnerships with growers and advisors, seed suppliers have developed optimized cover crop mixes and strategies to maximize benefits for bees, soil and farmers.

Programs like *Blue Diamond's* Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) grant, OSIP, and Project Apis m.'s Seeds for Bees® have driven widespread cover crop adoption in almonds over the past decade. As shown by a recent Almond Board of California survey, 20% of almond farmers now consistently plant cover crops. By subsidizing seed costs and offering technical guidance, these initiatives help growers confidently implement cover crops to enhance bee health, soil quality, and crop productivity.

To learn more about cover crops, the Seeds for Bees® program, or *Blue Diamond Growers'* Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) grant, contact Tom Johnson, Seeds for Bees® Grant Manager at Project Apis m. (tom@projectapism.org). ♦



Tom Johnson,
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THE ALMOND BOARD

Almond Board Hosts Influencer Bloom Tour to Strengthen Industry Storytelling

The Almond Board of California (ABC) hosted a strategic bloom tour in late February, designed to deepen understanding of California's almond industry among influential digital content creators. The two-day event brought a select group of social media influencers, registered dietitians and sustainability advocates into almond orchards at peak bloom to learn firsthand about industry practices, environmental stewardship, and the people behind California almonds.

"The purpose of this tour was to connect key communicators with the almond industry in an authentic and educational way," said Natalie Henderson, director of Global Communications at ABC. "These are individuals who have a strong presence in health, wellness and sustainability spaces and are influential in how consumers shape their views and make food choices."

Participants in the tour engaged with multi-generational growers, learned about pollinator health and water efficiency practices, and gained insight into the zero-waste innovations behind almond coproducts. ABC staff, including health and nutrition experts, were also on hand to present the science behind almonds' nutritional value.

"This wasn't just a surface-level tour," said Henderson. "It was designed to give participants a comprehensive look at our industry — from bloom to byproduct — and to address misconceptions directly through transparent dialogue."

According to Henderson, the role of influencers in shaping consumer opinion continues to grow. "The media landscape has shifted significantly. Many consumers now rely on trusted online personalities for information, especially around food and nutrition. These influencers become important third-party validators when they have personal experience with our industry."

The tour generated immediate results. During the event, attendees posted over a dozen organic Instagram stories, reaching an audience of more than 277,000 people and further content is in development. Beyond the digital reach, however, Henderson emphasized the long-term benefits of the program.

The group saw all aspects of the almond industry, including processing, which highlighted the use of hulls and shells





Influencers, nutrition experts and ABC staff toured several Central Valley orchards, humanizing the almond industry for attendees

"Several participants shared that the experience 'humanized' the almond industry for them," she said. "Understanding that these are family farms with deep roots and a commitment to responsible farming made a lasting impression."

The bloom tour also highlighted the Almond Board's integrated approach to marketing and communication. "This initiative combined industry education, public relations and digital marketing in a way that reflects the complexity and values of our sector," said Henderson. "It supports both our brand reputation and our ability to respond proactively to questions about stewardship, nutrition and innovation."

Stops included orchard and handler visits, and presentations from ABC's coproducts team, who discussed advancements in finding new uses for almond hulls and shells. "These hands-on experiences build long-lasting relationships," Henderson noted. "Even after the formal partnership ends, many influencers continue to share almond-related content, ask follow-up questions, and advocate on our behalf. It's an investment in trusted voices who help us tell our story."

As California's almond industry continues to navigate public perception challenges, initiatives like the bloom tour serve as a valuable tool in building transparency and trust. By aligning key communicators with the values and practices of almond growers, ABC is helping to tell the industry's story accurately and effectively across all platforms.

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California. ♦

TIME TO CONSIDER



Terminal webbing by UC Davis IPM

At the time I am drafting this article, the trees are lush and green. The temperature is in the mid 80's and water, fertilizer, and sunlight are supporting tree growth. It makes it hard to focus on the future because everything is perfect at this moment. The problem is that when the weather starts to heat up, it will only take a couple days of triple digit heat for a devastating pest to take over. Mites are pests that are often talked about, are difficult to control, and have lasting impacts on your orchard.

There are many varied species of mites that growers may battle throughout the growing season, but in this article, I am focusing on the twospotted spider mite and the Pacific spider mite. These mite species are responsible for turning your orchard into a Halloween decoration in July and August. But how do you know if you are going to have a mite problem? The best way to know is by monitoring your orchard. Mite populations start small but can quickly explode if conditions are right. High heat, stressed trees, and lack of predators can lead to a flareup of mites in just

a couple days. Those of you who have dealt with mites in the past know that they usually start on a indicator tree or a "hot spot" in the orchard. These spots tend to be stressed individual trees or small stressed pockets found in the orchard that the mites target early on. These trees or areas will give you a starting point to monitor if the population is increasing and spreading, or if it remains localized. **Mites** are one of the pests you want to identify and monitor early, because trying to play catchup after an outbreak is incredibly difficult.



Twospotted spider mite by UC Davis IPM

Now that you are monitoring for mites, how do you decide if you should control them or not? There are miticide treatments that can be made once a mite population has been discovered, but there are two questions that should be asked before an application is made: "What does my predator population look like?" and "Is the mite population increasing?" In the past, many growers made a miticide application early in May and, initially, this provided mite control for the whole season. The problem is that many miticides are harsh on predators like western predatory mite, sixspotted thrips, spider mite destroyer, and minute



Mites at hull split by UC Davis IPM

pirate bugs. This led to late season infestations of mites with nothing to slow them down. That is why you should closely monitor the population of mites. If the population stays put in a few localized trees, the predator population is keeping pace and naturally maintaining the mites. There is always an economic threshold that needs to be kept in mind, and with the rapidity of mite generation multiplication—sometimes as quickly as one week—miticide applications will be necessary. The main things to keep in mind when consulting with your PCA are:

1. What is the correct product to use?
2. How long will it be effective?
3. Can it be mixed with other products in your pest control program?
4. What is the pre-harvest interval?
5. What is the cost?

So, what impact can mites have on your orchard other than making it look like it belongs in a Halloween store? Mites harm the orchard not just during an infestation, but they leave lasting impacts after they are gone. In an orchard with a heavy infestation that includes dense webbing, defoliation of the tree is likely. If the defoliation occurs before hull split, the tree may not have enough energy to complete the development of the nuts. Defoliation during, or just after hull split, can lead to the hull re-adhering itself



Sixspotted thrip by UC Davis IPM



Pacific spider mite by UC Davis IPM

to the shell. Both situations can lead to off grades at harvest time. However, the lasting impact comes the following year. If mites go untreated and defoliate trees, that orchard is going to have less stored carbohydrates going into the next season. In some cases, those orchards may try to push new blooms after harvest because the mites have imposed such havoc on the trees' natural cycle. The reduction in stored carbohydrates can lead to poor bloom, reduction in bloom, and lack of terminal growth.

Although small, mites can swing a big stick when it comes to the health of your orchard. The three main takeaways from this article are to do the following:

1. Monitor mite populations early and focus your attention on population control.
2. Make an application when you know mite predators are no longer controlling the issue.
3. If you are trying to decide if you should control mites or not, and webs are starting to cover your orchard, remember the lasting impacts defoliation can and will have on your orchard. Or, you can look on the bright side and have the haunted house at your orchard for Halloween this year! ♦



Trent Voss,
Lead Regional
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