



JULY-AUGUST 2025

almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT



THE WORLD'S
GREATEST
SNACK



*Blue Diamond's Bold
New Logo and Brand Refresh!*

Looking Ahead
with CEO, Kai

Venus Williams
Sweepstakes

Treating Red Leaf Blotch
in Your Orchard



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ANNUAL MEETING

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Learn red leaf blotch symptoms and treatments on page 40

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In the President's Corner, Kai talks about *Blue Diamond* moving forward with the consolidation of Sacramento operations into Turlock and Salida, while supporting affected employees and welcoming new CFO, Fred Steunou, to drive strategic growth. Amid industry shifts and a surprising almond crop forecast, we are also launching bold marketing efforts to strengthen the brand and deliver value to growers.

16 *Blue Diamond* Logo and Brand Refresh

Blue Diamond is excited to launch a new logo and brand persona that evokes energy and excitement, aiming to capture the attention of more consumers seeking healthier options in their diet.

24 Venus Williams Sweepstakes

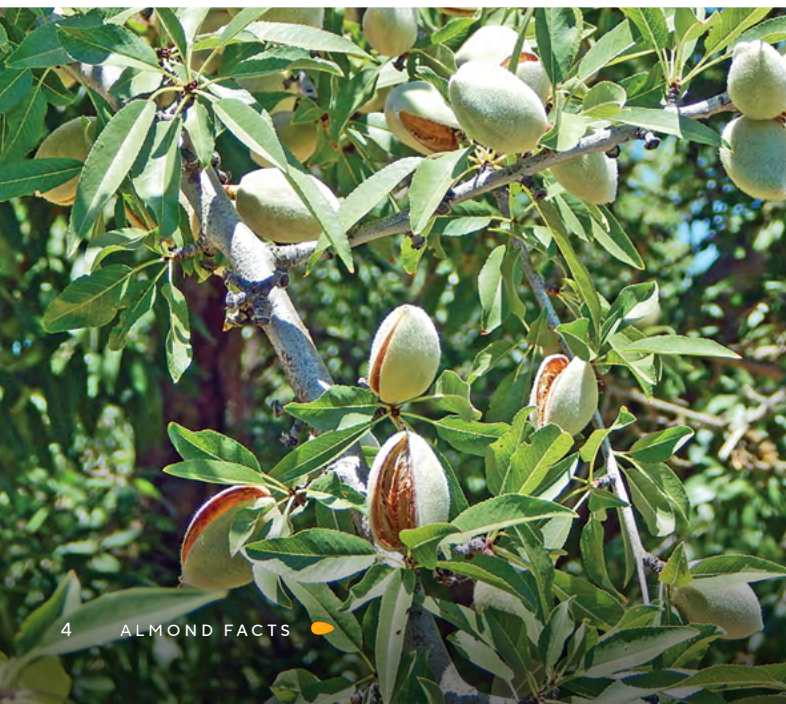
Blue Diamond is teaming up with tennis champion, Venus Williams, for a national sweepstakes full of unforgettable prizes, including a one-on-one tennis lesson with Venus!

40 In-Orchard Red Leaf Blotch Treatments

Red leaf blotch is a disease almond growers should take seriously. It's here for the foreseeable future, so don't wait if you see it in your orchards. Act now!

ON THE COVER:

Blue Diamond launched a vibrant, new logo for the first time in over 20 years!



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

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Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



Now that summer is in full swing and we're all feeling the heat, there is no denying that harvest season will be here before we know it.

Back in June, we announced the decision to close the Sacramento plant and consolidate our operations to Turlock and Salida. Since then, we have made significant progress in advancing our plan, and the team has been at the heart of it all. We are staying aligned with each phase of the plan and the goal is to keep things running efficiently from start to finish, with clear and open communication every step of the way.

I have said this many times to the team here, but I truly admire and respect how everyone, including the Sacramento team members, has been navigating this change. Transitions like this are never easy, but we are supporting every member of our team. We are in it for the long haul and our goal is to make this change as smooth and well executed as possible for everyone involved. At the end of the day, the focus is on pushing forward and ensuring we're in a strong position to close this chapter and double down on what drives value.



While we're on the subject of change, I'm excited to welcome a new member of our leadership team, Fred Steunou, our chief financial officer!

Fred has an impressive track record of driving growth across multiple industries. He joins

us from NatureSweet, the leading snacking tomato brand in the U.S., where he most recently served as CFO, vice president, and board member. At *Blue Diamond*, Fred will lead both the Finance and IT teams. His extensive experience across the Americas, Africa, Europe and Asia will play a key role in driving our strategy forward. Fred is looking forward to making Sacramento his new home, and I am excited to have him on board.

From new leadership to bold partnerships, fresh faces are shaping *Blue Diamond*, and I am sure you will recognize Venus Williams 'serving up' our Snack Almonds. We've partnered with the tennis champion for a national sweepstakes celebrating our premium almond line, now available in the produce aisle. These premium almonds have no added oils or artificial flavors, and the Sea Salt Almonds & Blueberries variety has been a standout! With even more flavors to explore, like Sea Salt & Black Pepper, Oven Roasted Honey, and Whole Natural, there's something for everyone.

It was great to connect with everyone at the District Meetings and hear directly from you all about the many challenges you are facing. The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) released the 2025 California Almond Objective Measurement Report which set the crop at three billion pounds. It's been at the top of everyone's mind, and if you were able to attend the District Meetings, you heard Mel Machado talk about it. The three-billion-pound forecast came as a surprise to many in the





industry, and knowledge of the final crop total is still several months away. We know this is just an estimate for now and, as Mel is quick to remind us, the picture may look very different once harvest concludes. Regardless, our goal at *Blue Diamond* remains to market every single pound of your almonds for the best price possible.

There's plenty happening at *Blue Diamond*, in the orchards, in stores, and throughout our sites. While this is clearly a time of change, we are moving forward with purpose and determination. I'm looking forward to sharing more with you when I see you in person at the next Annual Growers Meeting on November 19. Until then, please take care and remember we're doing this together every step of the way. ♦

Kai

Kai Bockmann
President & CEO

Regional Managers



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Merced County, South of Hwy 140 Madera County, North of Avenue 12, Firebaugh Blvd, Avenue 7½, & W. Nees Avenue
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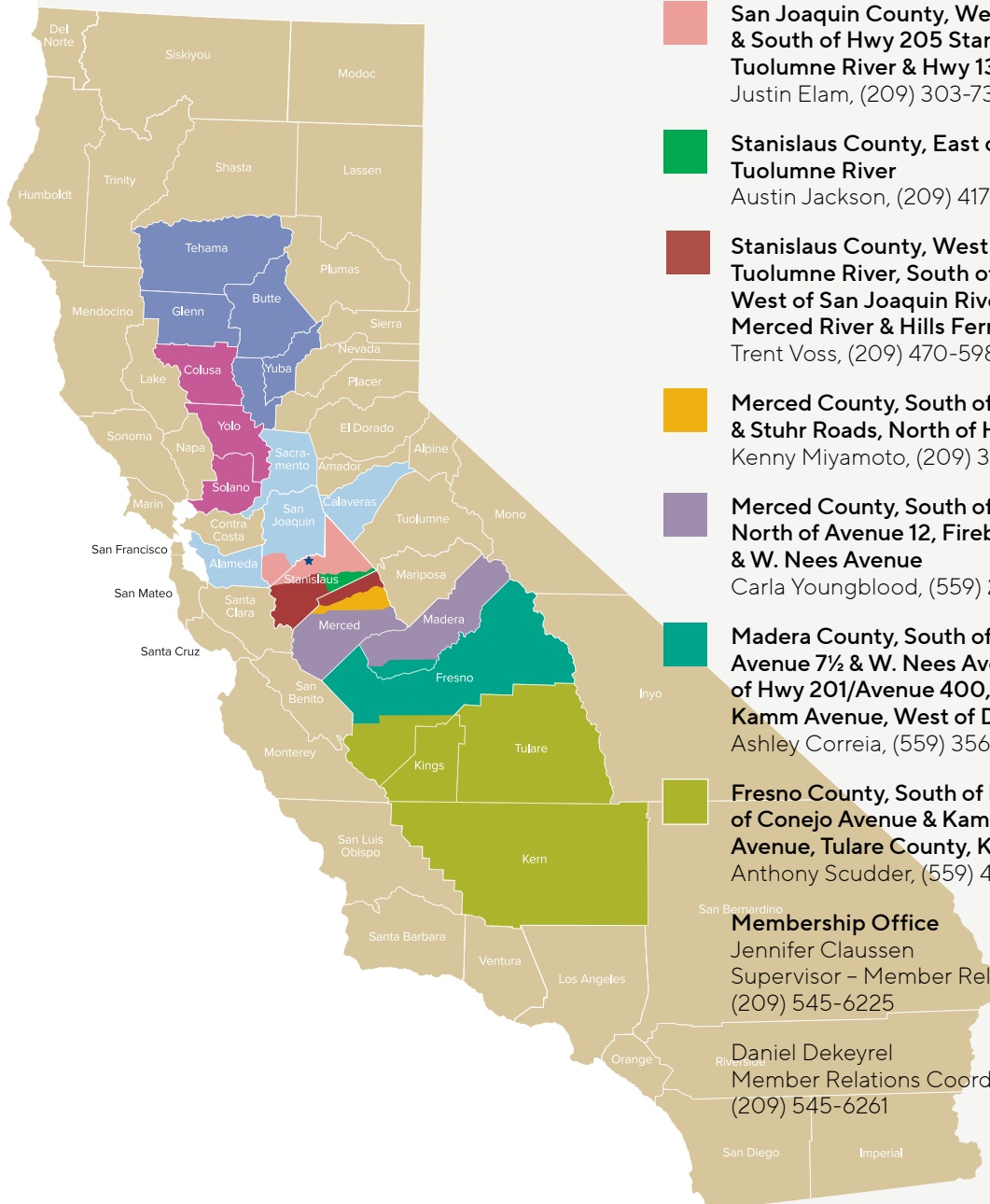
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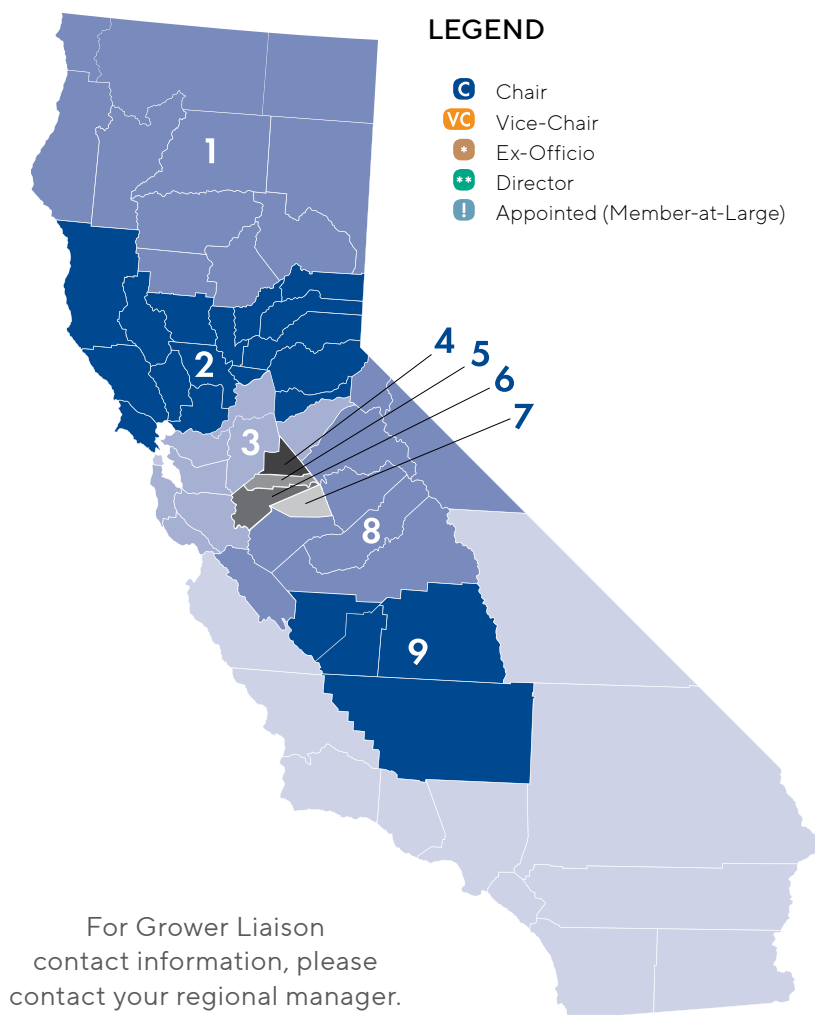
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ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



Blue Diamond Almond Market Update – July 14, 2025

OVERVIEW

June shipments totaled 186.7 million pounds, slightly below industry expectations and down 9% year over year. Exports came in at 135 million pounds, just below last year's level, though the year-to-date pace remains on par. Domestic shipments continued their downward trend, falling 17% for the month, further weighing on total industry movement. Cumulative shipments now stand at 2.449 billion pounds, down 2.5% from the same period last year.

SHIPMENTS

India:

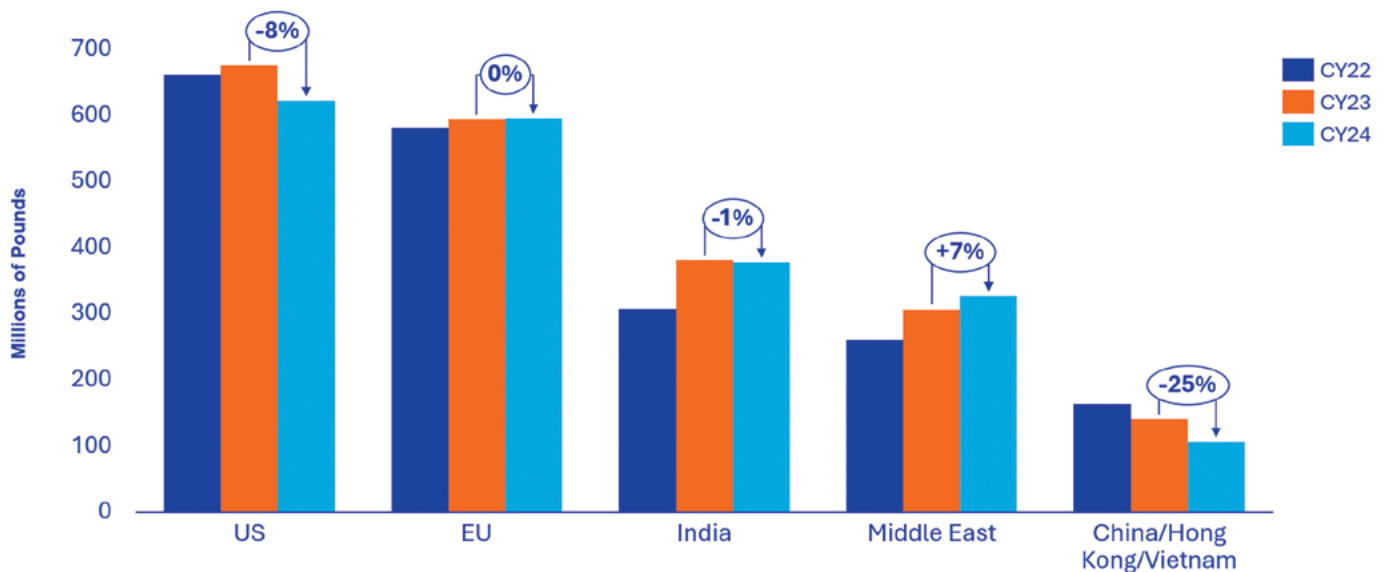
June shipments to India totaled 34.7 million pounds, up 29% year over year. This brings year-to-date exports to 377.2 million pounds, narrowing the shipment gap to just 1% compared to last season. India remained a key demand driver for the industry in June, with buyers pulling forward volume ahead of an early Diwali.

Timely shipments remain essential to meet festival demand. While some coverage is still pending, attention is shifting to the new crop following the Objective Estimate, which signals a larger than expected supply. Despite this, buyer sentiment is cautious, with a strong focus now on harvest execution, sizing, and quality which will shape pricing and forward coverage strategies into year's end.

China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:

Shipments into the China-Hong Kong-Vietnam corridor totaled just under 6.5 million pounds in June, up 17% year over year. Despite the monthly gain, year-to-date volumes remain down 24.5%, highlighting the continued impact of tariffs on California's competitiveness in the region. Among the trio, Vietnam has emerged as the more reliable entry point for U.S. product into Asia. On the mainland, Chinese buyers continue to favor Australian origin, benefiting from

Year-Over-Year Shipments June



Source: Almond Board of California

zero-duty access and competitive freight lanes. However, with Australia’s crop outlook weakening, some buyers are starting to reassess forward coverage. This may lead to demand returning to U.S. origin, particularly for spec-specific or gap-fill volumes, contingent on favorable price movements. For now, the market remains in a holding pattern.

Europe:

June shipments to Europe reached 44.4 million pounds, a modest 2% increase versus last year. Despite a sluggish start to the season, cumulative shipments are now tracking flat year over year. Intra-regional dynamics have shifted, with Spain retaining its top position despite an 11% year-to-date decline. With the Objective Estimate now released and indicating a potentially larger crop, buyers are expected to begin evaluating new crop positions. However, the pending decision on EU tariff enforcement, now postponed until August, is likely to curb near-term purchasing activity as market participants adopt a cautious stance.

Middle East:

Shipments to the Middle East fell sharply in June, totaling 19.4 million pounds—a decline of over 30% year over year. This pullback reflects the impact of regional instability and geopolitical tensions, which have disrupted near-term demand. Despite the weak June performance, year-to-date shipments are up 7%, bolstered by strong performance in Jordan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Looking ahead, with Ramadan expected to fall early in 2026, forward demand is anticipated to accelerate as buyers seek to secure early shipments from the 2025 crop to ensure sufficient coverage.

Domestic:

June domestic shipments totaled 51.4 million pounds, a 17.2% decline from the same month last year. This brings year-to-date domestic shipments to 621 million pounds, down 8% from the prior year. In crop year 2023, USDA support contributed approximately 20 million pounds to the market, the majority of which shipped by the end of June. While this assistance offered short-term relief, underlying domestic demand remains soft, challenged by broader economic conditions and shifting consumer purchasing behavior. Going forward, it will be critical to reaffirm the value and versatility of almonds across all product categories to support consumer engagement and drive demand.

COMMITMENTS

Total commitments reached 312 million pounds, showing a 10% decline compared to the previous year. New sales for the month were 96.6 million pounds, representing a 5% year-over-year increase. Current shipments and commitments now account for 87.4% of total supply, slightly below last year's pace of 89.4%.

New crop sales are reported at 111.5 million pounds, down sharply from 271 million pounds at this time last year. Ongoing uncertainty around tariffs and crop size continues to be a limiting factor in forward bookings.

CROP

The 2025 California Almond Objective Measurement Report by USDA NASS forecasts the crop at 3.0 billion pounds, up from the 2.8-billion-pound Subjective Estimate and the 2.7 billion-pound 2024 crop. This projection is based on 1.39 million bearing acres and a yield of 2,160 pounds per acre. However, many in the industry view this forecast as potentially overestimated, citing recent declines in new plantings and ongoing pressure on grower profitability. These challenges have led to reduced inputs that have impaired the productivity of a significant number of orchards and even the abandonment of some, potentially creating a gap between reported acreage and actual, harvestable land.

The projected yield also exceeds the 10- and 15- year weighted averages. As harvest progresses, industry focus will remain on receipts and realized yields to assess whether actual production aligns with or diverges from the forecast. ◆

Market Perspective

Heading into the report, the supply and demand balance appeared relatively stable. However, softer late-season shipments suggest a slightly higher carryout in the mid-500 million-pound range, translating to a manageable 19% carryout-to-shipments ratio.

While many looked to the Objective Report for clearer direction, its release has instead introduced greater uncertainty, with widespread belief that the forecast is overestimated. Market discovery in the coming weeks may prove difficult, particularly with added complexity from the extended tariff review under President Trump's trade policy. As a result, hand-to-mouth buying is expected to continue as the industry closely monitors receipts and actual production against forecasted levels.



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



Blue Diamond Growers' Turlock Site Recertified through Green Business Network

The *Blue Diamond Growers'* plant in Turlock, California has received its recertification as a Green Business by the Modesto Chamber of Commerce's California Green Business Network, Stanislaus County program. Not only was the Turlock plant the first business in Stanislaus County to achieve this esteemed certification (in 2021), but they were also the first to earn recertification.

In 2021, both the *Blue Diamond Growers'* Turlock and Salida facilities received Green Business Certification. The honor of a Green Business Certification goes to companies that achieve a rigorous and verified set of standards focused on reducing water use, conserving energy, preventing pollution, increasing recycling,

avoiding waste, encouraging alternative transportation, and partnering with other local vendors. At the Turlock site, no product goes to waste. All byproducts and oil stock produced are reused for either flour material at the Salida facility or animal feed.

"Blue Diamond Growers has an ongoing commitment to Grow with Care in our almond orchards and our facilities," said Dr. Dan Sonke, Head of Sustainability for *Blue Diamond Growers*. *"We are proud of the Turlock team's efforts and the recognition through this recertification. Their commitment to good stewardship reflects that commitment to our land and our neighbors."*



Celebrating at the recertification ceremony

The Green Business Certified recognition was awarded at a ceremony on June 30, organized by the Modesto Chamber of Commerce at the Turlock facility. The ceremony was attended by *Blue Diamond* leadership, as well as Ethan Hunt, who attended on behalf of Congressman Tom McClintock - 5th Congressional District of California, Joey Chavez, who attended on behalf of State Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil – California’s 4th State Senate District, and Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors: Vito Chiesa, District 2, field representative Noelia Lopez – on behalf of Channce Condit, District 5. Turlock mayor, Amy Bublak, was also present to offer congratulations.

“We appreciate the support and recognition from our community partners as we strive for continuous improvement in our operations. From partnerships with the growers in the field, to best practices at our manufacturing sites, we strive to be good stewards of the earth and of the almonds we deliver to the world,” said Jeff Hatfield, SVP Manufacturing for *Blue Diamond Growers*.

The 250,000-square-foot plant located at 1300 N. Washington Road in Turlock celebrated its 12th anniversary in June and is currently under the leadership of site director, Travis Hill. The state-of-the-art Turlock plant specializes in processing almonds (blanching, roasting, slicing, dicing, slivering, etc.) to be used by major global food customers in cereals, snack bars, yogurt toppings, baked goods and candies. The Turlock location also prepares the beverage base for *Blue Diamond Growers’ Almond Breeze®* Almondmilk and produces *Blue Diamond Growers’ Almond Flour* and other value-added almond products.

In addition to the stewardship efforts at the *Blue Diamond Growers’* manufacturing facilities, the co-op emphasizes on-farm stewardship practices, including pollinator protection, soil health, biodiversity, and water conservation. *Blue Diamond’s* farmers actively participate in the California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP), led by the Almond Board of California, to collect grower-submitted production practice information. CASP helps growers find ways to improve the stewardship of their farming operations. ♦

Joey Chavez (from State Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil’s office) with Charles Davenport, Blue Diamond Environmental Health & Safety manager



Celebrating at the recertification ceremony



Blue Diamond Introduces Bold New Look with First Rebrand in Over 20 Years



Blue Diamond is excited to launch a new logo and brand persona that evokes energy and excitement, aiming to capture the

attention of more consumers seeking healthier options in their diet. This new visual identity features a refreshed logo, bold color palette and updated brand elements that highlight almonds as the champion superfood.

After rounds of research with more than 7,000 consumers, *Blue Diamond* worked with globally recognized design agency Turner Duckworth, to create a refreshed brand world that leans into crisp lines, bold colors and fonts, while also offering a clear nod to its heritage by maintaining the unmistakable *Blue Diamond* shape.

Since 1910, *Blue Diamond* has grown to be the almond's biggest champion, amassing a co-op of nearly 3,000 growers in California, and yet the brand look has not changed since 2004. The new look will gather the attention of modern shoppers and stand out on packaging, in-store signage, digital platforms and more.

"We believe that *Blue Diamond* Almonds are the G.O.A.T of snacks, and our *Almond Breeze*® is the obvious choice in non-dairy beverages. Almonds allow you to show up and be mighty in your life, fueled by protein, fiber and flavor. This refresh connects this almond identity to the brand identity, breathing color, energy, and excitement into the brand" said Maya Erwin, vice president of Marketing and Innovation at *Blue Diamond*. "This is a refresh, not a revolution. That means we're staying true to our roots, keeping our identity that people know and trust, but with a bold edge that shows the way people enjoy our amazing products every day."

The rollout will begin with Snack Almond products and will be phased across product lines starting this fall — eventually including Nut-Thins® and *Almond Breeze*® products.

THE G.O.A.T OF SNACKS



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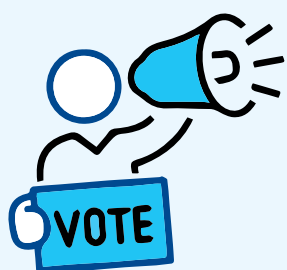
**FIBER
CHAMP**



Blue Diamond Growers Annual Meeting Voting

What is a Proxy & Why is a Quorum Needed at Annual Meeting?

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

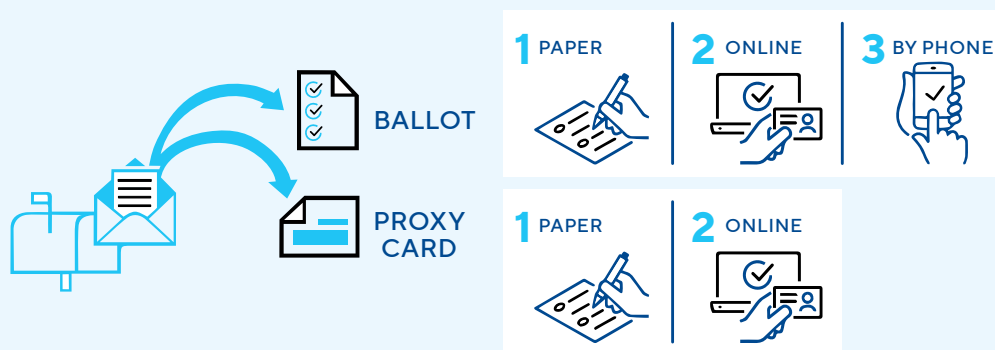


Annual General Election

It is time for the *Blue Diamond* annual general elections. This is a great opportunity for you to exercise one of your fundamental rights as a voting member to shape the future of your *Blue Diamond Growers* cooperative: electing members of the Board of Directors and Grower Liaison Committees. This year, you can vote for District Directors in districts 2, 8 and 9. You also have the chance to vote for Grower Liaisons in each of the nine districts. Ballots will be mailed the week of October 6 to voting members with Crop Agency Agreements. Voting will close on November 10, 2025. Only ballots received by this date will be counted. Your vote matters! Be sure to submit your ballot in plenty of time so your vote is received before this deadline.

How to Vote

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



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

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

Make Sure You Are Represented — Return the Proxy Card!

Not sure if you can attend the annual meeting? You may assign your vote to a proxy—another voting member—to vote on your behalf. This year, you will be able to return the Proxy Card by mail or assign a proxy online. Mail in your Proxy Card (separate from the ballot) and rest assured that you are represented in the election and annual meeting, even if you can't directly participate. If you do decide to attend the meeting yourself, know that your presence always comes first. The Proxy Card is a backup plan for if you can't attend. ♦



Untimely, New Law in California that Farm Employers Need to be Aware of

California laws and regulations continue changing, often causing unnecessary hardships on businesses in the state. A new law has passed in California, effective January 1, 2025 (often referred to as the “Captive Audience Meetings” law) that farm employers need to be aware of. Ron Barsamian, legal advisor to the California Fresh Fruit Association, shared the details of this new law, The California Worker Freedom from Employer Intimidation Act, with Matthew Malcolm on California Ag Network and how to safely navigate the changes. Watch the brief interview to learn more.



Use the QR to view the interview

Article contributed by Pacific Nut Producer Magazine. ◆

Scan me

#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity

On Memorial Day, *Blue Diamond* recognized and appreciated those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. We remember and thank you. We celebrated not one, but TWO sweepstakes partnerships, first with Venus Williams and second with Holly Fischer. Finally, we cheered as we launched a bold and exciting new rebrand, including our new logo! ♦



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BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of July 28, 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 July 28, 2025, for the program are listed here:

	Short-Term Investment Certificate (STIC)	Long-Term Investment Certificate (LTIC) (Maturity Date of 6/30/2028)
Initial Investment Required	\$1,000	\$50,000
Interest Rate	5.25%	4.00%
	(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.

Vanilla Almond Cupcakes

Bake Time: 40 minutes Difficulty: Medium Serves up to: 12

Ingredients

For the Cake

1½ cups all-purpose flour
 1½ teaspoons baking powder
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 cup granulated sugar
 ½ cup unsalted butter;
 at room temperature
 2 large eggs
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 ½ teaspoon almond extract
 ½ cup *Almond Breeze*®
 Unsweetened Vanilla
 Almondmilk

For the Frosting

1 cup unsalted butter;
 at room temperature
 4 cups powdered sugar
 2 Tablespoons *Almond
 Breeze*® Unsweetened
 Vanilla Almondmilk
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 ¾ teaspoon almond extract
 Sprinkles (*optional*)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a cupcake pan (12 cups) with paper liners. Set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, and salt together. Set aside.
3. In a stand mixer, beat the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy and lightened in color. This will take about 5 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula.
4. Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. Stir in the extracts.
5. Divide batter evenly into prepared cupcake liners, filling ¾ full. Bake cupcakes for 18-20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Transfer pan to a wire cooling rack and cool completely.
6. While the cupcakes are cooling, make the frosting. Using a stand mixer, beat the butter until creamy. With the mixer on low, add 1 cup of powdered sugar at a time until all the powdered sugar is added. Beat in the almondmilk, vanilla extract, and almond extract. Beat until smooth.
7. Place the frosting in a pastry bag and frost. 1M Wilton tip recommended. Decorate with sprinkles, if desired. Serve!



Asian Quinoa Bowls with Peanut Baked Tofu

Cook Time: 35 minutes Difficulty: Easy Serves up to: 4

Ingredients

Quinoa:

- 1 cup uncooked quinoa
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 3 teaspoons tamari divided
- 1 cup water
- 1¼ cups *Almond Breeze®*
Unsweetened Original
Almondmilk Coconutmilk or
Almond Breeze® Unsweetened
Original Almondmilk, divided

Peanut Dressing:

- ¼ cup peanut butter
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1 teaspoon Asian hot sauce
(like *Sriracha*)

Tofu:

- 1 block extra firm tofu, cubed
- 2 cups shredded cabbage
- 2 cups shredded carrots
- 1 bunch scallions, sliced
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- Sesame seeds to garnish (*optional*)



Directions

Quinoa

1. Add quinoa, ginger, 1 teaspoon tamari, water and 1 cup of almondmilk into a small saucepan.
2. Bring mixture to a boil, cover and reduce to simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Once liquid has been absorbed, set aside until ready to serve.
4. While the quinoa is cooking, preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease a baking sheet and set aside.

Peanut Dressing

1. In a small bowl, whisk together peanut butter, remaining ¼ cup of almondmilk, remaining 2 teaspoons of tamari, lime juice, and hot sauce.
2. Continue to whisk until smooth and pourable (add a splash more almondmilk as needed).

Tofu

1. Add tofu to a mixing bowl and toss with half of the peanut dressing.
2. Transfer the tofu to the greased baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes until crispy, flipping halfway through.

Assembly

1. Once tofu is done, assemble your bowls.
2. Divide the quinoa, tofu, cabbage, carrots and scallions evenly among 4 bowls.
3. Drizzle each with the remaining dressing and sprinkle with cilantro, sesame seeds and Wasabi & Soy Sauce Almonds for extra crunch.
4. Enjoy immediately!

National Sweepstakes Winner to Enjoy One-On-One Lesson with Tennis Champion, Venus Williams in Florida!

Other prizes include an autographed tennis racket, merchandise, and \$15,000 in gift cards.

Blue Diamond is teaming up with tennis champion and entrepreneur, Venus Williams, for a national sweepstakes full of endless snacking and unforgettable prizes.

In celebration of *Blue Diamond*'s new line of premium almonds found in the produce aisle, customers who purchase the new protein-packed snack can win a trip for two to West Palm Beach, Florida, which includes a 30-minute tennis lesson with the tennis champion for the grand prize winner.

Blue Diamond's newest line of premium almonds gives a fresh take on a healthy snack grown in farmer-owned California farms. Inspired by growing consumer demand for convenient and healthy snack options, these premium almonds offer a tasty array of fresh almonds and almond-fruit blends with no added oils or artificial flavors. These nutrient-packed almonds come in a variety of delicious flavors like Toasted Almonds & Cherries, Sea Salt Almonds & Blueberries, Oven Roasted Honey, Lightly Salted, and Whole Natural.

"As an athlete, almonds have always been one of my favorite go-to snacks, packed with nutrients," said Venus Williams. "They're the ultimate superfood, keeping me energized on the court and fueling me throughout my day. That's why I'm so excited to team up with *Blue Diamond* to give fans a chance to win big this fall and celebrate healthy snacking."



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**NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Promotion includes an Instant win game and a sweepstakes. Begins at or about 12:00 PM ET on 5/27/25 and ends at 11:59:59 PM ET on 9/15/25. Open only to legal residents of the 50 US/DC, 18+. For Official Rules, including how to enter, free method of entry, odds, prize details, and restrictions, visit www.VenusBDSweeps.com. Void where prohibited. Sponsor: Blue Diamond Growers. This Promotion is in no way sponsored, endorsed, or administered by, or associated with PayPal, Inc.

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Those who purchase a participating package in-store can enter the barcode at VenusBDSweeps.com to access an almond tennis ball game and earn entries toward prizes, including the grand prize trip to meet Venus Williams. Other prizes include an autographed tennis racket, tennis backpack, cookbook, sleeve of tennis balls and gift cards.

“We’ve seen a great reaction to this new offering as shoppers are looking for convenient and nutritious options in the produce section, and our new line of almonds delivers just that,” said Maya Erwin, vice president of Marketing and Innovation at *Blue Diamond Growers*. “We’re excited to give consumers a fresh new way to enjoy almonds with unique flavors and premium quality they’ve come to expect from *Blue Diamond*, and we cannot wait for the next chapter of this product launch with Venus Williams.”

The sweepstakes runs now through September 15, 2025, at select retailers nationwide, including Giant Eagle, Hyvee, Jewel, Roundy’s, Lunds & Byerlys, Buehler’s and Sendik’s. To view the official sweepstakes rules and prize details, visit VenusBDSweeps.com.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Begins 5/27/25, ends 11:59:59 PM ET 9/15/25. 50 US/DC, 18+. See rules at VenusBDSweeps.com for how to enter, free method of entry, odds, prize details and restrictions. Void where prohibited. This promotion is in no way sponsored, endorsed, administered by, or associated with PayPal, Inc. ♦



Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Awards 25 Students with 2025-2026 Scholarship

Sustaining the future of agriculture will require dedication, determination, and a strong work ethic from the next generation of industry leaders. Recognizing this, the Blue Diamond Growers Foundation has awarded scholarships to 25 students pursuing higher education during the 2025-2026 academic year. These recipients represent the future of farming and are passionate about making a lasting impact on their communities and the agricultural world.

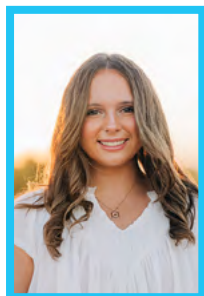
Get to know this year's scholarship recipients and explore excerpts from their essays to discover the aspirations driving them forward.



Avery Weagant – Chico State University (Ag Education)

I am on track to graduate with my bachelor's degree in two years, and will complete my teaching credential program the following year. Becoming a teacher to build

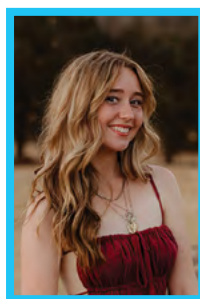
the future of our agriculture industry is something I have dreamed of for years, and I am fully prepared to work hard to accomplish these goals. I want to inspire students for generations.



Madelyn Rudnick – Cal Poly SLO (Ag Systems Management)

Ranching provided me with hands-on experience, an understanding of livestock care, and the complexity of business management in agriculture. The FFA FARMs leadership program

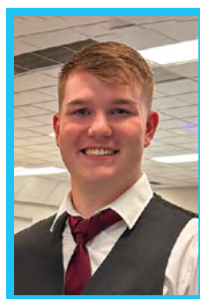
further expanded my knowledge about the industry and allowed me to explore agribusinesses throughout my county. My goal is to improve agriculture's efficiency and sustainability and ensure the availability of fresh and natural products in the U.S. and worldwide.



Avery Harrington – Chico State University (Ag Communications)

I was born into a multi-generational farming family in Colusa County. I am proud to represent the fifth generation of my family to continue the legacy of growing California

almonds. *Blue Diamond* is dear to my heart, as my great-great grandfather, G.O. Peterson, was one of the first 230 almond growers in The Exchange back in the 1910s. I hope to use my gift in writing and journalism to allow the industry to be heard.



Logan Krauss – Cal Poly Pomona (Ag Engineering)

Living in California we are always hit with sustainability concerns due to droughts and consumption. I'd like to become an environmental horticulture manager to assist

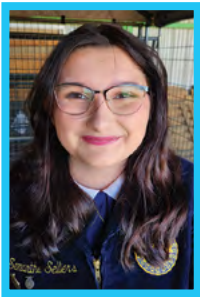
farmers in finding the best forms of sustainability. I'm committed to advancing technology and cultivating more efficient and sustainable solutions to make a real impact in the future of sustainable agriculture.



Wade Stretch – Cal Poly SLO
(Ag Systems Management)

I plan to major in agricultural systems management then attend law school to become a water attorney in California's Central Valley. I plan to protect water rights and fight for

water allocation needed to feed the nation. A law degree will give me the tools to make a meaningful impact on conserving water in California. My goal is to protect water, California's most precious resource.



Samantha Selliers – Kansas State University (Ag Communications)

I aim to pursue a career in public service, with aspirations to run for Congress. Through my communication skills, I plan to address issues such as trade policies,

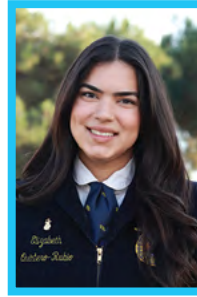
mental health support for farmers, and advancing technology within the industry. My goal is to contribute to a society that values and supports agriculture, ensuring its sustainability and prosperity for future generations.



William Sonke – Covenant College
(English/Literature)

I would like to work as a middle or high school teacher to share my knowledge and love for reading with the next generation. My desire is to build up comprehension skills

and a proper evaluation of literature. I want to impart my love for literature to the next generation to develop thoughtful students who will become the next leaders and shapers to transform our society for good.



Elizabeth Quintero-Rubio – Cal Poly SLO (Ag Communications)

I aspire to become an agricultural lawyer who fights for the rights of farmers and agribusinesses, including those in the almond industry. I will contribute to

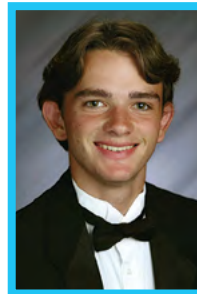
economic stability, sustainable practices, and a thriving future for California's farmers. I am determined to give back by advocating for the agricultural industry that sustains us all.



Marcus Montgomery – Cal Poly SLO (Ag Systems Management)

Agriculture has coursed through my veins for as long as I can remember. In 1910, my great-great grandfather, Frederick Montgomery, founded Almont Orchards with forty acres.

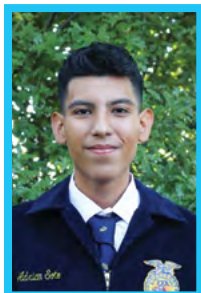
Today, our fourth-generation family farm operates more than 1,000 acres of almonds and walnuts. My goal is to continue the legacy my family built and continue feeding the world.



Ryley Vanella – Cal Poly SLO
(Ag Engineering)

My family has been in the almond industry since the late 1960s. I worked on the farm, operating gators and tractors and did maintenance and calibration to machinery. I

noticed room for improvement with the equipment. I want to use my passion for engineering to advance that process. I want to make farming a more accessible and more sustainable practice, and through agricultural or mechanical engineering, I believe it is possible.



Adrian Soto – Cal Poly SLO
(Ag Education)

My dream is to become an agriculture teacher. I'm eager to inspire the next generation of students, just as my ag teachers inspired me to be a better leader in

school, county and state. Throughout my time in FFA, I developed leadership skills through my roles as a cabin leader at Calvin Crest and a campfire leader at 4-H Camp Sylvester. I'm committed to making a difference in agricultural education and preparing students to be leaders in the industry.



Sara Garcia – College of the Sequoias (2025) and CSU Fresno (2027) (Ag Education)

In high school, I found a supportive community in the Farmersville FFA chapter. I plan to major in agricultural education and dream of owning a

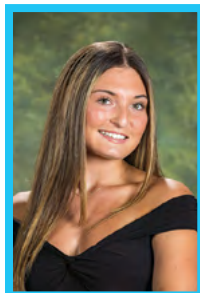
citrus grove and donating the fruit to local FFA citrus competitions. I wish to educate and inspire a new generation of students, fostering an understanding of agricultural knowledge and advocacy. I want to empower my students to pursue their interests and create their own journeys within FFA and beyond.



Logan Rose – Cal Poly SLO
(Ag Science)

Some of my fondest childhood memories are helping my grandmother pick pears in the orchard and checking irrigation in the vineyard with my dad. I will major

in wine and viticulture and work to positively impact the grape-growing industry and carry on my family's farming legacy. I will advocate for all the ag industries by actively working to solve problems impacting farmers. I would also like to volunteer in my local 4-H and FFA programs, to inspire youth to get involved in ag.



Mariana Etchamendy – Cal Poly SLO (Plant & Soil Science)

I plan to support growers in California by managing tree health and pest management by becoming a Pest Control Advisor and a Certified Crop Advisor focusing on permanent nut

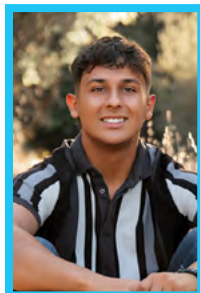
crops. I would also like to integrate sustainable agriculture with the use of our livestock in winter sanitation. I would like to find the correct balance of chemicals and pesticides when needed but explore the use of more natural methods as well.



Joseph Oliveira – Cal Poly SLO
(Ag Systems Management)

My goal is to become an agriculture engineer and start my own engineering business in the Central Valley. My projects will improve the farmer's life by applying scientific

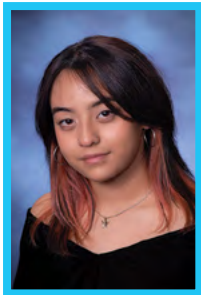
principles, technology, and mathematics to solve problems for California agriculture. I would also like to give back to my family dairy (Joe Oliveira Dairy) and almond orchard (The Almond Orchard) by helping generate a steady economy for both farms.



Cesar Ramos – Modesto Jr. College then Cal Poly SLO or UC Davis
(Soil & Crop Science)

I plan to become an agronomist to give back to the community that has given my family so much. I'd like to work for a company, like Simplot,

that can use my expertise. This will benefit society because the world is going to need farmers and people involved in agriculture. I plan to help my community by being able to feed them and advance the agriculture field in Stanislaus County.



Nevaeh Perez – UC Santa Cruz
(Biochemistry & Molecular Biology)

I want to do something that would be helpful to my mother, who always puts me first. She had problems with her jaw because she didn't go to the dentist so that she could save money

for me. I decided to go into dentistry to help her. I want to bring bright smiles to those that I can help.



Edward Bruno – Cal Poly SLO
(Plant & Soil Science)

After getting my degree in plant science I would like to get my PCA license and return home to work as a PCA or help my dad farm almonds and peaches. I'd like to help other

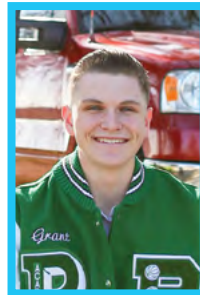
farmers and give them my best advice for success. If I work with my dad and farm, that would benefit him since I could use my knowledge from school to raise trees. It would make me a part of the farming community, and I would be able to provide advice.



Brynn Close – CSU Bakersfield
(Ag Business)

I am an active member in my school's FFA chapter. One of my greatest FFA accomplishments was winning third place at Cal Poly State Finals last year. Last year, I earned my

State FFA degree. In college, I plan to continue playing softball and majoring in agricultural business. I would like to use my degree to give back to the community I came from by returning as an agricultural teacher.



Grant Armstrong – Cal Poly SLO
(Plant & Soil Science)

I plan to major in plant science and leave as a valedictorian in my graduating class. I will use my degree to become a PCA where I will advise growers on their crop needs. PCAs

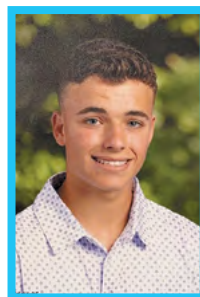
are crucial in the farming industry and help optimize plant growth. Having successful crop growth is crucial to feeding the world. I come from a farm-heavy area, and have been inspired by those before me to help farmers succeed.



Aracely de la Torre Gonzalez – Cal Poly SLO
(Ag Communications/Education)

As a future ag teacher I will ensure that the ag industry receives bright and driven individuals who will contribute to ag. When I complete

my college education, I will build connections with organizations and farmers for the benefit of my students as well as the California ag industry. I will offer programs like FFA to give students the opportunity to get involved in career development activities.



David Cox – Cal Poly SLO
(Ag Business)

After I obtain my degree, I would like to start my own farm equipment company in the Central Valley. My future career will benefit society by allowing me to do business with

people all over the Central Valley. I will use the stable income from my farm equipment company to provide a comfortable life for my family and give back to my community.



Keenon Kim-Huy – USC

(Ag Engineering)

I am fascinated by the intersection of technology and agriculture which has led me to seek sustainable solutions that optimize farming efficiency while preserving natural

resources. I will focus on precision agriculture, using data-driven technology to improve crop yields and reduce environmental impact. Integrating artificial intelligence and automation into farming will help farmers make more informed decisions, minimize waste and combat climate change.

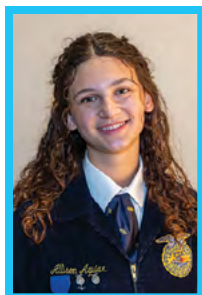


Kayce Van Horn – Cal Poly SLO

(Ag Science)

I plan to become an agriculture educator and FFA advisor. During my time in the FFA, my teachers encouraged me to get involved in public speaking contests, judging

teams and leadership roles. If not for them, I would not have gained the confidence I have or even be half the person I am today and I want to pay it forward. I will strive to be the best ag educator and support for my students.



Allison Aguiar – Cal Poly SLO

(Ag Communications)

When people learned that my family farms walnuts and almonds, I was often met with accusations of water overuse. Not everyone holds the same agricultural literacy skills

I fostered in my youth. These interactions solidified my desire to study ag policy to advocate for progressive and sustainable ag practices. I hope to become a voice for farmers and help them succeed in their selfless endeavor of feeding others. ♦

If you wish to donate to the
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Marion and her "Key Club" friends

Blue Diamond Retiree Celebrates 100th Birthday!

Marion with great granddaughter, Jennifer

Blue Diamond wishes a very happy 100th birthday to Marion Flandrena, who reached this exciting milestone on July 27, 2025. Marion was a *Blue Diamond* employee for over 10 years, first serving as secretary to data processing lead, Stan Deam before working as the manager of the Nut & Gift Shop (known then as the Almond Plaza). She thoroughly enjoyed her time at *Blue Diamond* and is a self-proclaimed *Blue Diamond* enthusiast who sings the Co-op's praises to any and all who will listen. Even her friends comment on how much she loves the Co-op.

Nearly 80 of Marion's friends and family joined her birthday celebration, many of whom flew in from across the country for the occasion. Her favorite fruit is cherry, so naturally, each guest received their own tube of Marion's new favorite *Blue Diamond* product, Cherry Slurpee almonds, as party favors! And if you're wondering how she looks so good, she'd tell you "It's probably all the almonds." Happy 100th birthday, Marion! ♦



Marion Flandrena proudly posing with *Blue Diamond's* Cherry Slurpee almonds



Marion with Helen Porter and Sammie Boehmer, two fellow centenarians!

Current Washington Situation

Congress, the Farm Bill, and Government Funding.

The first six months of the 119th Congress have been defined by passage of President Trump's signature legislation, the One Big Beautiful Bill, that was the vehicle for permanently extending the tax cuts enacted during the president's first term in 2017. The bill was passed by Congress using a unique procedure called reconciliation that allows the House and Senate to pass tax and spending measures on a simple majority basis using only votes from Republican members. The president signed the bill at a White House ceremony on the 4th of July. The bill made permanent the individual tax rate cuts from the 2017 bill that would have expired in 2026 and made permanent the 20% deduction of qualified business income—also known as Section 199A—which also would have expired in 2026.

In addition to extending tax rates, the One Big Beautiful Bill also included significant changes to federal nutrition and farm programs. House Agriculture Committee Chairman G.T. Thompson (R-PA) and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Boozman (R-AR) took advantage of the unique legislative situation to achieve reductions in federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP) benefits by requiring additional cost sharing from the states to increase support in several farm programs. This included a doubling of the Market Access Program to help with international trade efforts and a permanent exemption to the adjusted gross income limitation for Title 1, disaster, and conservation programs if 75% of income is derived from farming. While some of the adjustments in agriculture programs in the One Big Beautiful Bill are a positive step for almond growers and other producers, the inclusion of agriculture programs in the bill will make it difficult to get a wholesale review of farm programs in a Farm Bill done during this Congress.

For the remainder of the year, Congress will focus on passing the National Defense Authorization Act, which authorizes defense programs, and Appropriations bills

that provide funding for government agencies, including the Department of Agriculture. The House initiated the process and successfully passed the Agriculture Appropriations bill out of Committee on a partisan basis, with only Republicans voting in favor in June. The House bill cut funding for agriculture programs by 4.2% below the previous fiscal year and has yet to get the bill passed by the whole House. The Senate is expected to start moving bills through Committee in July, starting with the agriculture bill, and will continue working on them through the summer. The outlook for passing Appropriations bills across the floor in the Senate is not good and it appears that the government will spend a significant amount of time on continuing funding resolutions until Republicans and Democrats can agree to overall spending levels.

International Trade.

The situation on the international trade front can best be characterized as chaotic and ever changing. The president's trade team is staffed by several figures from the first Trump Administration including Peter Navarro, the president's senior counselor for Trade and Manufacturing, and U.S. Trade Representative Jamison Greer. The Trump trade team is in favor of using tariffs as a tool to bring trading partners to the table to negotiate more equitable trade deals.

As a part of this overall strategy, the president has used traditional tariff authority under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 and Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974. He has also utilized novel and untested authorities under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977. This would issue broad tariff increases for our trading partners. The president has levied 50% tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, reciprocal tariffs of at least 10% with variable rates for each country for all goods, and targeted tariff increases for 14 countries, including important *Blue Diamond* markets such as

Japan, Korea, and Thailand. While we remain concerned that the president's tariff proposals will result in retaliatory tariffs, specifically on almonds, we have not experienced the same level of reaction during this round of tariff increases that we did during the first Trump Administration. The U.S. Trade Representative reports engaging in active negotiations for trade deals with dozens of countries and has secured new trade agreement frameworks with the U.K. and Vietnam. The administration is, reportedly, very close to finalizing trade agreements with India.

We continue to monitor these important issues and are always working hard to support the almond industry and its growers. ♦



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



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THE ALMOND BOARD

Regulators Gain First-Hand Insight at ABC's Environmental Stewardship Tour

More than 50 representatives from key regulatory agencies attended the Almond Board of California's annual Environmental Stewardship Tour on May 9. This initiative was created over 20 years ago to provide policymakers with practical insights into almond farming and industry stewardship practices. This year's tour took place at orchards owned by the Bowman family in Modesto, where attendees gained a direct view of daily farming decisions and innovative stewardship research.

Garrett Bowman, a fourth-generation almond grower, along with his sons, welcomed attendees and explained his approach to orchard management through the growing season. He covered essential practices for irrigation and nutrient management, pest control, varieties and rootstocks. Bowman's Pest Control Advisor demonstrated equipment used for monitoring navel orangeworm flights. This demonstration illustrated the complexity and deliberate nature of pest management practices, highlighting the thoughtful decision-making process growers undertake to optimize both crop yield and environmental health.



During lunch, ABC's Gabriele Ludwig answered questions and informed participants of other stewardship research ABC is supporting



UC Davis' Dr. Thomas Harter describes his ongoing research on nitrogen application and leaching during the tour

Abhijeet Kulkarni, ABC's principal of technical and trade issues, described the significance of directly engaging regulators in orchard settings. "Fundamentally, it's about outreach to various regulatory agencies that impact our industry," Kulkarni explained. "Many of these decision makers don't have extensive backgrounds in agriculture, so this tour provides them with the context needed to fully appreciate what growers deal with on a day-to-day basis."

A key feature of the tour was a longer-term nitrogen research project led by UC Davis' Dr. Thomas Harter, examining the impact of moving to high frequency, low dose nitrogen applications on the potential for off-site movement of nitrogen. With 21 groundwater monitoring wells and sophisticated analysis of nitrogen movement, this multi-disciplinary research provides unique data on agricultural practices' influence on groundwater quality and greenhouse gas emissions. And it is one of the few locations where current models of leaching are being fact checked.

Early findings indicate significant reductions in nitrogen leaching below the root zone, demonstrating the practice change not only improves nitrogen use efficiency, but can decrease environmental impacts. "This research allows regulators to see, firsthand, the industry's proactive efforts to minimize environmental impact through scientifically informed practices," Kulkarni noted.

Following the orchard tour, participants gathered for lunch at Marlin Flory's barn, where ABC staff, led by ABC's director of environmental policy, Gabriele Ludwig, presented additional updates on current stewardship research and outreach efforts. This session sparked active dialogue, with regulatory staff posing thoughtful questions about irrigation practices, almond byproduct utilization, and other aspects of almond production.



Participants listened to grower Matt Bowman during the Environmental Stewardship Tour that took place Friday, May 9 in the San Joaquin Valley

“Regulators asked insightful questions on everything from how growers choose almond varieties to irrigation technology and sustainability practices,” Kulkarni said. “For many, this was their first time in an almond orchard, and the experience clearly opened their eyes to the intricate realities growers navigate daily.”

Attendees included senior staff from agencies such as the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, California Air Resources Board, California Department of Food and Agriculture, the head of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for California, and the head of Region 9 of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). By the following Monday, EPA officials in Washington D.C. had already heard about the value of the tour.

“We can’t directly influence regulatory decisions,” Kulkarni concluded, “but through education and open dialogue, we can ensure decision makers understand our industry’s proactive role in environmental stewardship.”

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THE BEE BOX



Cover Crops and Navel Orangeworm Management in Almond Orchards

Navel orangeworm (NOW) is a primary pest affecting almond orchards, causing substantial economic losses through nut damage and the spread of aflatoxin. With depressed nut prices and a changing climate, NOW damage has been exacerbated over the years. Current management practices rely heavily on winter sanitation, well timed insecticide sprays, timely harvests, and mating disruption to reduce NOW populations. This article discusses how cover crops can augment navel orangeworm control.

Historically there were three flights of NOW per year, now four flights have become industry standard.⁴ Early management of this pest is vital in reducing crop damage. Each female NOW moth can lay between 80 to 200 eggs and multiple larvae can develop in each nut. It is well documented that NOW overwinters as larvae in mummy nuts in the trees and on the ground.

In addition to NOW, a new pest is emerging in almonds: the carpophilus beetle (*Carpophilus truncatus*). This beetle was first noted in the San Joaquin Valley in 2023 and is known to overwinter in mummy nuts. Little is known about which pesticides may control this beetle, prompting UC researchers and extension officers to

strongly promote winter sanitation efforts for both NOW and the carpophilus beetle.⁵

The numerous detrimental effects of mummy nuts highlight the importance of winter sanitation efforts.¹ Removing and destroying mummy nuts has additional effects on yield quality. Integrating cover crops presents a promising approach to supplement pest control efforts by enhancing mummy nut decomposition, promoting predation, and reducing female NOW moth oviposition.³

Cover crops influence mummy nut decomposition dynamics by fostering favorable conditions for microbial activity and nutrient cycling in orchard soils. Studies have shown that the presence of cover crops accelerates the breakdown of mummy nuts compared to bare orchard floors. Earlier planted winter cover crops, when established by November to December, provided better mummy nut decomposition than later planted cover crops. Also, the height and density of the cover crop affected NOW survival with taller, denser

plantings. This detrimentally affected overwintering NOW populations.

Establishing cover crops enhances the habitat complexity of almond orchards, providing refuge and food sources for natural predators of NOW larvae. These predators actively prey upon overwintering NOW larvae in exposed mummy nuts, thereby reducing the population of NOW before they can infest the following summer crop. However, due to the extremely low treatment threshold for NOW, less than 2% nut infestation, natural predators are rarely relied upon for NOW control.³

Cover crops also contribute to NOW management by concealing mummy nuts from female moths during their oviposition period. The vegetation acts as visual and olfactory camouflage, making mummy nuts less detectable to female moths seeking suitable egg laying sites. The reduced visibility and accessibility disrupt the moth's reproductive cycle, thereby lowering the likelihood of infestation in mummy nuts on the ground.³

While cover crops offer significant benefits in NOW management, they



NOW in Independence.
Photo credit Mel Machado

Top left: An orchard in late fall, when mummy shake would occur
Top right: A thick cover crop stand

are not intended to replace traditional orchard sanitation practices entirely. Winter sanitation remains crucial for removing mummy nuts that remain after harvest.³ To address concerns about cover crop interference during mummy nut removal, farmers can adopt a strategic planting approach. Some farmers plant cover crops in alternate rows while leaving adjacent rows bare to allow for effective winter sanitation efforts without compromising cover crop establishment. You want to plant the cover crop early enough to have a floral load in time for the bees' arrival prior to bloom. Other farmers elect to plant the cover crop immediately before or shortly after completing winter sanitation.²

Cover crops can have an indirect influence on some of the underlying causes of sticktights (unharvested nuts which will become mummy nuts).^{1, 2} Some of these causes include nutrient or water stress, which leads to uneven ripening of nuts. This situation puts the farmer in the uncomfortable position of shaking some nuts too early or risking NOW infestation of ripe nuts.¹ Cover crops increase water infiltration, boost soil microbial communities, and improve the availability of some plant nutrients. These improved soil conditions can have a compounding effect over time, boosting orchard health.²

Again, integrating cover crops into almond orchards does not replace sanitation, but it can be beneficial to NOW suppression. By accelerating mummy nut decomposition, increasing predation, and hiding mummy nuts from female moths, cover crops contribute to reducing pest pressure early in the almond growing season. This integrated approach enhances the effectiveness of NOW control measures while supporting soil and orchard health. Farmers are encouraged to consider these findings when developing comprehensive pest management plans that integrate both cover crops and traditional sanitation practices.

Blue Diamond farmers can experiment with cover crops and get technical support at no cost through the *Blue Diamond Growers Advancing Markets for Producers Grant* program. This is an ongoing Federal USDA grant. To qualify, growers need to meet the following criteria: have and maintain a current contract with *Blue Diamond*, be a participant in the *Blue Diamond Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program* (OSIP) with a completed CASP

progress report, and an orchard map and associated paperwork from the FSA. The details can be found at www.bluediamondgrowers.com ♦

Resources:

¹ Almond Board of California (2021) Navel Orangeworm best management practices. (490) Navel Orangeworm Best Management Practices – YouTube

²Wauters, V., & et al. (2023) Developing cover crop systems for California almonds: Current knowledge and uncertainties. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*. Developing cover crop systems for California almonds: Current knowledge and uncertainties | Journal of Soil and Water Conservation (jswconline.org)

³Wilson, H., & et al. (2022) Winter cover crops reduce spring emergence and egg deposition of overwintering Navel Orangeworm (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae) in almonds. *Environmental Entomology*. Winter Cover Crops Reduce Spring Emergence and Egg Deposition of Overwintering Navel Orangeworm (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae) in Almonds | *Environmental Entomology* | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

⁴Wilson, H., Burks, C., Reger, J., and Wenger, J. (2020) Biology and management of Navel Orangeworm (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae) in California. *Journal of Integrated Pest Management*. pmaa025.pdf (silverchair.com)

⁵Wilson, H., Rijal, J., and Haviland, D. (2023) New pest infesting almonds and pistachios in the San Joaquin Valley. *UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources*. New pest infesting almonds and pistachios in the San Joaquin Valley – Food Blog – ANR Blogs (ucanr.edu)



Tom Johnson,
Seeds for Bees® Grower
Relations Manager,
Project Apis m.

TIME TO CONSIDER

Red leaf blotch is a disease almond growers should take seriously. It can have a multi-year impact on your crop. As with all things farming though, growers are adaptable. We understand the life cycle of this disease and have the tools to control it. The final step is to act. Don't shrug it off like I did last year! It's here and it will remain here for the foreseeable future.

Last year, while walking through our family's orchards with my dad and brother, I mentioned a new disease that had recently appeared in California almonds. "It's called red leaf blotch," I said, "but it's only been spotted in a few areas." We all shrugged it off. With a solid fungicide program in place, it seemed like just another new name making the rounds. Then came this year. By late May, I began noticing distinct discoloration in orchards across Stanislaus and Merced counties. One day, my dad called and said, "Hey, you know that new disease? We've got it. What can we do about it?" It was red leaf blotch and it was spreading fast throughout the region. This isn't a disease we can afford to ignore. It demands a focused, proactive management plan.

Red leaf blotch was first detected in a few counties last spring. Experts believe the pathogen was introduced into California via infected plant material. A local PCA (Pest Control Advisor) pointed out a key difference between this year and last year. Last year, the question was "Is the disease present in the orchard?" This year, it's "To what extent is the orchard infected?" Severity varies, but orchards with high infection levels this year were, typically, affected last year as well.

Red leaf blotch follows a single infection cycle. Active spores are present around petal fall, just as young leaves are emerging. Rain during this period splashes spores onto the leaves, initiating infection. Symptoms appear 35-40 days later.



Figure 1: Red leaf blotch in Merced County.
Photo credit: Trent Voss

The early signs include small, yellowish spots that enlarge and change color from orange to reddish-brown. As blotches grow, leaves begin to curl and eventually drop prematurely. This defoliation reduces photosynthesis, impacting the current crop and significantly affecting next year's yield due to lower carbohydrate reserves in the trees.

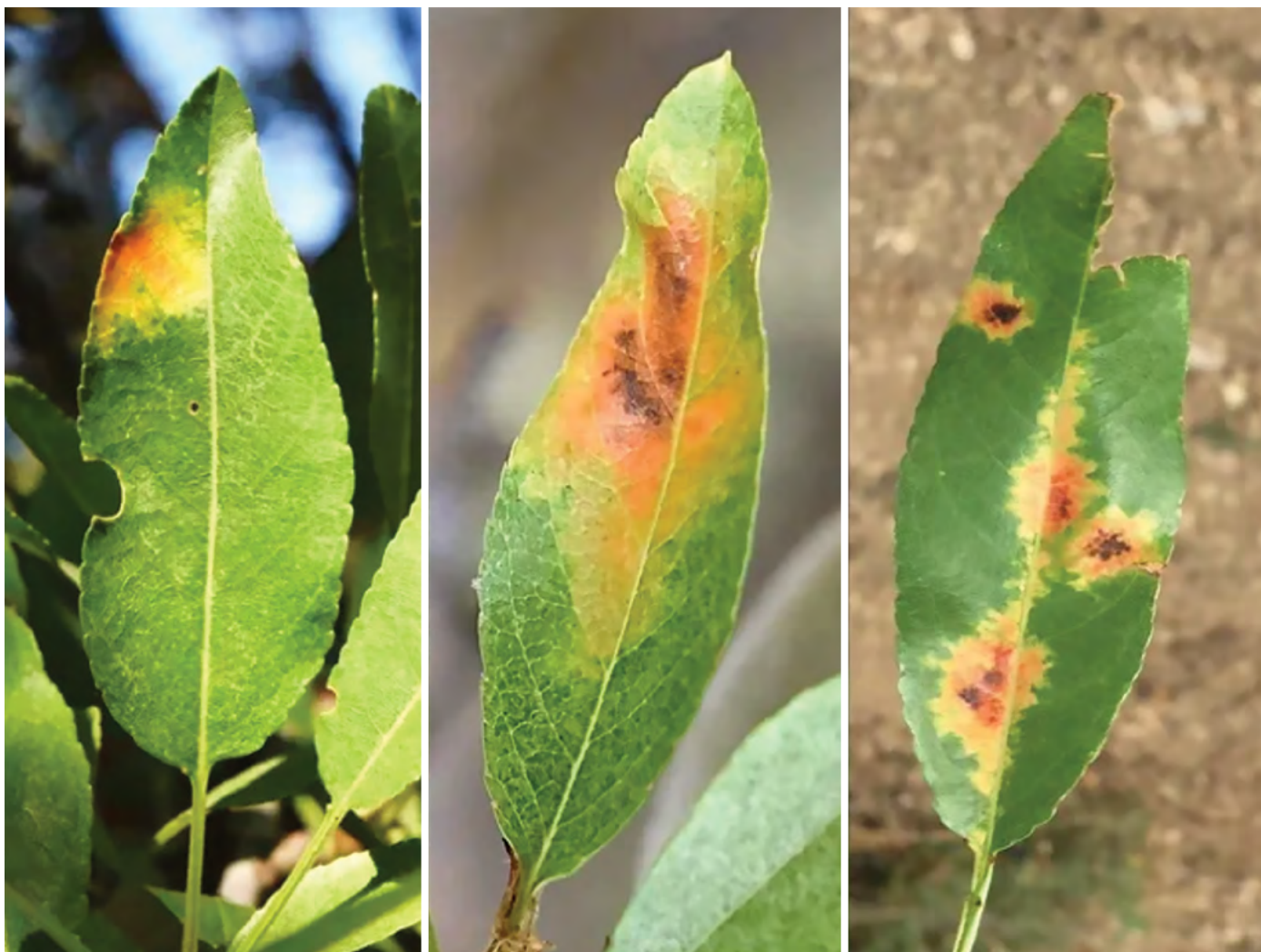


Figure 2: Advanced red leaf blotch symptoms. Photo credit: Alejandro Hernandez and Florent Trouillas

The good news? We have tools to fight back. Fungicides from FRAC groups 7, 11, M3, M4, and some group 3 chemistries have shown effectiveness. Consult your PCA to determine which materials best fit your orchard's needs. Timing is just as critical as product choice. Florent Trouillas, fruit and nut crop pathology specialist with the University of California Cooperative Extension, recommends a fungicide application at petal fall, followed by additional applications at two- and five-weeks post petal fall if wet weather continues. PCAs treating the disease suggest managing it similarly to anthracnose: focus on petal fall and apply protection when rain is expected. Spraying fungicide after the symptoms appear is ineffective at controlling the disease since the infection started 35-40 days earlier. Additionally, cultural practices like removing or destroying leaf litter during dormancy can help reduce inoculum levels in the orchard.

Red leaf blotch is a serious threat to California almonds. It can have multi-year impacts on yield and tree health. But as growers, you're adaptable. We now understand the disease's life cycle and have effective tools to manage it. The key is action! Don't shrug it off like I did last year. Red leaf blotch is here, and it's here to stay. ♦



Trent Voss,
Lead Regional Manager,
Blue Diamond Growers

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